

**HOW CAN MATERIALISM AFFECT THE
INTENTION TO CREATE BRAND-RELATED
USER-GENERATED CONTENT ABOUT
STYLE ON SOCIAL MEDIA SITES?**

Thi Mai Han Nguyen

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Brand-related user-generated content, electric word-of-mouth, knowledge self-efficacy, materialism, online social network, social media advertising appeal

Abstract

Brand-related user-generated content (UGC) about style is important because it can influence consumers' purchasing decisions. Several studies have suggested that personality traits can have significant effects on brand-related UGC creation. The aim of this thesis is to examine how personality trait can affect the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on social media sites. More specifically, the thesis investigates how materialism as a personality trait can impact on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on social media sites. In order to address the research objective, this thesis undertook four studies in order to address the research objective. The aim of Study 1 was to identify the attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media. In order to address this objective, Study 1 used a content analysis of 600 UGC posts created by consumers on Facebook, blogs and Twitter. The study found that "look like a celebrity" and "display my personal style" are the most important attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites. Study 2 investigated the main effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on Facebook. The study found that highly materialistic consumers were more likely to create brand-related UGC about style than low materialistic consumers on Facebook. Study 3 examined whether the effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style could be generalized from Facebook to blogs. The study found that highly materialistic consumers were more likely to create brand-related UGC about style than low materialistic consumers on blogs. The objective of Study 4 was to demonstrate the conditional indirect effect of materialism (independent variable) on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style (dependent variable). More specifically, knowledge self-efficacy about brands (mediator variable) mediated the effect of materialism on the likelihood of creating brand-related UGC about style on Facebook and blogs. In addition, the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style was moderated by brand symbolism (moderator variable) on Facebook and blogs.

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Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: QUT Verified Signature

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of this thesis, which investigates how materialism affects the intention to create brand-related user-generated content (UGC) about style on social media sites. Specifically, this chapter outlines the research problem, research questions (Section 1.2), thesis structure (Section 1.3) and contributions of the thesis to marketing theory and practice (Section 1.4).

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

User-generated content has increasingly become a means for brand conversation and understanding consumers (Christodoulides, Jevons, & Bonhomme, 2012). Traditionally, companies have produced advertisements and customers have actively or passively consumed them. Nowadays, consumers are likely to shift their interest from traditional to online media (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008). The proliferation of Web 2.0 technology has facilitated consumer power to not only consume advertisements, but also to create them (Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell, 2008; Morrison, Cheong, & McMillan, 2013). This has stimulated a revolution in advertising because advertisements have been freed from the absolute control of organizations (Nielsen, 2015). Since brands and products have been appeared significantly on social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube, blogs and discussion forums, marketers have increasingly utilized UGC as one way of marketing (Kim & Song, 2018; Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010).

Brand-related UGC has become important because consumers tend to rely on online word-of-mouth for advice on purchasing products and services (Cheong & Morrison, 2008; Liu, Karahanna, & Watson, 2011). According to eCommerce statistics, 55% of shoppers say that online review influence their buying decision and 88% of consumers say that they trust online reviews as much as personal recommendation (Jillian, 2017). Brand-related UGC has been perceived to be more credible, authentic (Ertimur & Gilly, 2012) as well as more cognitively and

emotionally engaging than traditional advertising (Lawrence, Fournier, & Brunel, 2013). More specifically, brand-related UGC can have a significant impact on future sales (Dhar & Chang, 2009) and consumers' brand attitudes (Wu & Wang, 2011).

The rapid increase of online UGC has brought significant opportunities as well threats for marketers (Poch & Martin, 2014). Brand-related UGC that indicates a positive brand attitude can produce beneficial impacts on brand image, while brand-related UGC with a negative brand attitude can have a negative effect on brand image (Poch & Martin, 2014). Thus, it is crucial for advertisers and marketers to understand who creates brand-related UGC, the reasons (Muntinga, Moorman, Verlegh, & Smit, 2017), and under what conditions brand-related UGC is created. Based on this understanding, marketers can adjust the advertising message appeal to attract potential brand-related UGC creators.

So far, one of the most widely recognized theory used to understand the motivation to create brand-related UGC is uses & gratification (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011). Uses and gratifications is employed to investigate how and why individuals engage in certain media (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). Users and gratifications assume that users actively choose media in order to fulfil and achieve personal goals (Leung, 2009). Today, one of the most cited paper that used uses & gratifications to investigate the motives to create brand-related UGC is that of (Muntinga, et al., 2011). However, their paper was based on self-reports. Most importantly, they have not examined psychological characteristics relate to the motivation to create brand-related UGC (Muntinga, et al., 2011).

Theoretical understanding of how differences in personality traits can lead to different types of brand-related UGC creation has continued to develop (Muntinga et al., 2017). There are two theoretical perspectives that have been presented in the literature. First, certain personality traits can have an impact on the intention to create brand-related UGC, and may even be predictors of this intention. These traits include market mavenism (Morrison et al., 2013; Muntinga et al., 2017), connectors, and persuaders (Muntinga et al., 2017), altruism (Poch & Martin, 2014), innovativeness (Morrison et al., 2013), and the big five personality characteristics, especially extraversion and openness (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011), and interdependent

self-construal (Bernritter, 2016). Among big five personality characteristics, neuroticism has been found to be negatively related to the likelihood of brand-related UGC creation (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011). The second perspective argues that different personalities have different brand-related UGC motivations, which leads to the creation of different types of brand-related UGC (Muntinga et al., 2017; Yoo & Gretzel, 2011). The broader research problem this thesis addresses is to explain how personality traits can be related to the intention to create specific type of brand-related UGC.

The thesis focuses on a personality trait of materialism, which has been overlooked in studies on brand-related UGC. Materialism has been defined as “a set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one’s life” (Richins & Dawson, 1992, p. 308). It is a trait that may explain the intention to create brand-related UGC. Highly materialistic consumers can regularly experience psychological discomfort due to the constant feeling of self-threat (Richins, 2017). UGC can be a vehicle for highly materialistic consumers to relieve their psychological unease. It is because creating UGC can support users to validate their self-esteem on social media (Belk, 2013).

There are different types of brand-related UGC on social media. Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian (2012) classified six kinds of brand-related UGC involving promotional self-presentation, brand centrality, marketer-directed communication, response to online marketer action, factual information about the brand and brand sentiment. Promotional self-presentation refers to explicitly promote consumers’ image and identity to others (Smith, et al., 2012). Brand central refers to “the central role of the brand in brand-related UGC” (Smith, et al., 2012, p. 104). Marketer-directed communication refers to the notion that consumers can post “questions or complaints to marketers, as well as respond to companies’ questions or comments” (Smith, et al., 2012, p. 105). Response to online marketer action refers to the post consumers create to response to the posts of online marketers and/or other consumers (Smith, et al., 2012). Factual informative about the brand include objective information about brands such as the colour or style of specific clothes, the price of an offering, the location of a store, or the timing of a sale (Smith, et al., 2012). Brand sentiment refers to the content that shows positive, negative and

neutral emotion toward brands (Smith, et al., 2012). In addition, Lee, Kim, Kim, and Han (2014) described four types of brand-related UGC: descriptive, emotional, comparative, and promotional messages (Lee et al., 2014). A descriptive message refers to the post about explanation or description about the brands and company (Lee, et al., 2014). An emotional content refers to positive or negative opinion or judgement about brands and company (Lee, et al., 2014). A comparative content indicates the comparisons between one commercial with another commercial (Lee, et al., 2014). Promotional content refers to the post that promote other content (Lee, et al., 2014). Stubb (2018) presented an additional two types of brand-related UGC created on individuals' social media sites involving storytelling and information. Storytelling content refers to the posts that focuses on revealing emotions and feelings through using subjective drama and narratives (Stubb, 2018). Information content mostly contains facts and arguments through engaging objective communication (Stubb, 2018).

Of greater interest for this thesis is brand-related UGC about style. Style has been defined as the combination of various consumption objects that can communicate individual identity (Kjeldgaard, 2009). Brand-related UGC about style can be important on social media sites due to following reasons. Consumers are likely to create brand-related UGC to convey symbolic identity in order to protect their vulnerable selves (Thomas, Saenger, & Bock, 2017). Expressing style can allow individuals to express their self-identity on social media (Dolbec & Fischer, 2015; McQuarrie, Miller, & Phillips, 2013).

Brand-related UGC about style is potentially a useful category to examine in order to determine how personality can explain the intention to create brand-related UGC, especially in the case of highly materialistic consumers. Style has been featured in a few studies on brand-related UGC on the fashion sector (Dolbec & Fischer, 2015; Kulmala, Mesiranta, & Tuominen, 2013; McQuarrie et al., 2013). However, these studies have a number of limitations. First, they have mostly focused on fashion products. Second, most of the previous research has been exploratory; thus, there has been a lack of consensus on the attributes of brand-related UGC about style. Third, although style has been explored in a number of previous studies, the concept of brand-related UGC about style has not been the main focus in these

studies. Hence, there was lack of consistency in the attributes of brand-related UGC about style. This thesis aimed to address this research gap by using content analysis. Content analysis allows researchers to systematically identify the attributes of brand-related UGC about style (Smith et al., 2012).

Based on this, the thesis proposed four research questions:

RQ1: What are the attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites?

RQ2: How can materialism affect the intention to create brand-related UGC about style?

In addition to understanding whether materialism as a personality trait can predict brand-related UGC about style, it is important to discover how materialism drives the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. Although Muntinga et al. (2017) identified that the intrinsic motivations of information, entertainment, personal identity, integration, social interaction and empowerment could mediate the creation of brand-related UGC for individuals with traits of mavenism, connectivity and persuasiveness, there has been no research which has investigated the mechanism that enables highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style. Furthermore, there has been no research that has explored the condition that activates the effect of the mechanism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style among highly materialistic consumers. Thus, the thesis posed two additional research questions:

RQ 3: What is the mechanism that drives highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style?

