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ÖZ

Günlük Hayatta ve "Second Life" Adlı İnternet Platformunda Kendilik Sunumunun Kısa Bir İncelemesi

Günümüzde internet teknolojilerinin çok hızlı bir şekilde gelişmesi sayesinde milyonlarca insan bilgisayarlar vasıtasıyla yaratılan sanal ortamlarda önemli ölçüde zaman geçirmektedir. Bu araştırma kapsamında sanal ortamlarda zaman geçirmenin gerçek hayatta kişisel ilişkiler üstündeki etkilerinin olup olmadığı araştırılmış ve incelenmiştir. Bu araştırma kapsamında, Goffman'ın kendiliğin sunumu teorisinden hareketle dünyanın en popüler sanal ortamı olan secondlife.com'daki üyeler arasındaki kişisel ilişkiler incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmanın yazarı, şahsen secondlife.com sitesine üye olmuş ve bu ortamda çok fazla zaman geçiren kişilerle hem secondlife.com üzerinden hem de ulaşabildiği avatarların gerçek hayattaki kimlikleri ile yüz yüze olmak üzere iletişime geçmiş ve görüşmeler yapmıştır.

JEL Sınıflaması: *A14, L86, Z13*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *İnternet, Kendilik, Sanal Yaşam, Second Life*

ABSTRACT

A Brief Analysis of Presentation of Self in Everyday Life and Second Life

As a result of the rapid advancement of internet today, millions of people are spending a considerable amount of time in virtual environments created via computer technologies. This research has tried to explore, if any, the effects of spending time in virtual environments on the personal relations of the persons in real life. Interactions of the people in the virtual environment, which is Second Life, was studied based on Goffman's Presentation of Self Theory. Within the scope of this research, the author registered in secondlife.com and contacted people who spend considerable time in this medium and conducted personal interviews with the Second Life users in real life as well as in virtual life.

JEL Classification: *A14, L86, Z13*

Keywords: *Internet, Self, Virtual Life, Second Life*

A Brief Analysis of Presentation of Self in Everyday Life and Second Life

Nil Mit *

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Çağatay Topal **

INTRODUCTION

Based on the dramaturgy of Goffman, this paper focuses on the "second lives" established by real people in a virtual environment via avatars, and their reasons behind these lives. In this essay, the "second lives" established online by real people will be considered as the **front stage** and their "real lives" (off-line) will be taken as the **back stage.** These two stages will be compared in terms of physical features, economic aspects, and social roles of the respondents. The fundamental concepts that must be defined in order to start the discussion are the concepts of hyper-reality, cyberspace, and the avatar.

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Hyper-reality is an expression employed in semiotic studies and postmodern perspectives to define a failure of being aware of the difference between reality and simulation (Baudrillard, 1994). Hyper-reality is considered to be a state of being in which the boundary between the fact and the imaginary are blurred (Eco, 1986). In this study, hyper-reality is taken as the environment in the Second Life. Cyberspace is a term that was first used in the 1980s, in science fiction literature. Subsequently, it has been rapidly accepted by computer specialists (Pollack, 1989). Within the perspective of this paper, cyberspace is considered to be the entirety of www.secondlife.com, which is a platform that millions of inhabitants run a second life and interact with one another (Gibson, 1984). In Hinduism, avatar represents the "descent" of a divine being in an earthly appearance. In India, divine beings (deities)

are widely considered as free of form and thus able to demonstrate themselves in whichever appearance they choose (Vivekjivanda, 2010). It was Chip Morningstar who first used the term "avatar" for the illustration of the user on the screen in 1985, when he created "Habitat," the digital role-playing game published by Lucas Film. In the same year, Ultima IV: Quest of the Avatar was also introduced, yet the expression was used in a different meaning, with a more readily apparent religious connotation. In this game, the player's ultimate objective was to turn into an "Avatar" (Hawley, 2006). In Second Life, real users may shape their avatars as they wish and, in some cases, they can even choose an object to represent themselves in this virtual environment.

Following the work of Park – who preceded him - Goffman (1959, p. 30) makes use of the expression "persona" to develop a foundation for a higher figure of speech to define all communication as a performance (front stage and back stage). Goffman (1959) accepts the boundaries of this figure of speech; however, he argues that individuals deliberately plan to release specific articulations during communication, called as impression management. They do this for the purpose of establishing special impersonations in the people they are in contact with (Goffman, 1959). Afterwards, the social platform turns into a stage where several performances are placed in contact with each other and other individuals act as spectators of these characters, named as personae.

There are particular rules and principles governing these performances. In their first meeting with others, individuals expect others to value and behave in accordance with the proper standards that are already organized by the community (Goffman, 1959, p. 24). This generates a description of the given state of being that is applicable for all. "Definitional disruptions," which are the faults in the performances, are to be concealed by individuals who have conducted them. In this instance, they are referred to as "protective practices" or "tact" (Goffman, 1959, p. 25). The definitional disruptions are what "losing face" refers to (Goffman, 1959, p. 9) and preventing these disruptions is called "maintaining face" (Goffman, 1959, p. 5). Recovering from them is "saving face" (Goffman, 1959, p. 39). "Creating a scene" is the description of the situation in which individuals who should be in dramatic collaboration escape from their designated performances (Goffman, 1959, p. 205).

According to Goffman (1959, p. 28), despite the fact that the roles are wrongly accepted and individuals may not have faith in them at the first place, they can adopt and integrate these roles with their personalities. As long as the illustrations in the virtual world are the reflection of the impression that people design for themselves, they are what users aspire to become and the illustration represents the personalities of individuals more accurately than their real world characters. As a result, the perception of the role by individuals turns into a second character and an essential component of their identity (Goffman, 1959, p. 30). This assumption put forward by Goffman completely overlaps with the assumption that the virtual lives of real people may sometimes be an integral part of them.

The notion of a persona as an intentional disguise an individual creates and wears for a particular role which is separate from character or individuality, can be a rather beneficial explanation for the separation between the way said individuals mentally visualize themselves and the thing they devise. The allegory of social communications as performance on a stage is considered beneficial. It is something people occasionally perform in order to meet the conditions of the role they undertake. The role of the facade in creating personality and acting as the personae is also significant. Masks can be frequently read and interpreted by other individuals. Therefore, avatars can be customized as means to illustrate a certain personality to others while some of them can be deliberately shaped as "body projects" in order to manage this channel of symbolizing personality to the world. Very similar to the assumptions of Goffman, virtual internet environments provide their users with limitless opportunities to create new identities and images. Certain challenges existing in real life regarding creating images in real life (sex, racial features etc), do not exist at all in computer generated environments. Users can create avatars of any sex, nationality and origin and shape they wish. In general the outlooks of avatars are different than the real features of users.

Literature Review

This section will present a summary of the important existing literature that deal with the study of such virtual platforms as Second Life. Additionally, the central concepts and conclusions that hold importance with regard to this paper – will be highlighted for further references. A vast amount of existing literature on virtual platforms in general, and Second Life in particular, focus on the possible uses of these platforms as an educational tool. In his analysis, Prude (2013) examines the role of online platforms where such virtual platforms are used for college and university online education. Cook (2011) shows that simulations developed for virtual worlds may have the ability to provide a safe environment for students to practice clinical decision making for paediatric patients. The study of Chien, Davis, Slattery, Keeney-Kennicutt and Hammer (2013) aims to develop a virtual curriculum demonstration, with the overall purpose to understand graduate students' perceptions, self-reflections, self-understanding and educational growth with regard to teaching and learning in a virtual interdisciplinary curriculum. Second Life has also been studied as an interactive training and learning tool (De'tienne et al., 2012; Veronin et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2012; Wang F. and Shao E., 2012). Ethical problems born from the use of virtual worlds as platforms for learning and teaching have also been an issue that has been covered. The effects of avatars as visual presentations of the self and senses of embodiment within the online world are cases in point (Childs et al., 2012).

Numerous studies on Second Life focus on the social interactions among users and the way the self is expressed on the platform. A study by Tawa, Gongvatana, Anello, Shanmugham, Lee-Chuvala and Suyemoto (2012) describes a method for collecting and interpreting interpersonal behavioural data in Second Life. Said study concentrates on the social distances between White, Asian and Black participants in the Virtual World

(Tawa et al., 2012). In Lee's (2013) research, sixty students from two fifth-grade elementary school classes were interviewed to find whether there were any differences among the self-expressions of the Second Life participants who showed different levels of shyness. The results suggest that, especially for the students with high degrees of shyness, Second Life may be a beneficial environment to improve their self-expressions (Lee, 2013). The relationship between real world and virtual world is another problematic question (Bayraktar and Amca, 2012; Buckingham and Rodríguez, 2013; Hardey, 2008). A virtual reality support centre was established in 2009 in Second Life for people with chronic fatigue syndrome. The purpose was to determine whether a virtual reality setting could help diminish their social isolation (Best and Butler, 2013). The study shows that the relationships between the organic human body, psychoanalytic projections of the idealized or socially constructed body, and technology should be revised by taking into account the physiological effects experienced by participants while navigating on Second Life (Best and Butler, 2013).

The work by Morgan (2013) demonstrates how the author utilizes Second Life in a university history class. The Second Life becomes a meeting space for students and a platform for the research of public history (Morgan, 2013). Lomanowsk and Guitton (2012) studies the effects of sexual appeal, interpersonal touch, climatic, environmental, physical, and cultural constraints on the tendency to reveal or cover naked skin. It is revealed that participants of virtual environments, specifically Second Life, are engaged in impression management.

The ideas of Goffman (1956, 1973), who describes how people negotiate and validate identities in face-to-face encounters and how "frames" within which to evaluate the meaning of encounters are established, have been influential in defining the perception of sociologists and psychologists with regard to person-to-person encounters. Electronic communication (EC) has formed a new range of interaction with a developing etiquette. Despite being limited and less rich compared to interactions with physical encounters, the concept also introduces new problems and new opportunities in the presentation of self.

Gonzalez, Solartes and Vargas (2013) deal with the concept of virtual worlds from a Lacanian perspective. Lacan proposes a divided subject, in contrast to introducing a unified one. The interaction between virtual presentation and the self is understood with the language of signified and signifiers. These two terms belong in different worlds, signified in the virtual worlds and signifiers in the real world, where signifiers are said to allow the signified to materialize the self in the avatar. As Second Life is a multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORG) with immense traffic, it is accepted to be a meta verse where 3D virtual worlds are constructed so as to enable the participants the chance create their avatars by granting traits at their own discretion; thus providing the virtual character a separate identity (Gonzalez et al., 2013).

Parka (2013) identifies the effects of collaborative activities on group identity in a virtual world such as Second Life, through the events that promote the interaction

of participants with the tools integrated in Second Life (Parka, 2013). Among the various aspects of identity formation studied in Second Life are mechanisms that affect aggravation and relaxation of virtual aggression (GunLee et al., 2013), the influence of the virtual self on offline health and appearance (Behm-Morawitz, 2013), and the evolution of avatars (Shimizu, 2012). The research by Jeter (2012) focuses on a small sample of groups formed in Second Life in order to develop a series of typologies. A list of key terms collated by anti-terrorist agencies is used to determine the search terms employed to select the groups. Each group's choice of words is reviewed manually, using their self-definitions to derive a series of five general categories (Jeter, 2012). The study by Pickard, Brody and Burns (2013) tests the persuasive power of avatars which take similar physical and facial features with the users and that are visually imbued with authority. The study puts forth that remedying aversion to authority in high self-esteem and high self-monitoring individuals may be possible by morphing facial features of the individuals into avatars (Pickard et al., 2013).

Research on social identity shows that the ability to trigger identity-associated threats against individuals whose social identity is marginalized may be caused by situational cues. Numerical presentation of social identities in a given social environment can be provided as an example to this situation (Lee and Park, 2011). It is concluded that ethnoracial minorities may perceive the virtual world as identity-threatening when exposed to avatar-based cues that indicate White dominance, thus feeling psychologically disconnected and detached from the concepts introduced by the virtual environment itself (Lee and Park, 2011). The conclusion of another study is that role players tend to both negotiate identity and utilize their time spent online as a moratorium for their real, offline lives (Williams et. al, 2011).

The virtual world has another function as a coping mechanism for individuals suffering from an inability to gain acceptance, social connectivity or social support in their real, offline lives, mainly on the grounds of their personal situation, psychological profile or their minority status in their "respectful" societies (Williams et. al, 2011). Papacharissi (2002) concentrates on how people use personal home pages to present themselves online from the point of Goffman's "Presentation of Self" theory, where analysis is conducted with reference to personal home pages. Analysis reveals popular tools for self-presentation, desires of virtual homesteaders to associate with virtual homestead communities, and remarkable relationships among characteristics of home pages (Papacharissi, 2002).