RQ 4: Under what condition does the mechanism drive highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style?

1.3 THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis comprises four separate studies. Study 1 used a content analysis of 600 posts on Facebook, Twitter and blogs to explore the important attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites. Study 2 involved an online experiment with 128 international Amazon Mechanical Turk participants to address

the causal relationship between materialism and brand-related UGC about style on Facebook. Study 3 was another experiment using an additional international 101 Amazon Mechanical Turk participants that aimed to test whether the effect of materialism on brand-related UGC about style could be generalized from Facebook to blogs. Study 4 was a further online experiment using 204 USA citizens recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk. It examined the mechanism that affects highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style on Facebook and blogs. In addition, the study investigated a moderator variable that may strengthen the mechanism to create brand-related UGC about style among highly materialistic consumers on Facebook and blogs. An overview of the thesis structure is presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

Overview of Thesis Structure

Study number	Sample size	Research question	Objective	Research design
Study 1	600 posts created on blogs, Facebook and Twitter by consumers	What are the attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites? (RQ1)	To identify the attributes of brand-related UGC about style	Quantitative content analysis
Study 2	128 international Amazon Mechanical Turk Facebook users	How can materialism affect the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on Facebook? (RQ2)	To examine the effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on Facebook	Quantitative online experiment
Study 3	101 international Amazon Mechanical Turk blog users	How does materialism affect the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on blogs? (RQ2)	To investigate whether the effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style can be generalized from Facebook to blog	Quantitative online experiment

Table 1.1 - *Continued*

Overview of Thesis Structure

Study number	Sample size	Research question	Objective	Research design
Study 4	204 USA Amazon Mechanical Turk Facebook and blog users	What is the mechanism that drives highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style? (RQ3) Under what condition does the mechanism drive highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style? (RQ4)	To examine the mechanism that enables highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style To explore the condition that activates the mechanism that leads to the intention to create brand-related UGC about style among highly materialistic consumers	Quantitative online experiment

1.4 CONTRIBUTIONS TO MARKETING THEORY AND PRACTICE

The current thesis makes important contributions, both theoretically and practically to the literature. Foremost, while past researchers have conducted exploratory studies on brand-related UGC about style (Dolbec & Fischer, 2015; McQuarrie et al., 2013), they have not reached common agreement on the attributes of brand-related UGC about style. Through the use of content analysis, this thesis systematically identifies the attributes of brand-related UGC about style.

Second, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how personality traits can influence the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on social media. Materialism can be an important personality trait that predicts the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. Third, the study extends work that

has proposed that personality traits can impact on the intention to create certain types of brand-related UGC. In particular, the thesis shows that personality traits can lead to the likelihood of UGC creation about style.

Fourth, the thesis highlights a novel mechanism underlying the effect of personality traits on the intention to create brand-related UGC by showing that knowledge self-efficacy about brands mediates the effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. This builds on prior work (Hsu, Ju, Yen, & Chang, 2007; Lu & Hsiao, 2007; Papadopoulos, Stamatii, & Nopparuch, 2013) by showing the antecedent that can lead to knowledge self-efficacy about brands. In particular, materialism predicted knowledge self-efficacy about brands, which in turn resulted in the intention to create brand-related UGC about style.

Fifth, to achieve further understanding of the role of brand symbolism in moderating the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style, the value of symbolic brands was manipulated to investigate the conditions under which brands, knowledge self-efficacy was activated among highly materialistic consumers.

There are also practical implications of the thesis. First, consumers with a high level of materialism can be strategically beneficial for marketers who aim to stimulate consumers to create brand-related UGC because they are likely to create positive brand-related UGC. This is because highly materialistic consumers are likely to experience positive, product-evoked emotion before and after purchasing (Richins, 2013). Furthermore, brand-related UGC about style is important because consumers have tended to rely on brand-related UGC about style for purchasing decisions (McQuarrie et al., 2013). In a digital world, content can be diffused extensively through online word-of-mouth (Saenger, Thomas, & Johnson, 2013). Brand-related UGC about style can spread rapidly through social networks, which can significantly impact on the brand attitudes of other consumers. This phenomenon can bring significant benefits for firms.

Second, an advertising campaign can be effective when the message appeals are crafted to be relevant to the targeted customers (Morrison et al., 2013). In order

to encourage highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC on social media sites, practitioners can craft the message to encourage these consumers to create brand-related UGC in order to express their style. This is important because in offline communications, consumers can simply discuss their strong feelings about brands face-to-face. However, on social media, brand-related UGC creation can require more incentives and elaboration (Eelen, Özturan, & Verlegh, 2017). Lastly, the thesis provides practical suggestions for marketers to implement social media campaigns for low and highly symbolic brands.

1.5 SUMMARY

This chapter presents the background of the research problems, research gaps, research questions, and theoretical and practical contributions. The thesis structure was also presented. The next chapter presents a review of the relevant literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 OVERVIEW

The purpose of a literature review is to examine the literature and to propose research questions and hypotheses based on the literature synthesis. This chapter has seven sections. The main purpose of the first section, Section 2.1, provides a definition of materialism, an overview of attributes of highly materialistic consumers, and, more specifically, discussion of how consumers use brands and how they use style for self-protection. Section 2.2 evaluates two different views about how individuals use social media to present themselves, how social media support users to present an ideal self and how they facilitate users' self-validations. This section also discusses how Facebook and blogs facilitate users to present their ideal self and to reassure users' self-esteem. Section 2.3 discusses how highly materialistic consumers use brand-related UGC about style as a coping strategy. Section 2.4 explains why knowledge self-efficacy about brands can function as a primary mechanism for highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style, and Section 2.5 discusses the role of brand symbolism on social media sites. Section 2.6 provides a synthesis of the literature on knowledge self-efficacy about brands, brand symbolism and brand-related UGC about style. Specifically, the section discusses how brand symbolism can moderate the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style among highly materialistic consumers. Finally, a conceptual model is presented in Section 2.7.

2.2 MATERIALISM

2.2.1 Definition

Materialism has been conceptualized in various ways. However, in marketing literature, the two most influential views are those of Belk (1985) and Richins and Dawson (1992). Belk (1985) viewed materialism as a collection of traits and defined it as "the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions" (Belk, 1985, p. 267). Belk (1985) proposed that the traits of materialism consist of three elements:

possessiveness, nongenerosity and envy. Belk, (1985) explained possession as “the inclination and tendency to retain control or ownership of one’s possessions” (p. 267). Possession includes not only the tangible (money, contracts, monetary obligations, interests and land) but also experiences such as a vacation (Belk, 1985). The second element of materialism, nongenerosity, refers to the unwillingness and hesitation to share, lend and contribute assets to other people. The third element, envy, stands for the craving for other possessions. Envious individuals usually feel displeased and inferior to those who have the desired possessions.

The second most widely-used definition of materialism has come from Richins and Dawson (1992). They defined materialism as a value structure comprised of “a set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one’s life” (Richins & Dawson, 1992, p.308). This view suggests that “materialism is characterized as a set of value-laden beliefs that guide people's daily lives and their consumption decisions” (Richins, 2017, p. 481). This conceptualization of materialism as a value structure follows the broader psychological values tradition (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1994, 2012) that sees values as goal-directed, cognitive structures that influence behaviour in various domains and contexts (Rindfleisch, Burroughs, & Wong, 2009). Richins & Dawson (1992) proposed that materialism as a value structure consists of three domains: success, happiness and centrality (p. 308). Success refers to the notion that people are likely to consider their possessions and acquisitions as a way to indicate their success. In this view, the value of possessions is not only associated with status but also the capacity to indicate a desired self-image and perfect life. The second domain, happiness, is explained by the notion that highly materialistic people tend to view possessions and acquisition as ways to gain satisfaction and well-being in life. Finally, centrality refers to the notion that highly materialistic people have tendency to consider possessions and acquisitions as essential things in their life (Richins & Dawson, 1992).

In this research, materialism is conceptualized as “a value orientation in which materialists place a high value on acquisition as a means to reach important life goals” (Richins, 2017, p. 481). Viewing materialism as a value is in line with the understanding of most contemporary consumer research studies (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 2006; Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002; Fitzmaurice & Comegys, 2006; Kim

& Kramer, 2015; Richins, 2004). In addition, this conceptualization aligns well with Belk's (1985) materialism conceptualization as "the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions" (Belk, 1985, p. 267). This means that this study brings together the viewpoints of both Belk (1985) and Richins and Dawson (1992). Furthermore, this conceptualization allows researchers to determine that materialism is more than just the consumption of expensive brands and conspicuous products (Richins, 2017). It adopts the viewpoint that "materialism is not a dichotomy" and individuals are not rigidly divided into materialists and non-materialists (Richins, 2017, p. 481). Instead, "materialism is a continuum ranging from low to high" (Richins, 2017, p. 481).