The conceptualisation of the self has undergone remarkable change with the evolution of digital communication technologies and virtual spaces. "Embodiment" and "presence" are two important concepts in understanding virtual interactions. Avatars provide embodiment in these environments and make it possible to interact with others outside the physical world. Characteristics of communications and relationships may limit the interaction between the self and the other in virtual platforms. One inhibition arises from the lack of social indica-

tions; however, the introduction of new technologies that facilitate social interaction overcomes this obstacle to some extent. As opposed to the interactive dynamic behind the emergence of the self in nature, virtual environments are particular sites in terms of the central role of social interactions (Evans, 2012).

Bullingham and Vasconselos (2013) discuss Erving Goffman's work and its applicability to the contexts of blogging and Second Life. They argue that, contrary to engaging with the process of whole persona adoption, users are willing and enthusiastic to re-create their offline self in the online world, (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013). However users are mostly inclined to edit facets of self through this process. That is, in the "front stage," people deliberately choose to portray and develop a given identity. The study also concludes that for comprehending identity through interaction and the presentation of self in the virtual environment, Goffman's original context is of great use. The virtual worlds can present opportunities to contribute to the further development of the Goffman framework, where enhanced potential for editing the self is increasingly being offered (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013).

Cheon (2013) examines the three factors influencing purchasing behaviour in the virtual world: namely, the platform context, explained as technical characteristics such as interactivity and vividness and social characteristics such as involvement; product context, explained as product value, and virtual experience, explained as flow and satisfaction gained from the virtual world. Virtual marketplaces for products and services have become significant profit sources in virtual worlds due to the large quantity and growth of virtual product transactions. The results of the study shows the significance of the experience of flow. It is found that, involvement in particular has remarkable influence on flow, among interactivity and vividness (Cheon, 2013).

Eun-Lee and Domina (2013), first analyse the tendency and intention of users to shop in Second Life based on user experiences with their avatar, and secondly identify the specific motivations of users that influence the same intention. The results show that the intention to shop is largely affected by the users' satisfaction with the look of their avatar in Second Life, yet no importance is attached to whether the avatar looks similar to the actual look of the user (Eun-Lee and Domina, 2013). The study by Kim (2012) draws a theoretical framework investigating key antecedents to repurchase and recommend digital items intentions of users. The analysis suggests that user satisfaction and a perceived value act is a significant element in establishing users' post-adoption intentions about digital items (Kim, 2012).

Case Study

Second Life™ was introduced in 2003 by the Linden Lab and has become one of the most liked virtual worlds used mainly for social network development, a use that stands in contrast to online game sites such as EVE Online and the World of Warcraft. It is a virtual territory that is made up with a few continents along with several small islands (McKenna et al, 2001). The acquisition of land can be made through purchasing of land on continents or by the purchase of

an island by a person or an institution for further confidentiality and reputation. There is a currency that is valid in the virtual world, the Linden Dollars, which can be exchanged with US Dollars. The exchange rate is approximately 300 Linden Dollars for one US Dollar. The residents of Second Life can build and craft their own things in the virtual environment by adding several basic geometric shapes together. These are known as prims, short of primitives. There is a dynamic economy being conducted within the virtual space which is run by the trading in and out these ornamented things that take the form of several modes, such as vehicles, garments, furniture or hair (Hawley, 2012).

Second Life has been home to approximately 36 million users during the last decade. Users spent approximately US$3.6 billion within the virtual world on assets, while the aggregate time spent on the website has reached 217,266 years. Currently, the virtual world is being visited by over 1 million people every month. In the destination guide, the largest part of the virtual world is constituted by games, events and adventure/fantasy (Hawley, 2012). Around 400 thousand new account creations are realized per month, while 1.2 million deals are performed for assets in the virtual world. In Second Life, there are 2.1 million virtual assets for sale, while the most traded items are women's hairstyles. The land area of the virtual world is approximately 700 square miles, which corresponds to an area slightly larger than 1810 square kilometres (Boellstraff, 2013). The history and function of Second Life has been provided in detail by Boellstorff (2008). The number of transactions conducted on a daily basis in 2013 was 2.1 million, while the number of active accounts at any time varies from 40.000 to 80.000 conditional on the time in the day, in the week or in the year.

Starting from the year 2006, virtual world activity has demonstrated a swift rise all throughout the developed countries. Such a rise in activity has been for the purposes of fulfilling varying goals, including entertainment, relaxation and work. Every day, millions of people access their virtual environment, select and demonstrate actions by means of their avatars (Lawrence, 2012). Depending on their own personal choices, the true selves of the people behind the avatars are generally kept private by the users, while the avatar remains utterly flexible. This suppleness of illustrating oneself through an avatar and the users' being able to select how to demonstrate themselves result in the virtual environments' transformation into social workshops for identity revisions (Peachey, 2010, p. 37).

For the purpose of this paper, secondlife.com has been chosen as the preferred virtual environment. The first reason is the high number of users on the platform. As mentioned above, Second Life has achieved a remarkable growth in the number of users, and is one of the most highly populated virtual platforms. Another important reason is the diversity on the platform. On the one hand, Second Life benefits from the lack of a common theme, due to the fact that it is created to be a realistic virtual environment that provides users with a "second life" (as the name suggests). Consequently, the development of the environment has been very diverse. It is possible to explore many different themes ranging from historical to urban to fantastic,

merely by choosing to visit different destinations. This is particularly attractive for the purpose of social sciences as this means that the user body of the platform is also diverse in its preferences. Another important reason is the global outreach of the environment. Second Life has become widely popular in the Middle East and Turkey as well, and this has proved to be an important advantage in the collection of data. Lastly, the user interface and the design of the platform makes it rather easy to acquire a considerable amount of experience and relationships in a reasonable timeframe, once again making it a good choice for the purpose of this study.

Apart from some practical concerns and concerns relating to the research sample, this platform has also been preferred because of the amount of existing literature in the field. Various authors have studied Second Life in terms of identity formation, educational use and the representation of the self. Building on this existing framework, it is easier to identify key approaches and to determine the avenue for contribution to the field. It is also important to note that on Second Life, it is possible to travel to different destinations and take part in different activities regardless of game performance. This makes it an ideal starting place for many amateur enthusiasts of virtual worlds. This lack of a requirement of a gaming background makes it an important avenue where social interactions and identity formation can be observed with a very diverse sample of very different people. Other virtual environments that require more experience with gaming and the associated online platforms usually have smaller communities that are comparably more homogeneous.