2.2.2 Highly materialistic consumers and self-threat

There are two streams of research that have described the psychological characteristics of highly materialistic consumers. The first research stream looks at the relationship between materialism and low self-esteem. Within this stream, there are two research groups. One group of studies have agreed that highly materialistic consumers have low self-esteem (Chang & Arkin, 2002; Noguti & Bokeyar, 2014; Reeves, Baker, & Truluek, 2012; Solberg, Diener, & Robinson, 2004). They tend to doubt about their self-view (Frost, Kyrios, McCarthy, & Matthews, 2007) and personal insecurity (Christopher, Drummond, Jones, Marek, & Therriault, 2006). Another group of studies has attempted to demonstrate that the connection between low self-esteem and materialism can yields inconsistent findings (Richins, 2017). For example, some research has revealed that there is no significant relationship between low self-esteem and materialism (Grougiou & Moschis, 2015; Mick, 1996) or the correlation between materialism and low self-esteem is low (.29 and .14 respectively) (Kim, Callan, Gheorghiu, & Matthews, 2017; Ruvio, Somer, & Rindfleisch, 2014). A weak correlation between low self-esteem and materialism might originate from the unstable nature of the self-concept among highly materialistic consumers (Richins, 2017). Even though the self-concept is relatively stable most of the time, the self can also be changeable due to social events and roles that can make individuals act differently in various circumstances (Aaker, 1999; Gao, Wheeler, & Shiv, 2008).

The second research stream has argued that highly materialistic consumers have a high self-esteem discrepancy (Park & John, 2011). Self-discrepancy refers to the inconsistency between how the person sees him/herself and what he/she wants to become (Higgins, 1987). Park and John (2011) found that self-discrepancy, either high explicit/ low implicit or low explicit/high implicit, can lead to materialism. Explicit self-esteem refers to “consciously reasoned evaluations of the self, whereas implicit self-esteem is defined as highly efficient evaluations of the self-occurring outside of awareness” (Park & John, 2011, p. 73). For example, a person can undergo a discrepancy between his or her yearning (e.g., to be the CEO of a Fortune 500 firm) and current position (e.g., a manager at a small, local firm) (Mandel, Rucker, Levav, & Galinsky, 2017). This perceived self-discrepancy causes psychological discomfort which can lead to materialism (Park & John, 2011). For example, materialism has been found to be significantly related to celebrity worship (Reeves et al., 2012). This might be evidence of high self-discrepancy among highly materialistic consumers. Highly materialistic consumers have been found to be likely to worship a celebrity because that celebrity tend to be associated with a luxurious lifestyle, an attractive physical appearance (Chan & Prendergast, 2008), success, popularity, or being influential (Gountas, Gountas, Reeves, & Moran, 2012). This thesis follows Richins' (2017) view that highly materialistic consumers have high self-esteem discrepancy and an unstable self-esteem.

In addition to high self-esteem discrepancy, highly materialistic consumers can have other notable characteristics that can contribute to constant psychological discomfort. They constantly seek external self-validation (Micken & Roberts, 1999; Richins, 2017). For example, prior research has shown that highly materialistic consumers' pursuit of material possessions can be motivated by extrinsic factors, such as status, popularity (Van Boven, Campbell, & Gilovich, 2010) and social image (Liao & Wang, 2009). Other evidence has shown that that highly materialistic consumers can pursue an ideal body shape due to social pressure (Guðnadóttir & Garðarsdóttir, 2014).

The desire for external self-validation can make highly materialistic consumers sensitive to negative opinions from others (Christopher, Marek, & Carroll, 2004), relying on social approval to present their self-identity (Christopher & Schlenker,

2004) and adjusting their manners to fit in with others (Rose & DeJesus, 2007). For instance, highly materialistic consumers tend to employ different techniques to customize their self-presentation so that they can convey a desirable image to others (Christopher, Morgan, Marek, Keller, & Drummond, 2005). In addition, Clark and Goldsmith (2012) found that highly materialistic consumers tend to buy status brands so that they can conform to social norms in purchasing. Even before buying an ordinary brand, highly materialistic consumers often consider other people's reactions to the brands and whether the item will positively impress others (Fitzmaurice & Comegys, 2006).

The combination of self-discrepancy and desire for external self-validation can often create psychological discomfort among highly materialistic consumers (Richins, 2017). While individuals with a stable self-identity can easily eliminate the self-discrepancies (Richins, 2017), for highly materialistic consumers, this is difficult due to an unstable self-concept (Richins, 2017). As a result, their self-discrepancy can make them experience a threatened self, leading to the need to alleviate it (Richins, 2017).

There are two primary types of self-threat that highly materialistic consumers can regularly experience. The first is a power threat. Consumers with a high level of materialism have tendency to consider social power as an important value in their life (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002). The desire for power can be manifested in many highly materialistic consumers' aspects. For example, when a brand is anthropomorphized, highly materialistic consumers are likely to have a greater preference for a servant brand than low materialistic consumers. Furthermore, they tend to prefer a servant brand more than a partner brand. (Kim & Kramer, 2015). Partner brands refer to the fact that brands "coproduce benefits with consumers as equals. Servant brands refer to the fact that "brands work for the consumers to create benefits" (Kim & Kramer, 2015, p. 286). Moreover, highly materialistic consumers tend to be dominant in social relationships (Kim & Kramer, 2015). In addition, highly materialistic consumers' preference for status consumption (Clark & Goldsmith, 2012) may be an expression of their need for social power (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Indeed, materialism is likely to be associated with social power

because materialism tend to positively related to self-enhancement value (Kilbourne & LaForge, 2010).

The second type of self-threat is a meaning-related threat. Highly materialistic consumers are likely to be high meaning-seekers (Micken & Roberts, 1999; Richins, 1994a). This need might be clearly expressed in the ways that highly materialistic consumers use products. For example, highly materialistic consumers tend to rely on brands and products to achieve a meaningful self-transformation (Richins, 2011), and they connect with brands for symbolic identity (Rindfleisch et al., 2009). Likewise, Dittmar and Bond (2010) found that highly materialistic consumers with high self-discrepancy preferred buying self-expressive products.

2.2.3 Highly materialistic consumers and brands

In order to deal with the regular state of self-threat, highly materialistic consumers have tendency to rely on brands and products (Richins, 2017). This is because highly materialistic consumers are likely to have a strong expectation that brands and products can transform their selves in a “significant and meaningful way” (Richins, 2011, p. 145). In other words, they tend believe that brands or products can protect their vulnerable selves (Richins, 2017). This can be manifested in the fact that highly materialistic consumers have a tendency to purchase brands not merely for material acquisition (Liao & Wang, 2009), but for the meanings attached to brands that are significant to them (Micken & Roberts, 1999). For instance, several researchers have indicated that highly materialistic consumers tend to be motivated to buy products to achieve their ideal selves (Dittmar & Kapur, 2011), to enhance their selves (Kilbourne & LaForge, 2010) and to reassure their selves (Rindfleisch et al., 2009).

Self-transformation motivation might result in the fact that highly materialistic consumers are likely to connect with various brands and products (Richins, 2017) in which “they perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others” (Richins, 2013, p. 146). In other words, highly materialistic consumers tend to rely on items through which others can easily observe the intended meanings. This view suggests that highly materialistic consumers have tendency to use any type of product

category and brand (Richins, 2017) as long as the object can reassure them or affirm them in some way (Richins, 2011). This perspective is similar to that of Rindfleisch et al. (2009) who suggested that highly materialistic consumers are likely to connect with a wide range of brands when they experience existential insecurity.

This view is contrasted with the previous research which argues that highly materialistic consumers primarily purchase products or brands that others can easily observe the symbolic meanings expressed by these items. Specifically, highly materialistic consumers are likely to purchase publicly visible products (Richins, 1994b), products and brands that help them communicate a social image or identity to others (Fitzmaurice & Comegys, 2006), and prefer global brands (Alden et al., 2006). Highly materialistic consumers tend to rely on expensive items that can reflect concepts such as wealth, prestige, status or sophistication (Clark & Goldsmith, 2012; Flynn, Goldsmith, & Pollitte, 2016; Gil, Kwon, Good, & Johnson, 2012; Nancy & AARON, 1998; Rose & DeJesus, 2007; Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2009). Indeed, highly materialistic consumers have tendency to purchase the “best”, “the most expensive” and “other status possessions” (Fournier & Richins, 1991, p. 408). Research has indicated that highly materialistic individuals have a positive attitude towards status brand consumption (Gil et al., 2012; Wiedmann et al., 2009). Rindfleisch et al. (2009), and have explained that this might be due to impression motivation which leads highly materialistic consumers to select products or brands that are socially desirable.

This study adopts the view that consumers with a high level of materialism consider products and brands as vehicles for self-protection. This can motivate highly materialistic consumers to use a wide range of products and brands as coping responses to their threatened self. This view goes beyond the idea of impression as the main motivation for highly materialistic consumers.

2.2.4 Materialism and style

Style is important for highly materialistic consumers because it allows them to use brands and products to achieve their ideal selves. They believe that goods can provide meaningful self-transformation (Richins, 2017) that enables them to gain an

ideal self (Dittmar & Kapur, 2011), which suggests that highly materialistic consumers are likely to be high meaning-seekers through material objects (Micken & Roberts, 1999; Richins, 1994a). Style allows for individual meaning to be communicated (Kjeldgaard, 2009). Thus, highly materialistic consumers is more likely to use products or brands to express their style than low materialistic consumers.

The style concept originates from subculture (Hebdige, 1995). Hebdige (1979, p.100) suggested that style comprises four components. First, style is an “intentional communication” that can deliver clear meanings and messages (Hebdige, 1979, p.100). Second, style can be considered as “bricolage” or the conscious recombination, rearrangement, reassembling and appropriation of objects to indicate a new meaning, and at the same time replace the original signs and material culture (Hebdige, 1979; Clarke, 1976). Third, “style as homology” (Hebdige, 1979, 113) refers to the notion that selected objects should carry symbolic meanings (e.g., dress, appearance, language, ritual occasions, styles of interaction, music) and can be arranged systematically for “relocation” and “transformation” (Clarke, 1976, p.177-178). Fourth, “style as signifying practice” (Hebdige, 1979, p.100) suggests that style can be interpreted with various meanings. In the context of subculture, the object may indicate the value of the group so that group members can recognize main values manifested through the objects (Hebdige, 1979; Clarke, 1976).

In a narrower definition, style has been regarded as the assembly of fashion and ornament items (Murray, 2002). In consumer behaviour, style is defined as the combination of various consumption objects that can communicate individual identity. It is considered an important instrument for expressing personal meanings and values (Kjeldgaard, 2009). This research adopts the view that style is defined as a combination of different consumption items to deliver individual meanings and values.

The next section discusses how social media sites facilitate highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style.

2.3 SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

2.3.1 Self-presentation

Social network sites have become an increasingly important part of many people's lives. People tend to use social media to satisfy psychological needs (Belk, 2013; Wilcox & Stephen, 2013). One of the important psychological motivations can be the use of social media sites for self-presentation (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008). The activity of self-presentation involves revealing one's identity in such a way that one regulates the impressions others will receive about them (Goffman, 1959). There are two different views regarding self-presentation on social media sites.

The first view suggests that self-presentation conforms to social norms. This view argues that social media are used to connect with both offline acquaintances and the wider public (Marwick, 2011). The main aim of using social media can be to establish community (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Self can be constructed through ongoing social interactions with this community (Marwick, 2011). Explicit self-promotion can put users at the risk of social isolation (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). More specifically, users are not likely to reveal too much personal information to others (Marwick, 2011). Furthermore, individuals tend to avoid creating posts that they believe their offline friends would consider inappropriate (Marwick, 2011). Users have tendency to perceive social media sites as an avenue where "the strictest standards apply" (Marwick & Boyd, 2011, p. 126). Individuals constantly are likely to keep an eye on their followers so that they adjust their posts (Marwick, 2011).

A different view holds that self-presentation does not necessarily follow the collective norm. Arvidsson and Caliandro (2015) found that individuals have tendency to use social media to become public rather than to develop a sense of community. Furthermore, UGC on these sites tend to promote the ideal self (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008) and self-focused information. Social media can be a venue for individuals to show their image and boast about luxury consumptions and prominent connections (Marwick, 2015). This view holds that appearances of consumers presented on social media are not actual but ideal images that are usually artistically processed, amplified through selecting, modifying

and editing (Marwick, 2015; Vilnai-Yavetz & Tifferet, 2015). Moreover, consumers are likely to consciously use their body, muscles and facial expressions (Drenten, 2012) to imitate the poses of models reflected in traditional fashion magazines (Engholm & Hansen-Hansen, 2014; Harju & Huovinen, 2015; McQuarrie et al., 2013), professionally staged fashion images (Engholm & Hansen-Hansen, 2014), and celebrities (Marwick, 2015). Poses, such as twisted feet, crossed legs, contrapposto, weight on one foot, causing a dangling of the arm and shoulder, and enhanced curves are usually found on social media (Harju & Huovinen, 2015).

This thesis adopts the view that highly materialistic consumers are likely to use social media sites in order to present ideal selves on social media. Highly materialistic consumers tend to have high self-discrepancy (Park & John, 2011). Individuals who have high incongruence between their ideal and actual selves tend to have low self-esteem (McKenna & Bargh, 2000). Swaminathan, Stilley, and Ahluwalia (2009) suggested that people with low self-esteem have a tendency to connect with brands to express their ideal self only when the brands are consumed in a public rather than a private place. Social media is a public setting (Bazarova, Taft, Choi, & Cosley, 2012). Therefore, highly materialistic consumers tend to use social media sites in order to present an ideal self rather than their actual self. Indeed, Hollenbeck and Kaikati (2012) found that consumers with low self-esteem were more likely to associate with brands to display their ideal self while consumers with high self-esteem used brands to show their actual self on social media.

2.3.2 How do social media facilitate users to present their ideal selves?

Social media sites can allow individuals to present ideal selves in four ways. First, camera phones and applications of photo-edit tools tend to be so ubiquitous that individuals are likely to accept it as a norm that photos can be regularly processed on social media (Marwick, 2015). The omnipresence of camera phones has shifted the function of photography from a vehicle for documenting family memories to a tool for individual self-expression (Van Dijck, 2008). Furthermore, social media and mobile phones may provide photo-edit applications for users to adjust their image (Marwick, 2015). Users can refine their image to emphasize their best aspects and conceal their incompleteness (Chua & Chang, 2016). In addition,

the incorporation of cameras into mobiles has provided the chance for users to take numerous volumes of photographs and upload them onto social media (Marwick, 2015). An important function of social media is that it can support users to develop visual self-presentation (Marwick, 2015). The visual medium is incorporated in several social media platforms, including blogs (McQuarrie et al., 2013), Facebook (Eftekhar, Fullwood, & Morris, 2014), Twitter (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2015), and Instagram (Marwick, 2015). This has meant that pictures are effective tools for impression management (Marwick, 2015).

Secondly, ideal self-presentation has become a part of our culture and may receive encouragement from massive audiences, further encouraging users to engage in this behaviour (Marwick, 2015). Individuals are likely to accept that it is reasonable to display an ideal self on social media sites (Chen & Marcus, 2012). In offline social networks, people are less likely to repeat self-enhancement information because it can be considered boastful, awkward and inappropriate (Tice, Butler, Muraven, & Stillwell, 1995). However, in online social networks, self-disclosure tends to be promoted (Belk, 2013).

Thirdly, on social media, ideal self-presentation might be much easier and more comfortable due to the feeling of invisibility in using a computer screen rather than direct human interaction (Belk, 2013). Face-to-face identity construction can be affected by different factors, such as physical attractiveness and common views of social background. Therefore, in the offline context, it might be difficult for users to display selves that are congruent with their ideal selves (Mehdizadeh, 2010). On social media, consumers can completely control and manage their self-image (Belk, 2013; Chua & Chang, 2016). Furthermore, consumers can “rehearse and rewrite” and consciously design their profiles until they can achieve their desired self-image (McQuarrie et al., 2013, p. 140; Zhao, 2005). They have full autonomy to reveal personal information, such as age, gender, and appearance (Schau & Gilly, 2003).

Fourth, individuals may not need to interact each other to maintain a social community (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2015). Social media enables users to participate in public life without the need to have direct interaction (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2015).

2.3.3 How self-presentation can validate users' self-esteem

Individuals can use social media for self-presentation because social media can support them to validate their self-esteem. Social media is a public place (Bazarova et al., 2012), and users not only connect with their offline friends but also with other people from a wider network (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). Furthermore, when users create a post, it can be assessed from anywhere and anytime by their peers (Belk, 2013; Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). Posts cannot be only seen by connected friends but also outside the networked circle (Bazarova et al., 2012). In addition, social media sites can facilitate feedback, interaction and ratings (Belk, 2013). As a result, when users post content, they can immediately receive comments from their peers. These comments can often appear publicly for others to see (Larsen 2008). In the virtual world, status-seeking can be reflected through “social currency and social reinforcement” such as the number of followers, “likes” of the post, comments and shares (Marwick, 2015, p. 142). When users get positive comments, interaction, followers, and the number of pages viewed by others, their self-esteem can be reassured (Belk, 2013; Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012; Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006). Moreover, because this feedback comes from others, individuals look less self-centred than if it were their own comments (Larsen, 2008).

In addition, social media can provide opportunities for ordinary people to appear in the media and become well-known (Marwick, 2015). Social media can enable individuals to broadcast their activities not only to their personal networks but also to wider public networks (Marwick, 2011). In the past, public appearance was often limited to celebrities, politicians and influential figures (Turner, 2010). Nowadays, the development of broadband and mobile phones has created places for normal people who are inspired to rise to stardom through the sharing of their daily activities on social media sites (Mullen 2010). Individuals have the freedom to access new audiences directly and globally, without the need to seek “institutional certification or enablement” (McQuarrie et al., 2013, p. 137).

Indeed, prior research has shown that social network sites can be important avenues of psychological development (Belk, 2013; Wilcox & Stephen, 2013). Individuals can experience more positive self-esteem when posting selective self-

information on Facebook (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). In addition, less emotionally stable people are likely to join in social media and share self-relevant information because they find online social networks can support them to regulate their emotions (Bareket-Bojmel, Moran, & Shahar, 2016; Berger & Buechel, 2012). In addition, individuals with a need for exaggerated self-importance are likely to post on social media in order to promote themselves (Mehdizadeh, 2010).

2.3.4 Facebook as a context for users to present their ideal selves.

A notable feature of Facebook is its function to reassure an individual's self-esteem. Specifically, Facebook contains characteristics that can facilitate interaction and feedback between users and followers (Davenport, Bergman, Bergman, & Fearington, 2014; Mehdizadeh, 2010). When individuals create brand-related UGC, they might receive positive comments (Belk, 2013), "likes" or "shares" from their friends (Panek, Nardis, & Konrath, 2013). Unlike offline interactions, on social media, positive feedback may be visible to the public (Belk, 2013) which can validate individuals' self-esteem (Belk, 2013; große Deters, Mehl, & Eid, 2014). In addition, Facebook provides an opportunity for users to gain infinite shallow connections (Van Dijck, 2013), which can enhance individuals' self-esteem (Panek et al., 2013).

Facebook has features that make it different from other social media platforms. It is a venue for users to continue their real-life connections (McQuarrie et al., 2013). When Facebook is used to contact pre-existing social connections, personal information is expected to reflect accurate facts about the individuals' personality because friends might challenge their inauthenticity (Back et al., 2010). Thus, self-image is often authentic (Back et al., 2010; Marwick, 2011).