The users on the platform are called "residents" and the platform itself is termed as "grid" by the community. Any newcomer to the platform is referred to as a "newbie." There are some specific destinations that are "newbie-friendly", meaning that newcomers are encouraged to prefer these destinations so as to be able to adapt to the environment. There are also some volunteer experienced residents, who set up all kinds of different mechanisms to aid newbies during their initial phase.

For the purpose of this paper, diverse destinations on Second Life were visited and many conversations were initiated with other avatars using the in-built chat function. In order to obtain a diverse range of interviewees for the case study, destinations with specific themes such as "historical" or "fantastic," as well as some popular destinations, were specifically visited. One important disadvantage was that the experience level of the user was visible for others. This meant that the character that was used to conduct the interviews was easily identified as a "newbie," which in many cases dissuaded some more experienced users from participating in the conversations. There were, however, still some experienced users within the study sample.

It can be suggested that there is segregation between the lives and identities in the real world and Second Life for many users. Although it is allowed to expose the identities of the real world in Second Life, the majority of users prefer to keep this confidential and reveal this information to those they really have faith in. Inversely, users carry on their Second Life experiences and

virtual identities and keep this confidential from those they know in the real world. The confidential information includes occurrences, associations, appeals and occupation out of the virtual world.

The research outlined here focuses particularly on the relationship and differences between the Second Life (front stage) and the physical world (back stage), with respect to the experience of the self.

Design of the Research

As the study was conducted on a virtual environment, it created a number of new difficulties which were not usually encountered within the real world. Therefore, particular attention had to be paid to the stage in which the research was designed. These aforementioned difficulties, which were existent in every element of the research course, formed the research design, methodology and the processes. Some aspects were effective in relation to the design of the research. Second Life is an environment that has routines, customs and surroundings and the lives are lived within the confidentiality of the homes of the habitants. They are possibly kept secret from people in the real world. Additionally, habitants are positioned all around the world with the inclination to maintain their real life identities confidential from other Second Life residents. When considering that the virtual identities are probably private, the highest level of secrecy and understanding would be required when encountering other residents. As a result, the main purpose of the study was not to become a standard or customary identity in the virtual world; rather, it was to discover the variety of experiences taking place between the residents of Second Life and their perspectives from within the virtual world.

In order to tackle these difficulties and find an answer to the research question, a series of personal interviews were constructed. The format, as well as, the questions was inspired from the experiences of the researcher in the Second Life. The interviews were designed to generate the data required to answer the research questions. On the other hand, attention was paid so as to not have the results of the research be affected by the researcher's own experience. In this sense, a semi-structured interview was created in order to enable flexibility during the discussion depending on the own experiences of the participants.

The entire set of the interviews have been performed in the virtual world. This had a number of particular special advantages. It enabled the participants of the research to be free of cultural history or location, which may not be valid in interviews conducted in the physical world. Moreover, this possibly defeated probable apprehensions that the participants could have in terms of segregating the real life from the Second Life.

Collection of Data

As the central questions of this study revolved around the analysis of the significant amount of data to be collected as a result of the aforementioned interview questions, clear choices regarding the collection method of this data had to be implemented before conducting said interviews. In addition to the actual volume of data itself, the qualities and sensitivities of Second Life and the users were taken into account.

Despite the fact that Second Life offers an audio service, the entire set of the interviews were performed in writing and in Turkish language. The aim was to make the participants feel more comfortable through writing rather than talking. In addition to this, a number of habitants particularly selected interaction only in writing for a number of reasons. For instance, there may be residents who introduce themselves as another gender to their actual gender. In such a case, their gender would be revealed through their voices. Likewise, the person may have hearing difficulties in the real world and this is a privacy issue that they would wish to keep confidential.

The data generated in a particular interview in writing may generate less information than to data generated in a verbal interview conducted in the equivalent conditions. The reason is that typing a sentence usually lasts longer than articulating it. The written interaction in Second Life has a shortened structure; therefore, written answers could be curtailed when compared to verbal articulation. Thus, the interview design was made to last for two hours per interview in order to collect as much data as possible.

Ethics was a concern that created specific difficulties due to the fact that the interviews were performed between avatars in a virtual environment. One of these difficulties was related to the informed consent, which is traditionally demonstrated in the real world through the signatures of the participants to show that they were informed about the interview and approved to be a part of it. A further difficulty was the case of privacy and secrecy of the users. Although all avatars are illustrated with assumed names which cannot be traced to the real world, the writings on the virtual environment are recorded in the Linden Lab register. It was observed during the research that participants preferred to maintain their confidentiality. Therefore, it was guaranteed that the identities of the participants would be anonymous in the research report and their real world identities would not be asked for. Additionally, the names of the avatars would be kept only on the personal computer of the researcher. Another difficulty was the lack of awareness of the status of the participants in the real world. This in turn would have an effect on the usual processes of validation. Lastly, while beginning the interviews, participants were requested to confirm by articulation that they were regarded as adults in the context of their real life countries. Participants of the interviews were selected on a random basis from the virtual world. A total of fifteen interviews were executed. These interviews were performed at occasions that were convenient to the interviewee and the interviewer, based on the location of the participant. The interviewees were advised that they were free to reject questions or to cease the interview.

Thematic Analysis

This paper aims to comprehend the variety of experiences of combining with a virtual identity in Second Life and to thereby evaluate the results of the interviews in relation with the Presentation of Self Theory of Goffman. In this sense, a thematic evaluation system is employed. The three organising themes are: physical features, economic aspects, and roles both in the real life and the

Second Life. These correspond well to the concepts taken from Goffman's theory, as they are related to different components of character formation on the front stage. The global theme that emerges from the analysis of data is the representation of the self.

Under the theme of physical features, interviewees were asked questions on their skin colours, heights and weights both with regard to their real lives and virtual lives. Once the interviewees were asked about their skin colour, height and weight in their real lives, they were asked further questions on the physical features of their avatars. Finally, they were asked to present reasons for their choices.

The second group of the questions were on the real and virtual economic aspects of the secondlife.com residents. The interviewees were first asked questions on their monthly incomes, the cities where they live, the types of the houses they live in and the brands of the cars they drive in their real lives. Accordingly, once the interviewees were asked the questions on their economic aspects in their real lives, they then were asked their monthly incomes, the cities they live in, the type of the house they have and their cars within Second Life. Afterwards, they were asked for the reasons of these choices. The analysis of these choices was later checked against the assumptions of Goffman's theory.

The last group of the comparative questions were on the both the real life and virtual life roles of the interviewees. The first round of the questions consisted of the real sexes, ages, jobs and marital status of the users in their real lives. Thus, the answers of the comparative questions were analysed and the reasons of the differences between real and virtual lives have been explored.

Sampling

Due to the diverse nature of the Second Life community, key parameters with regard to sampling had to be established in order to obtain a sufficiently diverse study sample. In light of the limitations that are presented in detail below, particular important had to be placed on a grounded approach in this regard when establishing the boundaries and specifications of the sample. In this study, the front stage is taken as secondlife.com. This is the environment where people create new images and new lives, which they cannot have in their real lives. In secondlife.com, people become the new people who they have always wanted to be and try to create the images they desire, which they cannot create in their real lives. The backstage is the opposite, where the performers are allowed to stop acting and where no audience is allowed (Goffman, 1959, p. 63). In this research, real life is taken as the back stage. This is where the users of secondlife.com stop acting. However, real life, i.e. the back stage, is vital as the reasons for acting in the front stage (secondlife.com) lie here.

Goffman elaborates his framework by introducing different roles from teams, the performers and the audiences. While conveying their selves to others, people hide some information which would be incompatible with their presented selves from their audiences, which he terms as "the secrets" (Goffman, 1959, p. 74). The whole acting process in fact turns into a game of keeping secrets from the audience and the maintaining of

these secrets within the team. These secrets are not necessarily "the dark secrets," they may be of other kinds, as strategic secrets to manipulate the audience to reach a goal, inside secrets such as the ones belonging to one team, or social group which the group members want to preserve their in-group identity (Goffman, 1959, p. 76-79).

This study also explores the secrets of secondlife.com users while trying to find out the reasons why they have established a second virtual life. To this end, secondlife.com residents were interviewed and asked comparative questions. To illustrate this approach, they were first asked questions about their physical features in real life. Then, they were asked whether there were any differences between their real physical features and physical features of their avatars. If there were any differences, they were asked to indicate the reasons. The reasons were generally expected to be their secrets, which did not necessarily have to be dark secrets.

"Impression management" is one of the fundamental concepts in Goffman's theory and this concept is also important for this study since it is closely related to the interview questions. Goffman credits the possibility that the performers might experience difficulty in staying in the role, so that they make use of "defensive" and "protective" attributes and practices that would minimize the risk of unmeant gestures, inopportune intrusions and faux pas [gaffes, boners] (Goffman, 1959, p. 103). Defensive ones are dramaturgical loyalty, i.e. members being loyal to a group and keeping its secrets and maintaining the performance; dramaturgical discipline is his discipline in this role-playing and his being unlikely to commit a faux pas, dramaturgical circumspection is being prepared for the performance in order to minimize the risks of failure, in Goffman's words, "...preparing in advance for likely contingencies and exploiting the opportunities that remain" (Goffman, 1959, p. 108). Protective practices are related to the audience's help for team members maintaining their performance, basically by being polite. Tactfully not seeing the mistakes is one of the key points that people maintain their social interaction despite being aware of this sociological framework that Goffman suggests. Despite knowing that there are front stage and back stage and they are being represented to a performance, the audience tactfully choose to enable the performers to continue (Goffman, 1959, p. 114-120).

In this paper, the concept of impression management developed by Goffman refers to all three categories of questionnaire. The basic assumption is that the users of this platform generally try to create a new person, different from the real being in terms of physical features, economic aspects and roles. The reason for the difference is to create a new impression in the eyes of the other avatars and the users of those avatars, which is in fact to manage a new impression.

Limitations

As already stated in the sections above, the scope and application of the study was restricted due to the major limitation of being unable to verify the truthfulness of the information provided by the interviewee. As all of the interviews were conducted on Second Life, the accuracy of the information regarding the back stage (the real lives of

the subjects), was based solely on the words of the interview subject. Additionally, due to the nature of the Second Life community and the related issues of ethics and privacy, the real names of the interviewed Second Life users were not recorded. This further limited any opportunity of external verification of the information provided during the interviews.

The issue of time spent engaging on Second Life was the second limitation. Second Life remains quite a discernible community, with some regular users having been active for years. Thus, the regular users have created their own community rules, with some unique linguistic capabilities, unique features and community solutions to different in-game bugs and problems.

Naturally, as with any introduction to a new social environment, any newcomer to such a community does initially stand out before they can integrate by grasping the rules of the community. Not being able to spend enough time on Second Life meant that a high level of integration was not achieved. This, in turn, resulted in the fact that the users who were interviewed did not represent the larger Second Life community. Especially a lot of older users who were more active in the community were wary of participating in the study. While they were very helpful in welcoming a new member of the community and explaining the different concepts and interface issues, many of them seemed unwilling to share information about their real lives. This lack of information on behalf of the interviewer was apparent to them due to not having fully grasped the Second Life lingo, and due to the option that the age of avatars can be viewed during the chat option. Due to this particular limitation in the scope of the Second Life users engaging in the study, the cross-section of answers became slightly more restricted.

Analysis

However, despite the aforementioned limitations, a sufficient amount of data was achieved from the results of the successfully conducted interviews. This section of the paper will provide an analysis of this data in light of the aforementioned concepts that have been established by the existent literature. As this paper is based around the dramaturgy of Goffman, the initial analysis will be present with reference to Goffman's theories. The analysis will be made with reference to the three thematic sets of questions that were directed to the interviewees.

The first group of questions focus on the physical features of the avatar and the physical features of the owner in real life. The users have also been asked to explain why they have made such choices and why they have preferred an avatar that was similar to/different from their real life characteristics. Giving a quantitative overview of the interviews, none of the interviewees indicated that they changed their skin colour. The majority of the interviewees had changed their height compared to their real life value. Lastly, the majority of the users made a change in their weight. This was especially the case for users who indicated that they had average or above average weight in real life.

The answers to this group of questions tie in with Goffman's assumption that people would like to show a special version of themselves to others, creating an image of

their self. (Goffman, 1959 p.41) According to Goffman's theory, social interactions are characterized by the creation of a 'desired impression' by people, and this role is a superior version of the self. In that sense, the slimmer and taller avatars of the interviewees are a prime example of this front stage character in possession of more desirable characteristics.