On the other hand, there is research that has indicated that consumers can use Facebook to present their ideal self (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). There are reasons to argue that individuals have authority to display their ideal selves on Facebook without being afraid of social isolation. Even though Facebook is mainly used to interact with offline relationships, it has characteristics that can allow users to form one-way relationships (Taylor, Lewin, & Strutton, 2011). First, consumers can use a

mediation device such as a hashtag to achieve a social media reputation (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2015). Hashtag is an essential device to promote visibility. A hashtag can be used to represent a searchable term, enabling consumers with a shared interest to be visible to others (Page, 2012) and to aggregate UGC posted by multiple members (Page, 2012), thus creating the possibility for users to initiate and maintain connections (Zappavigna, 2011). Hashtags can stimulate the waves of imitative manners, meaning that consumers can continually re-share and post consistent themes and topics, without interaction and discussion (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2015). This can enable users' to reach out to their current followers' lists and makes the posts more visible. In other words, it is the-one-to-many broadcasts that promotes a professional identity rather than personal interactions (Page, 2012).

Second, the "follow" feature on Facebook can allow others to connect with users without becoming friends (Panek et al., 2013). Therefore, most of the connections can be perceived as weak ties (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Thus, users' friends may not be acquainted very well with them, which allows users to present their ideal selves without being exposed to the risk of social exclusion (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012).

Third, unlike Twitter that tends to facilitate more UGC sharing than creating, Facebook provides an easier capability for displaying the self through UGC, which can contribute to self-promotion (Smith et al., 2012). Fourth, an important feature of Facebook is that it allows users to broadcast their intricate life narrative to a wide audience (Van Dijck, 2013) through status updates. This can allow users to show narratives of their self-identity on Facebook. Fifth, Facebook allows individuals to express multiple selves at the same time (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012)

Therefore, in order to balance weak and strong ties, individuals tend to use implicit cues to present their ideal-selves on Facebook (Zhao et al., 2008). Facebook users are more likely to "show rather than tell or to display rather than describe" when constructing online identities (Zhao et al., 2008, p. 1826). The prominent function of Facebook is that it allows users to upload and share photos. Pictures are effective as an implicit but strong vehicle of non-verbal communication to express ideal selves on Facebook (Eftekhar et al., 2014). This is because photos can describe

one's self-identity more figuratively than words (Eftekhar et al., 2014; Vilnai-Yavetz & Tifferet, 2015; Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012). Facebook users upload about 350 million photos per day (Wagner, 2013). More importantly, in 2012, Facebook purchased Instagram, a mobile photo-sharing application (Dominic, 2012).

Instagram can allow users to upload photos and manipulate them by using filters. In addition to visual cues, subtle self-presentation has often appeared on brands through the act of "liking" a brand (24%), profile activities (22%), profile interests (21%), attitude discussion (5 %) and ordinary routine (17%) (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). Linking with brands on Facebook can send stronger signals about self-identity than in the offline context because brands appear publicly and can be noticed by social network users (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012).

2.3.5 Blogs as a context for users to present their ideal selves

Blogs "are personal journals on the internet arranged in reverse chronological sequence that facilitate interactive computer-mediated communication through text, images, and audio/video objects" (Huang, Shen, Lin, & Chang, 2007, p. 473). On blogs, users can focus on a specific topic (Greuling & Kilian, 2014; McQuarrie et al., 2013). Blogs are rich in visual and textual possibility (Kozinets, 2010), and multi-media capabilities (Du & Wagner, 2006). This rich visual presentation allows consumers to produce metaphoric meanings (McQuarrie et al., 2013) while sophisticated textual presentation allows consumers to integrate their personal narratives (Kozinets, 2010) and demonstrate in-depth knowledge about products (Li & Du, 2011; Pan, MacLaurin, & Crotts, 2007; Stubb, 2018). Thus, blogs are the sites that can host brand-related UGC that shows detailed information about brands as well as highlight self-image. Furthermore, users can express multiple selves on blogs (Schau & Gilly, 2003).

Similar to Facebook, blogs can provide users the opportunity to affirm their self-esteem (Belk, 2013). More specifically, on blogs, users can reach unlimited numbers of followers (McQuarrie et al., 2013). Furthermore, blogs facilitate feedback and interactions (Belk, 2013). In addition, a large number of comments and page views are visible on blogs that can enhance users' self-esteem (Belk, 2013).

There have been two different views regarding of how consumers use blogs in order to express their selves. The first view has suggested that self-identity is constructed consistently with the practices of community norms (Kozinets et al., 2010). Specifically, individuals use blogs to develop a community that emphasizes values, such as trust, friendship, and alliance (Kozinets et al., 2010).

Another view has suggested that individuals use blogs to promote professional selves rather than maintain a social community. In this case, the main purpose is to gain public recognition and seek attention (McQuarrie et al., 2013). For example, initially, consumers interact with their followers on blogs. However, when they manage to build huge audiences and achieve popularity among followers, they stop communicating with them. Self-presentation in such a context does not necessarily conform to social norms; thus, the self is more likely ideal rather than the real self (McQuarrie et al., 2013).

Taken together, the prior research has indicated that blogs and Facebook have features that facilitate users to present their ideal selves. Still, it is worth noting that blogs might differ from Facebook in certain ways. Compared with Facebook, blogs can host UGC that explicitly promotes a self-image and brand-focus. Bloggers have more freedom and power to express a desired self that deviates from an authentic self than on Facebook (McQuarrie et al., 2013). Consumers might display their expert knowledge about brands on blogs but brands only play supporting roles; “character narrative forms the backbone of blog content” (Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 82; Schau & Gilly, 2003). On Facebook, ideal self-presentation tends to be more subtle (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012).

Highly materialistic consumers are more likely to use social media to present an ideal self than low materialistic consumers. In order to present their ideal selves, highly materialistic consumers are likely to create brand-related UGC about style because style can support them to use brands to express their desired identity. The next section expands on this, discussing in detail the reasons that highly materialistic consumers are likely to create brand-related UGC about style in order to express their ideal self.

2.4 MATERIALISM AND BRAND-RELATED UGC ABOUT STYLE

2.4.1 Brands as a means to convey identity on social media

In the offline context, brands can provide a means for individuals to express self-identity (Belk, 1988; Strizhakova, Coulter, & Price, 2008). In social networks, the function of brands to reflect self-concept has been found to be crucial (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012; Schau & Gilly, 2003). Consumers can use brands to protect and enhance their selves on social media (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). In addition, the function of brands can even be amplified in social networks (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). In the offline context, it might be regarded as rude to boast about luxury items (Belk, 2013), whereas in social network sites where there is a “transformation of private diaries into public revelations of inner secrets” (Belk, 2013, p. 484), it is acceptable to display such items (Belk, 1985). In addition, the visibility of brands tend to be more intense in social networks than in offline the context (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). Brands can be visible not only in users’ contact lists but also in the broader network (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). Furthermore, when individuals create posts, users’ friends can view the updates at any time. This allows brands to be continuously seen and noticed (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012).

In addition, self-identity can be expressed through semiotic presentation about brands. (Schau & Gilly, 2003). For example, unlike real-life where people can actually acquire products for self-presentation, on social media, individuals do not actually need to possess the brands in order to present their selves. Consumers can simply connect with a brand logo, website and image for self-presentation. In addition, consumers can actively connect with friends that can signal their self-identity and disconnect from brands that do not deliver the right message about their self-concept (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012).

In short, prior research has indicated that online social networks can allow individuals to use brands to indicate their self-identity, even when the individuals do not own material acquisitions. Furthermore, its effect might be more powerful than in the offline context. Thus, brand-related UGC creation might be an effective tool for self-protection. The next section presents the definition of brand-related UGC

and how it can be a coping strategy for highly materialistic consumers to protect their self-identity.

2.4.2 Brand-related UGC

Most scholars have agreed that UGC is a broad concept (Poch & Martin, 2014). The most widely accepted definition of UGC is “content that is made publicly available over the Internet; reflects a certain amount of creative effort; and is created outside professional routines and practices” (OECD, 2007, p. 4). This definition has been adopted by many scholars (e.g., Christodoulides et al., 2012; Rhie, Kim, & Lee, 2010; Smith et al., 2012). According to this definition, posting a real advertisement on YouTube would not be seen as UGC; however, if an advertisement was customized by the user, this would be considered UGC (Vanden Bergh, Lee, Quilliam, & Hove, 2011). Another similar definition is “media content that is created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and is primarily distributed on the Internet.” (Daugherty et al., 2008, p. 16). This includes such online content as digital videos, blogging, podcasting, mobile phone photography, wikis, and user-forum posts. This definition has been adopted by many researchers (e.g., Knoll, 2015; Morrison et al., 2013). However, Christodoulides et al. (2012) criticized this definition as it is too wide to use in brand-related UGC because it is connected with all kinds of platforms. Furthermore, it is difficult to distinguish from electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM).

Nevertheless, it has become common today to view UGC as a form of eWOM (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015) or as correlated with WOM (Poch & Martin, 2014). eWOM, WOM and UGC are created by consumers for non-commercial purposes (Berthon et al., 2008), and share a common communicative effect (Ertimur & Gilly, 2012) and communication style (Poch & Martin, 2014). eWOM is defined as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004, p. 39). UGC and eWOM are considered to be different but interdependent concepts. UGC is mainly created by consumers; however, although eWOM is spread by consumers, the content may or may not be created by consumers (Cheong &

Morrison, 2008). This research focuses on brand-related UGC and adopts the view that UGC and eWOM overlap.

Brand-related UGC creation can be a strategy for individuals to reassure their self-esteem. Daugherty et al. (2008) indicated that ego-defensiveness can contribute greatly to attitudes toward UGC creation. Consumers tend to create brand-related UGC in order to “protect themselves from internal insecurities and external threats” (Daugherty et al., 2008, p. 21). Similarly, consumers have a tendency to create brand-related UGC when they undergo self-threat in order to deal with their psychological discomfort (Thomas et al., 2017).