The second group of questions in the survey related to the economic aspects. The interviewees were given questions on their average income, the city where they live, their cars and their houses. According to Goffman's theory, people have a tendency to exaggerate their real incomes when given an opportunity to create a new image. The general tendency is to build an impression that has superior traits when compared to the real self of the person (Goffman, 1959, p. 41). Even though the economic aspects are not as directly related to the personal front as physical features, they still have an important effect on it. The economic status of the person shapes the outfit and accessories of the person, which are an important part of the outer appearance. Other factors, such as one's car and house, also affect the personal front, as they are an important part of the impression created on others. Thus, these factors are also important steps in the creation of the front stage character. As highlighted before, the creation of the personal front on the front stage is a key concept in Goffman's theory. This is especially important in Second Life, where the appearance of the avatar is the only indicator for others. Most of the daily interaction on the platform is shaped by the appearance of avatars. It should also be noted that body parts, outfits and accessories are the most traded goods on the platform; where the user is frequently encouraged to spend currency on customizing the avatar. In terms of the opportunities for customization, the areas relating to these questions are more flexible than the previous ones in real life, as it is easier to alter indicators of one's wealth, compared to one's height/ weight. The situation on the Second Life is quite particular in that sense, as there is a currency that is used on the platform. Therefore, creating a different economic outlook in the Second Life is not as easy as changing one's appearance. Unlike other platforms that enable the creation of avatars, such as the Sims, Second Life requires spending money for full ownership of certain items. That is why the users' answers to the questions on their avatars might just be aspirations and not their real situation on the platform.

For the first question (income), the majority of users answered that they had chosen a higher income for their avatar. The only exceptions were a few users whose answers to real life questions indicated that they did not have any economic difficulties. This was parallel to the user's choices of occupation, which will be explained in the third section. As the players in the game often do not have set homes, a lot of users refrained from giving a concrete answer for the second question. The ones who answered, however, all replied that they had chosen a different place for their avatar.

As for the third and fourth questions, which were often answered jointly, the general tendency was towards choosing cars or houses that would be associated with higher income. One of the interviewees, 3, indica-

ted that he was a student with an average income of around 500 TL of pocket money, living in a dormitory and not owning a car. About his avatar he said:

I chose a nice house and car and I made my situation look cooler.

This is a prime example of the general tendency to create avatars that have cooler and more desirable lives. Another user, **8**, similarly said that he had chosen a higher income lifestyle because

It looked more prestigious, it looked better.

The minority, whose answers on real life indicated an average or above-average income, did not really concentrate on changing the economic aspects of their avatar. For example, **6**, who is a graphic designer living in Utrecht, said that he did not really bother to customize these characteristics.

I often say that I am a designer, just like in real life.

He said that he preferred his avatar to have economic characteristics similar to his own. One stark contrast was from **10**, who had an income of about 800 TL a month and took up temporary house cleaning jobs to survive. When asked if her avatar was similar to her she said:

NOOO:D I am rich here. I live in a house, own a company and my car is a Mercedes.

This can be explained with a dramaturgical approach, where, according to Goffman, the formation of the front stage character is closely tied with one's points of weakness and dissatisfaction. Similarly, the interviewees who preferred to make the biggest change to their economic persona on Second Life were the ones who were most affected by low income.

The first group of people, who actually formed the majority of the users interviewed, confirmed Goffman's prediction that people have a tendency to create a wealthier image (Goffman, 1959, p. 52). According to Goffman, people often shape their front stage character according to their experiences of the back stage. In other words, the back stage is the source of motivation behind the certain characteristics of the front stage character (Goffman, 1959, p. 63). The second group of questions were directed towards revealing this relationship between the front and back stages. All of the users, who were not satisfied with their level of income and lifestyle in reality, chose to create avatars that had a higher income. This highlights the importance of the experiences in the backstage, demonstrating how the back stage should be inspected closely to analyse the traits of the front stage character. The front stage character, the avatar in this case, mirrored the desired impression that the interviewees would like to create in the eyes of the Second Life community. Consequently, the interviewees stated that their motivation was that it would look "cooler," thus confirming Goffman's theory that people create front stage characters to be more attractive, or create a better first impression. (Goffman, 1959, p. 41).

The third aspect, job, has some characteristics that was similar to the previous group that was explored. As in real life, people tended to group their job, income and lifestyle together. That is why the previous assump-

tion, that people have a tendency to create a wealthier or more prestigious character when provided with the opportunity, applies.

Based on Goffman's theory, the expectation was that all of these different aspects would be manipulated to appear more attractive in societal terms. The users were expected to emphasise certain characteristics, or to conceal others in order to reach a constructed impression that they felt they would feel better in.

For the third question, the results were similar to the second group answers, with the majority of users saying that they had chosen a "more interesting" or "more prestigious" job for their avatar. These results confirm Goffman's assumption that people prefer to create images that appear wealthier. As explained above, income and profession have an important indirect effect on the personal front. That is why it is a key step in the modification of the front stage character to look more desirable.

The third group of questions were about the sex, age, job and marital status of the interviewees and their avatars. The interviews revealed that all of the participants preferred to create avatars that were single (only one indicating that the avatar used to be married), despite some of them being married or divorced in real life. Out of the 10 participants, 7 preferred to create an avatar that was younger, with the age difference becoming more significant for the interviewees who were closer to middle age. The majority of the users who were interviewed indicated that they had chosen their real life sex. Many male users had humorous replies to the questions, often stating that "their avatars were male, of course". The results for this groups of question also clearly demonstrate that Goffman is right in assuming that people have a tendency to create a different front stage character with more attractive qualities, in order to impress others. (Goffman, 1959 p. 41)

Goffman's theory is based on the dichotomy between the front stage and the back stage. While the front stage is characterized by the presence of the audience, back stage is where members of audience do not have access to enter. The "role," in other words the constructed impression, is assumed on the front stage. This is where the necessary setting to the front stage role is provided. Even though the two spheres are seemingly distant, there is actually an important tie between the personas in these different settings. Goffman puts forward the idea that certain conditions on the back stage affect the features of the front stage character. These conditions are termed as "secrets" and they are pieces of information that would be seen as incompatible with the version they present to others (Goffman, 1959, p. 74). Secrets are at the core of the customization of the front stage character. They create the motivation behind the altering of certain characteristics for the creation of the front stage character. When explaining the motivations behind their avatar creation, many interviewees gave away certain information that would qualify as "secret" in this sense.