In addition to self-reaffirmation, consumers are likely to create brand-related UGC in order to enhance their self-esteem. Several researchers have shown that consumers can create brand-related UGC in order to promote their self (Berthon et al., 2008; Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011; Smith et al., 2012). Indeed, brand-related UGC creation can provide consumers with social recognition and economic benefits (McQuarrie et al., 2013). Social position refers to the fact that individuals can achieve status and popularity not only in the social media community but also in the traditional media and a company’s promotional campaign (McQuarrie et al., 2013). Individuals can access prominent social connections (McQuarrie et al., 2013). For example, bloggers receive invitations to company parties, fashion runway shows, opening events and charity activities (McQuarrie et al., 2013). Economic benefits refer to gifts, items, merchandise, paid advertisement placements and paid sponsorship for blog content and writing for publications (McQuarrie et al., 2013).

2.4.3 Brand-related UGC about style

Style has been featured in a number of studies on brand-related UGC (Kulmala et al., 2013; McQuarrie et al., 2013; Phillips, Miller, & McQuarrie, 2014; Pihl, 2014). The first stream of research has been to investigate how consumers discover and refine their personal taste on social media (McQuarrie et al., 2013; Phillips et al., 2014). Taste refers to the “enactment of style”, the ability to provide aesthetic judgement as a means of self-expression (McQuarrie et al., 2013, p. 140; Phillips et al., 2014). The first element of style enactment can be consciously present

a person's looks by following the poses of models in up-market fashion magazines (McQuarrie et al., 2013). The second attribute can be to show how to combine different brands in order to shape their distinctive taste (McQuarrie et al., 2013; Phillips et al., 2014). Another feature is the ability to express opinions, eclectic evaluation of different options, and passion toward the consumption items (McQuarrie et al., 2013). In addition, style can only be fully formed when the items are actually used by consumers; it is not enough that the consumption objects are displayed directly from the website (McQuarrie et al., 2013).

The second stream of research has compared the difference in organic and amplified eWom. Personal style has been found to be an important feature in both organic and amplified eWom (Kulmala et al., 2013). It is characterized as individuals playing the role of a model to present their style. Furthermore, consumers tend to show how to combine different brands to form an individual style (Kulmala et al., 2013). In addition, individuals are likely to show the style of their favourite celebrity and express their affection toward it (Kulmala et al., 2013).

The third research stream has used the concept of style to understand how brand community is formed on social media. Specifically, Pihl (2014) investigated how the concept of style can function as a linking value in establishing a brand community on social media. The concept of style refers to the notion that consumers tend to associate with a wide range of brands in order to form a style (Pihl, 2014). He found that individuals tend to highlight how to use a set of brands in order to define style rather than employ a focal brand (Pihl, 2014). Brands become useful when they can fit in with other consumption items. In other words, brands can only have meaningful significance when they can be combined with other items to express an individual style (Pihl, 2014). Another prominent characteristic is the emphasis on developing common consciousness, such as showing encouragement, a compliment and shared rituals (question-and-answer session) among consumers (Pihl, 2014).

Taken together, past research suggested that style has been explored in a number of previous studies on brand-related UGC; however, they have some limitations. Specifically, as their focus has been to explore taste development (McQuarrie et al., 2013; Phillips et al., 2014), and comparisons between organic and amplified eWOM (Kulmala et al., 2013), they have not defined a comprehensive

concept of brand-related UGC about style on social media. In Pihl's (2014) study, even though the concept of style was presented, the main focus of his paper was to apply the concept of style to analyse the notion of brand community, not about brand-related UGC about style. Thus, even though style was featured, the concept of brand-related UGC about style was not the main focus in these studies. In addition, previous studies have shown no systematic consensus on the definition of the attributes of brand-related about style. Moreover, they have mostly focused on fashion products. Hence, the concept of brand-related UGC about style has been largely unexplored.

Based on this problem, the question for the present research was established as follow:

RQ1: What are the attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites?

2.4.4 Materialism and brand-related UGC about style

The constant feeling of self-threat (Richins, 2017) and the fear of social exclusion (Christopher & Schlenker, 2004) might lead to the need to resolve psychological discomfort immediately, which can result in a higher desire for instant attention among highly materialistic consumers (Richins, 2017). In addition, highly materialistic consumers have characteristics that might challenge intimate relationships. Specifically, they tend to have an orientation toward competitiveness, mistrust and lower social engagement (Bauer, Wilkie, Kim, & Bodenhausen, 2012). Also, materialism originates from envy (Belk, 1985), which can a common threat to any human relationship (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Furthermore, consumers with a high level of materialism are likely to be selfish and manipulative, which might be harmful for a genuine relationship (Richins, 2017). However, highly materialistic consumers are likely to seek social approval, tend to be worried by negative criticism (Christopher & Schlenker, 2004) and tend to adjust their behaviour in order to fit in with others (Richins, 2017). Thus, highly materialistic consumers might manage well in shallow and superficial relationships on social media.

Highly materialistic consumers are likely to use brands to express style in order to convey desired selves. Brand-related UGC about style can be a coping

strategy for protecting highly materialistic consumers' selves. As discussed in Sections 2.2.4 and 2.2.5, first, on Facebook and blogs, highly materialistic consumers can accumulate immediate and multitudes of positive reactions to validate their selves. Second, social media can facilitate users to present ideal selves that they feel difficult to achieve in real life through brand-related UGC. Based on this, the hypotheses for this research were established as follow:

H1: Consumers with a high level of materialism will report more favourable intentions to create brand-related UGC about style than consumers with a low level of materialism on Facebook.

H2: Consumers with a high level of materialism will report more favourable intentions to create brand-related UGC about style than consumers with a low level of materialism on blogs.

In order to express style through brand-related UGC, consumers might rely on brands to help communicate their style. The reason that highly materialistic consumers are more likely to create brand-related UGC about style than low materialistic is because highly materialistic consumers tend to have knowledge self-efficacy about brands. To be able to use material items to indicate self-identity, individuals might need to have a thorough knowledge of metaphoric meanings of products and how to use them to present their self-concept (Chaplin & John, 2007). In the offline context, highly materialistic consumers tend to use any types of brand and product to communicate self-identity (Richins, 2017). As a result, they might have more capability of obtaining meaning from different material objects and the usefulness of brands for signalling self-identity than low materialistic consumers (Richins, 1994a). The next section explores this notion by introducing the concept of knowledge self-efficacy about brands.

2.5 KNOWLEDGE SELF-EFFICACY ABOUT BRANDS

Self-efficacy is defined as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Self-efficacy is particularly relevant to this study because it is an important

mechanism that helps to explain human functioning (Bandura, 1982). Specifically, it can significantly influence individual intentions and behaviour (Albert, 1986). Self-efficacy has been empirically investigated as a psychological explanation for several outcomes, such as internet use (Eastin & LaRose, 2000; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007), academic achievement (Bandura, 1993), entrepreneurial intentions (Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2005), performance motivation (Bandura & Cervone, 1983), and written test scores (Joo, Bong, & Choi, 2000).

In order to explain and predict self-efficacy, it must be measured in terms of a specific capability within a particular activity. It is because a high sense of efficacy in one particular activity domain is not necessarily related to efficacy in other fields (Bandura, 1997, p. 42). In this thesis, self-efficacy refers to knowledge self-efficacy about brands. Knowledge self-efficacy about brands refers to the confidence that individuals have in their ability to provide knowledge about brands that is valuable to others on social media sites (Kankanhalli, Tan, & Wei, 2005).

2.5.1 Materialism and knowledge self-efficacy about brands

In the offline context, highly materialistic consumers tend to rely on any type of material objects that can reassure their selves (Richins, 2017). As a result, highly materialistic consumers are likely to have more ability to comprehend the symbolic meanings of various brands and products than low materialistic consumers (Richins, 1994a). Knowledge self-efficacy about brands refers to the belief that individuals have the capability to provide information about brands that will be useful to their peers on social media sites (Kankanhalli et al., 2005). Therefore, materialism is likely to be a predictor of knowledge self-efficacy about both low and highly symbolic brands.

2.5.2 Knowledge self-efficacy about brands and the intention to create brand-related UGC about style

Research has shown the inconsistent role of knowledge self-efficacy on individuals' intentions to create UGC on social media. Specifically, the first stream of research has shown that knowledge self-efficacy can be a critical determinant that impacts on individuals' sharing intentions. Hsu et al. (2007) found that knowledge self-efficacy had a positive effect on knowledge sharing behaviour in the professional virtual community. A virtual community is an online space that focuses

on a particular expert knowledge so that members can learn from, exchange, develop and provide a specific knowledge area (Hsu et al., 2007). In similar research, Papadopoulos et al. (2013) indicated that knowledge sharing can be a determinant that positively affects the intention to share professional knowledge on weblogs in organizations, such as task information, instructions for problem solutions, building innovative ideas, and procedural suggestions. In addition, knowledge self-efficacy has been found to predict the intention to share personal information and other information with others on blogs (Lu & Hsiao, 2007). Lee, Cheung, Lim, and Ling Sia (2006) indicated that a lack of knowledge self-efficacy was the most significant reason that individuals did not share knowledge on a web-based discussion board. Web-based discussion is a site that provides detailed information about products, brands and companies. Consumers can rely on this forum in order to make purchasing decisions and gain insight into brand quality, price and so on (Lee et al., 2006).

The second stream of research has held a contrasting view. For example, Cheung and Lee (2012) found that knowledge self-efficacy was not significantly related to eWOM because the culture of the online platform did not require users to possess expert knowledge about products. It is because UGC on online consumer-opinion platforms merely record attitudes about service quality, rather than expert knowledge about the product (Cheung & Lee, 2012).

Prior research has indicated that the inconsistent impact of knowledge self-efficacy on the intention to create UGC on social media sites. Therefore, it is important to explore under what conditions knowledge self-efficacy predicts the intention to create UGC about style. This thesis argues that brands with high symbolic values can activate the effect of knowledge self-efficacy on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. In other words, the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style is contingent on brand symbolism. The next section explores in detail why highly symbolic brands can enhance the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands by discussing the concept of brand symbolism.

2.6 BRAND SYMBOLISM

In the context of brand-related UGC about style, knowledge self-efficacy about highly symbolic brands can be critically important. Research has shown that certain types of brands can have a better capability of indicating/signalling something about the individuals consuming them (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). A brand with highly symbolic values can “communicate something about the individual using the brand” (Escalas & Bettman, 2005, p. 380). Highly symbolic brands are recognizable, and enable individuals to link desirable characters (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012; Kleine, Kleine, & Allen, 1995), and self-image with brands (Allen, Fournier, & Miller, 2008; Ramaseshan & Tsao, 2007), and can also enhance individuals’ self-image (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001).

A highly symbolic brand consists of three characteristics: status, uniqueness and conformity (Gierl & Huettl, 2010). Status refers to the notion that these brands can connote luxury that indicates social status (Gierl & Huettl, 2010). Uniqueness refers to the notion that consumers tend to search for goods that are “unusual” or “avoid the purchase of products or brands that are perceived to be commonplace” (Tian et al., 2001, pp. 52-53). Conformity refers to the notion that a product can help individuals to be easily recognized by specific groups, such as music lovers, mountaineers, or gourmet food lovers (Lascu & Zinkhan, 1999).

Although there has been evidence that indicates that consumers can use both functional and symbolic products, such as music, film, video, sports, hobbies, vehicles, apparel and household goods to construct their identity (Schau & Gilly, 2003), most scholars have commonly agreed that brands with highly symbolic values are important on social media sites because they drive consumers to create brand-related UGC. Brand symbolism is a mediator for the relationship between interdependent people and the intention of brand-related UGC creation (Bernritter, Loermans, Verlegh, & Smit, 2017). Phillips et al. (2014) studied women collecting images of branded goods on Pinterest to develop their aesthetic styles. They found that individuals mostly emphasized product images that reflected captivating and symbolic meaning. Furthermore, most of the pictures did not contain functional and “solution-type” elements (Phillips et al., 2014, p. 646). In another study, Chahal

(2010) found that luxury goods, such as virtual Versace, DKNY, J Crew, Nike, and Gucci, have often obtained ten times more clicks than unbranded items.

Furthermore, brand symbolism is a boundary condition that facilitates consumers to create brand-related UGC in order to release the psychological discomfort of self-threat (Thomas et al., 2017). Similarly, Hollenbeck and Kaikati (2012) found that consumers used both highly symbolic as well as functional brands to present themselves on social media sites. However, 70% of interviewed participants revealed that they connected with iconic and expensive brands, while only 30% of respondents disclosed their association with functional brands (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). In addition, Bernritter, Verlegh, and Smit (2016) indicated that brand symbolism strengthened the effect of consumers' perceptions of the brands' warmth on the likelihood of brand-related UGC creation (Bernritter, 2016). Consumers' perceptions of the brands' warmth refers to the consumers' perceptions of brands, which includes three dimensions: warmth, kindness and generosity (Aaker, Vohs, & Mogilner, 2010).

2.7 KNOWLEDGE SELF-EFFICACY ABOUT BRANDS, BRAND SYMBOLISM AND BRAND-RELATED UGC ABOUT STYLE

Section 2.4.1 indicates that in the offline context, highly materialistic consumers might be more likely to have knowledge self-efficacy about both low and highly symbolic brands than low materialistic consumers. In addition, social media can facilitate individuals to use both low and highly symbolic brands in order to indicate style. The symbolic meaning about brands can be created through the manipulation of semiotics (Lampel & Bhalla, 2007; Schau & Gilly, 2003) and can depend on individual imagination and technology access (Schau & Gilly, 2003). Unlike Twitter that emphasizes sharing activities, UGC on Facebook can facilitate users to express a self-narrative (Smith et al., 2012). Furthermore, visual presentation on Facebook can generate symbolic meaning (Marwick, 2015; McQuarrie et al., 2013). On blogs, users can have plenty of space to create brand-related UGC by utilizing textual and visual cues (Kozinets, 2010), enabling users to elaborate on the content. In addition, compared with Facebook, the culture of blogs promotes explicit self-focus (Schau & Gilly, 2003) and brand-focus (Stubb, 2018). There are two

reasons to predict that the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style is moderated by brand symbolism among highly materialistic consumers.

First, due to being sensitive to social rejection (Richins, 2017), highly materialistic consumers might only need to activate knowledge self-efficacy about highly symbolic brands in order to create brand-related UGC about style. Highly materialistic consumers tend to have high self-discrepancy (Park & John, 2011). Research has shown that high ideal-actual self-incongruence are related to low self-esteem (McKenna & Bargh, 2000). In addition, highly materialistic consumers are likely to be concerned about the impression they create on others. They tend to have a desire for social validation and are likely to be afraid of negative opinions from others (Christopher et al., 2004) and whether they are being socially rejected or ignored (Richins, 2017). Furthermore, they tend to adjust their manners in order to fit in with others (Richins, 2017). As a result, highly materialistic consumers are more motivated to use brands that can support them to gain social acceptance than low materialistic consumers (Rose & DeJesus, 2007). For example, they expect that brands can help them to change the way they are viewed by others and to improve their relationship with others (Richins, 2011).

Individuals who have low self-esteem tend to link with highly symbolic brands in order to indicate their ideal self only when the brands are consumed in a public place (Swaminathan et al., 2009). Furthermore, such symbolic consumption can occur when they expect to gain a social relationship (Swaminathan et al., 2009). Social media is a public place (Bazarova et al., 2012); thus, on social media, individuals who are motivated to gain normative evaluation from others tend to connect with highly symbolic brands in order to express their ideal selves (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012).

Highly symbolic brands possess attributes that can express individuals' self-identity (Escalas & Bettman, 2005) while low symbolic brands are primarily used for utilitarian purposes (Chen, Lee, & Yap, 2016), which have a low capability of expressing style. Thus, using low symbolic brands in order to display self-identity

might not be socially acceptable, while using highly symbolic brands in order to communicate styles might be considered to conform to the social norm.

Therefore, it was argued that highly materialistic consumers who have a desire to create brand-related UGC about style might only need to activate knowledge about brands that are commonly used to indicate style. Hence, even though in the offline context highly materialistic consumers might have knowledge self-efficacy about low and highly symbolic brands, the desire for social acceptance might motivate them to engage in knowledge self-efficacy about socially approved products when creating brand-related UGC about style. Therefore, if highly materialistic consumers want to signal their style through brand-related UGC, they would only activate knowledge self-efficacy about the brands that have high symbolic value to communicate their style to others.

The second reason is that highly symbolic brands can provide opportunities for highly materialistic consumers to signal their self-threat, which in turn improves their psychological state. Highly materialistic consumers are likely to have high self-discrepancy (Park & John, 2011) which causes them to constantly experience psychological discomfort (Richins, 2017). When individuals experience self-threat, they are not likely to create brand-related UGC because they tend to consider brand-related UGC as a threat-related activity (Thomas et al., 2017). However, individuals have a tendency to engage in problem-focused coping strategies when they perceive the opportunity to do something to deal with the threat (Mandel et al., 2017). Research has shown that brand-related UGC can be a coping strategy to alleviate their perceived high self-discrepancy only when brands can have capability to symbolically indicate the threat domain (Thomas et al., 2017). Highly materialistic consumers tend to experience two primary self-threats: a meaning-related threat and a power threat. Thus, highly symbolic brands can support highly materialistic consumers to recover their self-threat.

In the context of Facebook, users tend to mention brands in subtle ways to avoid social sanctions (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). Highly symbolic brands can be a means for users' to express their selves in subtle way because they support individuals to deliver a powerful message about their self-identity on Facebook

(Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). Blogs are the sites that can encourage explicit self-promotion (Schau & Gilly, 2003), thus facilitate highly materialistic consumers to use knowledge self-efficacy about highly symbolic brands to express their self-image.

Based on the arguments above, it was expected that materialism predicts knowledge self-efficacy about brands, which results in the intention to create brand-related UGC about style only when brands have highly symbolic value, and not when brands are low in symbolic value. Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H3: Materialism predicts knowledge self-efficacy about brands which mediates the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on Facebook when brands have highly symbolic value. When brands have low symbolic value, the mediation effect will not occur.

H4: Materialism predicts knowledge self-efficacy about brands which mediates the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on blogs when brands have high symbolic value. When brands have low symbolic values, the mediation effect will not occur.

2.8 CONCEPTUAL MODEL

As a result of the literature review synthesis, a conceptual model is proposed (see Figure 1.1). This model suggests that materialism is a predictor for the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. It also predicts that knowledge self-efficacy about brands functions as a mediator for the relationship between materialism and brand-related UGC about style. In addition, the model suggests that brand symbolism moderates the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style.

Figure 1.1 shows the conceptual model for the conditional indirect effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style mediated through knowledge self-efficacy about brands.