For example, **9**, who was a middle-aged and married man with a low income in real life, created an avatar who was a young, single, businessman. He explained that he hoped this would help him meet many dif-

ferent people. He also stated that he thought he would tell them about his real life after they talked for enough time. This was clearly information he had to keep away in order to act coherently when he was in the game. Moving from this, it should be noted that the back stage, where no members of the audience is allowed, is an important starting point when analysing the formation of the front stage character.

Conclusions Derived from the Analysis

The first group of questions focused on physical aspects, which were by nature considerably easier to change virtually. The interviews revealed that the general trend was to customize an avatar to look slimmer and taller than the real life self. This trend towards a body image that fits the current beauty criteria in the society reveals once again that the customization of the front stage character is done in line with the values of the audience

The second group of questions were related to the economic aspects of identity, with questions on income, house/car and city of residence. The majority of the interviewees indicated that they had preferred to create an avatar that had a higher income then themselves, usually accompanying this higher income with a better house and car then what they had in real life. The difference in income was especially evident for interviewees who indicated that they had economic problems in real life. This firstly demonstrated that the formation of the front stage characters, which was highly affected by societal values, aimed to create a more superior role. In that sense, the obvious trend towards a richer avatar, and the interviewees' ways of justifying this choice ("it is cooler," "it is more attractive," etc.) were good examples of this tendency.

Another important concept from Goffman that was applicable to this group of questions was "secrets." The gap between the income of the avatar and the user was especially high for those with the lowest income, who openly expressed their displeasure with this situation. This was a good example of the concept of "secrets." People had a tendency to hide certain pieces of information that they deemed incompatible with the identity that they had built. For the ones with economic problems, the low income was one of the primary factors they chose to alter when creating a desired impression. At the same time, it was the one thing that they chose to hide from their audience.

The majority of the users chose a job which they believed was more desirable, and there were some examples where the "dream job" they couldn't have in life was the preferred choice for the avatar.

Proceeding from these results, it can be presented that the overall trend confirmed the assumption that users generally tried to create a new person, who differs from their characteristics in real life. The strongest motivations behind this were the desire to attract other avatars and the desire to look more interesting, which showed that "impression management" was a key concept in this sort of behaviour. The relationship between the back and front stages was also confirmed, with "secrets" being revealed by users when trying to explain the reasons behind their choice of creating a character different from their real life existence (Goffman, 1959, p.

74). It can also be observed that users made use of certain tools and safety mechanisms to decrease their risk of breaking from their chosen role (Goffman, 1959, p. 103). They made sure that the modifications to their real life self remained at a level where they could still control and feel associated to it.

The analysis of the interviews revealed that the users preferred to re-create their offline selves with minor adaptations of certain characteristics. This once again showed that the relationship between the avatar and the user could be likened to the relationship between the front and back stage characters. While the latter was not a completely different identity from the former, they were two different reflections of a shared core. The experiences from the back stage constituted the source for the customization of the front stage. The front stage was the embodiment of an impression that the person felt would fit him/her better. According to Goffman, the front stage character is a "more special" self, and it is still part of the self. (Goffman, 1959, p.41)

CONCLUSION

The development of technologies in the last decade and the wider use of online platforms have made these platforms a new interest for social research. These virtual spaces, which mimic real life social interactions, provide an opportunity to analyse identity formation from different theoretical perspectives (Peachey, 2010, p. 37). This study has set out to explore the creation of avatars in the online platform, Second Life, in light of Erving Goffman's theory "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life." As previously existing literature based on the platform is still in the phase of development, and there are few applications of Goffman's theory, which actually has a great potential of applicability to online platforms, this study has sought to focus on this topic. The literature review conducted on virtual worlds shows that the number of the research focusing on the Second Life from the point of Goffman's "Presentation of Self Theory" is limited. The main two questions that were discussed were the theoretical analysis of the user experience in real life and the comparison of results reached in Second Life.

Erving Goffman's main argument is that during their social interactions, people behave according to a self-image they create. This image aims to present a special version of the self in order to impress others or maintain interactions (Goffman, 1959, p. 37). Literature indicates that there are some similarities between online role-playing and improvisational theatre. According to Newman, both of these activities are characterized by the creation of a real-time story through the collaboration of participants (2007, p. 27). In addition to this argument, the users in the virtual world are aware that they are in contact with a "role" that is created by the user. In turn, they suppress their disbelief in the role, and accept the existence of the platform. The same mechanism exists for theatre as well. As such, Goffman's reuse of concepts from performance arts can be applied to virtual platforms, as there are some mechanical similarities between the two fields.

For the purpose of this study, Second Life was also accepted as a hyper-reality and cyberspace. Second Life clearly fits the defini-

tion of "hyper-reality" as discussed by Eco, who argues that the factual and the illusive are blended together without any clear borders defining these states (Eco, 2013). All of the interviews also contributed to this understanding, as the interviewees' style of answering the questions was clearly personal. Even the questions on the avatar alone were answered in the first person singular, showing the clear amalgamation of the two identities in the minds of users.

The experiences in-world also confirmed the definition of Second Life as a cyberspace. The community in the Second Life, with its own rituals, habits and events, clearly formed a social background where interaction and presentation was experienced in a pattern that was very similar to everyday life. This confirms Slater's understanding of cyberspace, as this computer-generated platform serves as a social background for social interactions which are actually representative (Slater, 2002).

The study is based on the premise that Second Life can be taken as a "front stage" in accordance with Goffman's terms. Goffman distinguishes the front stage as the platform where the acting begins. Personal front and manners, clothes and other characteristics differentiate the front stage (Goffman, 1959 p. 55). Second Life is an ideal platform to be compared to a front stage, as the entry into the platform requires the formation of a character "Avatar." The first step in the process is to choose the sex and appearance of the avatar, and from this moment on, the existence of the individual is differentiated from the self in real life. The manners are also different in the Second Life, as the game has certain borders to human interaction and behaviour. In other words, the user has to adapt to the modes of communication and behaviour offered by the platform, and cannot directly transfer his/her manners from real life.

On the platform, the customization of the physical look of the avatar was seen as very important. Most of the shopping on Second Life focused on the choice of skins, body parts and outfits. Similarly, the one obvious point that usually distinguished a "newbie" from a well-established, older avatar was the look of the avatar. In that sense, starting from the initiation of the game with a customization of the avatar, the pressure to have a customized personal front was felt throughout the time in the game. From Goffman's perspective this emphasis on the personal front can be seen as an indicator of the formation of the front stage character. The creation of the avatar, from the very beginning, is the creation of a front stage character in Goffman's terms. The customization of the avatar marks an importance step in getting into a different 'role' on the front stage. The interviews also revealed the same pattern. Most of the interviewees had strong feelings regarding the physical appearance of their avatar. In fact, this was the area where most of them had made the most conscious decisions, and the explanation behind their choices often came easily. Most of the users also said that the creation of their avatar in their first moment on the platform made them more curious about the virtual environment, and helped them adapt to the new setting.

Having clarified that Second Life shows the characteristics of a "front stage" in Gof-

fman's terms, the relationship between the avatar and the user was also explored. Taylor argues that avatars represent "the way people feel about themselves from within" (Taylor, 2002, p. 51). In other words, avatars should not be thought of as completely separate beings. These digital bodies are used as a means to express oneself, and they constitute a public sign of how the users internally experience their own identity. As previously explained, we prefer to define this relationship as a "symbiosis." This implies that during the in-world experience, the avatar and the user form a unified image. This is particularly enhanced by the setup and interface of the game, where the viewpoint is from the back of the avatar's head. In that sense, the avatar becomes an object that is owned by the user, and this fact serves the formation of an image.

Even though the avatar was still perceived as a tool to experience new things, the questions about avatars were still answered in a way that indicated direct involvement. None of the users referred to their avatar in third person, and they maintained their role as the avatar during the whole conversation. In all of the interviews, the word "I" curiously referred to both the avatar and the real life self of the user. This demonstrated how the two identities were intertwined. Some of the more experienced avatars explained how they had become increasingly used to their virtual life on Second Life, emphasising the existence of routines, social groups and "friends" on the platform that further connected them to their avatars and Second Life.

The majority of interviewees preferred to create a richer avatar, who had a better car and house compared to their lifestyle in the non-virtual world. The general picture was the creation of a projection that had superior qualities to that of the real life self. Goffman argues that the front stage character is a superior version the self, and it reflects a more "special" self than the person would like to present to others (the audience) (Goffman, 1959, p.41). The alterations that were made clearly reflected what would be regarded as "superior" by society. It should also be noted how important the existence of the audience is for the formation of the front stage character. The characterization of the front stage character is often done so that the end product is meaningful according to the values of the audience. In this sense, it is important to highlight that "the more special version" which was represented by the avatar, represented widely accepted values of our society today.

The most frequently named motivations for the choices were "wanting to look more attractive," "wanting to look more interesting," "befriending more users," and "attracting the opposite sex." All of these points were direct applications of Goffman's theory, where the front stage character was formed with the aim of improving the first impression or social interactions (Goffman, 1959, p. 37). Goffman's theory primarily explains the dynamic between social interactions, and this is why it is important to understand the effects that the alterations have on the social interactions that take place. Referring to the interviews, the users frequently openly admitted that they cared about how they appeared to the other avatars. Most of them believed that their choices for their avatar would be more representative of their

self and improve the quality of social interactions they would have on the platform. This strong social nature of the front stage character formation was also evident in the personal experience phase.

The front stage is only meaningful in relation to the back stage. Backstage is defined as the platform where the performers stop acting and there is no audience presence (Goffman, 1959, p. 63). For the purpose of this study, real life, as opposed to Second Life, was taken as a backstage. This is where the user can act freely without any need to coordinate his/her actions with the avatar. Other users on the platform do not have access to this reality. There was an evident culture of not making any references to the real life self during interactions within Second Life. This was an expected reaction from the users, as it was one that served to protect their back stage as a personal and intimate area. The importance of the back stage lies in "the secrets" as Goffman refers to them. According to Goffman, the formation of the front stage character is shaped by certain pieces of information from the backstage that are trying to be concealed (Goffman, 1959, p. 74). From the general trend of selecting a richer or more attractive avatar, the cases that stood out were the ones where the interviewee revealed information that can be classified as a "secret." In conclusion, the conducted interviews revealed that the assumption that the secrets were the connecting points between the front stage character and the back stage character held true for Second Life.

The last important concept from Goffman's theory that was discussed in the study was "impression management." According to Goffman, people make use of certain defensive and protective mechanisms to minimize the risk of getting out of the role (Goffman, 1959, p. 103). This is further enhanced with the audience considerately enabling the performers to continue their role. In other words, certain bits of knowledge or behaviour may purposefully be ignored by the audience to allow the performance to continue (Goffman, 1959, p. 114-120). From the interviews, it was gathered that the users made use of "impression management" while shaping their in-world existence. When building an avatar, which is to a certain extent representative of the self, altering these characteristics is often seen as too "radical." This would, from a certain perspective, cut the tie between the self and the avatar, and from another perspective make it more difficult to remain in the role and make the role convincing. It is also important to note that even though avatars typically differ from the real life self, some connection is still maintained.

Goffman argues that the front stage character is representative of the conception of the self. In other words, this mask represents the self that one would like to be. The end result of this process is that the role becomes second nature to the person, forming an integral part of personality (Goffman, 1959, p. 30). In light of the direct applicability of core concepts from Goffman's theory to Second Life, it can be argued that such a relation is formed between the avatar and the user. In other words, the avatar is a reflection of the self that the user strives to be and in turn, experiences in-world affect the character of the user in the real world. This is represented by the symbiotic relationship between the ava-

tar and the user. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the mechanism of shaping a front stage character, which is a special reflection of the self, is applicable to the behavioural patterns of Second Life users.

This paper is intended to be a humble contribution to the existing literature on the presentation of self in virtual environments. Even though studies that are concerned with studying Second Life through the scope of the work of Erving Goffman have been conducted, this study is rare in being solely focused on the framework presented by Goffman. The specific focus on avatar creation and the method of the case study is also significantly different from some other studies in the field.

This paper has also attempted to address an apparent lack of primary sources and comprehensive literature on this specific area. Not many of other primary literature or secondary sources based on the work of Erving Goffman, exist that would help further our understanding of the presentation of self in virtual environments. The paper has tried to undertake the analysis of this presentation of self in virtual environments by applying the framework presented by Goffman, and, in doing so, extend the coverage of literature in this area. However, an apparent need for such sources should be noted and further areas of research and study might be considered in order to broaden the scope of current literature.

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