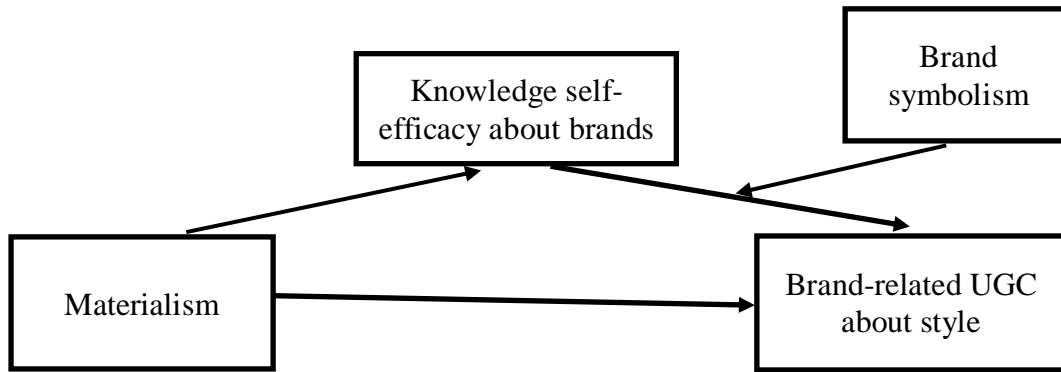


Figure 1.1. Conceptual model for brand-related UGC about style.

2.9 SUMMARY

The literature review explained why materialism predicts the creation of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites. Specifically, the chapter discussed how social media contributes to support highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style. Furthermore, the chapter presented two different views about how individuals use social media: to present their actual self versus their ideal self. The link between materialism and ideal self-presentation was also explored.

The mechanism which explains why highly materialistic consumers create brand-related UGC about style was outlined, discussing knowledge self-efficacy about brands. Moreover, the chapter provided an overview of brand symbolism and how the interaction of brand symbolism and knowledge self-efficacy about brands leads to the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. Finally, the chapter proposed one question, four hypotheses and a conceptual model that are built from the synthesis of literature review.

The next section presents research methodology for the four studies.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 OVERVIEW

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology used in the four studies. Specifically, the chapter revisits the overview of the research questions (Section 3.1), explains the research method of Study 1, which is a content analysis (Section 3.2.1), and the research method of Studies 2, 3 and 4 (Section 3.2.2). More particularly, the chapter aims to provide justification for the use of content analysis in the Study 1 and why an online experiment was used in the subsequent three studies. Furthermore, the chapter describes the research design and procedure of the four studies in Sections 3.3.1 to 3.3.4 respectively.

3.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The overarching research question posed in this research is:

How does materialism affect the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on social media sites?

This thesis seeks to better understand the important attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites, and to investigate the main effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style and to test knowledge self-efficacy about brands as a mechanism for the effect of materialism on the likelihood of creating brand-related UGC about style. Furthermore, the research tests brand symbolism as a moderator for the mediator effect. In order to address the overarching research question, four questions are proposed in this thesis:

RQ1: What are the attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites?

RQ2: How does materialism affect the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on social media site?

RQ3: What is the mechanism that drives highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style?

RQ4: Under what condition does the mechanism drive highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style?

3.3 STUDY 1 RESEARCH METHOD

Because the first study seeks to understand the important attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites, it followed the content analysis method adopted by Smith et al. (2012). Content analysis is a quantitative research strategy (Bryman & Bell, 2015) that can be used for “making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristic of messages” (Holsti, 1969, 14). Objectivity refers to the “transparency” in classifying data categories in order to minimize personal bias of the data analysts (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 194). Being systematic means that the classification of categories is conducted consistently (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Content analysis allows researchers to “quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner” (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 195) and to analyse both visual and textual materials (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Related to this study, content analysis was used because it allowed the researcher to examine attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media systematically and objectively (Smith et al., 2012).

3.3.1 Sampling

In content analysis, there are several stages in choosing a sample because the method can involve different layers of documents. For example, one researcher may want to examine how the word “courage” was used in a business environment. The researcher first selected four types of newspapers because these kinds of newspapers were related significantly with the research objective. Later, the researcher selected 600 news items appearing within these newspapers (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

In this research, there were two phases of sampling. The first stage was to select social media accounts that reflected materialism values. The second stage was to choose brand-related posts within the social media accounts.

3.3.1.1 Sampling social media accounts

Search terms were established to be entered into Google to identify accounts created by consumers on blogs, Twitter and Facebook (Kozinets, 2015, p. 165). “Louis Vuitton” was used as a search term for the following reasons. First, Louis Vuitton is a famous and highly conspicuous luxury fashion brand (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2015). Second, materialism is significantly related to involvement in fashion clothing (Cass, 2001). On Twitter, the search term “#Louis Vuitton hashtag on Twitter” was put on Google. On Facebook, the search term “#Louis Vuitton hashtags on Facebook” was put on Google. The blogs were sampled using snowball sampling. Snowball sampling allows the researcher to identify further members of the population (Saunders et al., 2009). Specifically, on Twitter and Facebook, users often add the links of their blogs. From these blog links, other blog accounts were identified.

A non-probability judgment sampling was used to choose accounts on Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Judgement sampling refers to the selection of a sample that is considered the most suitable for the research objective, which is mainly based on the evaluation of the researcher (Satyaprasad & Krishnaswami, 2010). Judgment sampling allows researchers to select the sample that reflects typical characteristics required of the sample member (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013). Specifically, this sampling technique allowed the researcher to select account samples that were non-commercial and relevant to the construct of materialism.

Criteria for selecting the accounts on Facebook, Twitter and blogs were established. Specifically, the accounts needed to provide descriptively sophisticated content about brands. Furthermore, they needed to show recent and regular posts about brands and should be created by consumers. Accounts that were used for commercial purposes were eliminated.

The identification of the accounts that were created by consumers and not used for commercial purposes was based on long-term observation. First, accounts should not contain sponsor information. Identifying sponsored content mainly relied on the statements revealed by consumers on social media sites. According to the Federal

Trade Commission, consumers need to disclose sponsor information on their social media post (FTC 2013). Thus, accounts were not to contain information about sponsored product, affiliate links, shop my style, ad networks, or consistently focused on one specific brand in the posts, it was assumed that the content was non-commercial. Second, if users did not reveal in their profiles that they were professional bloggers, corporates or celebrities, it was assumed that accounts were generated by consumers.

Boeije, (2010) suggested that a group of six to ten participants was suitable for a non-probability sample (Boeije, 2010, p. 64). Therefore, five account samples for each social media type (Facebook, Twitter and blogs) were selected, which totalled 15 account samples. Tables 3.1 presents the selected account samples.

Table 3.1

Account Sample Names and URLs on Facebook, Blogs and Twitter

Account sample	Name	URL
Facebook	Jessiekessie	https://jessiekessie.wordpress.com/about/
	The seventh of July	https://www.facebook.com/theseventhofjuly
	Olaizolav	https://www.facebook.com/olaizolav/?fref=ts
	Vintage Bird Girl	https://www.facebook.com/VintageBirdGirl
	wantgetrepeat	https://www.facebook.com/wantgetrepeat/photos
Blog	What I wore 2 day	http://whatiwore2day.blogspot.com/
	Ephemera	http://sheilaephemera.blogspot.com.au/
	My everyday wear	http://myeverydaywear.blogspot.com/
	Di-alog	http://iwishiwastbackinstyle.blogspot.com.au/
	Secret hipster	http://secret-hipster.blogspot.com.au/
Twitter	Sofia	https://twitter.com/sofiinaranjo
	Meena Voguee	https://twitter.com/MeenaVoguee
	Bobby Miles	https://twitter.com/bobalicious1992
	Evita	https://twitter.com/EvitaKst?lang=en
	Chris G.	https://twitter.com/chrisgyr

3.3.1.2 Sampling within the social media account

The coding unit was an individual brand-related UGC. A post was considered a brand-related UGC if brands were mentioned or displayed in it (Smith et al., 2012). After eliminating unbranded and commercial UGCs, a probability systematic

sampling technique was used. This technique allowed the researcher to maintain a manageable sampling scope, but still guaranteed a reasonably representative collection of brand-related UGCs (Smith et al., 2012). Thus, systematic sampling was employed to collect brand-related UGC from the account samples on Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Only posts published by consumers from 10 July 2015 to 10 July 2016 were selected. After removing unbranded and commercial posts, one post was randomly selected from the first page on 10 July 2016, and then every fifth post was selected until 40 posts were gathered from Twitter and Facebook. On blogs, the first 40 posts were selected for each blog account because consumers created brand-related UGC on blogs less frequently than they did on Facebook and Twitter. In total, 200 posts were gathered from Twitter, Facebook and blogs. This sample size followed the suggestion by Smith et al. (2012). Tweets and retweets were collected on Twitter, status updates, wall posts, pictures and videos were collected on Facebook, and visual and textual posts were collected on blogs.

3.4 RESEARCH METHOD FOR STUDIES 2, 3 AND 4

The content analysis in the first study identified the important attributes of brand-related UGC about style. As it could not answer the “why” question (Bryman & Bell, 2015), it did not provide the antecedent that explained the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. Therefore, an experiment was used in Studies 2 and 3 in order to deal with this limitation of the content analysis. An experiment allows a researcher to establish a causal relationship between materialism and the intention to create brand-related UGC about style (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). The main purpose of an experiment is to examine whether a change in X (independent variable) can lead to a change in Y (dependent variable) when keeping others variables constant (Shadish et al., 2002). Studies 2 and 2 aimed to establish the causal relationship between materialism and the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on Facebook and blogs. Hence, the experiments allowed the researcher to test the main effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style.

Study 4 tested the mechanism that explained why materialism predicted the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. In addition, it tested the condition

that activated the mechanism. Furthermore, Study 4 aimed to rule out confounding variables. Given the objectives of the research, the experimental method was adopted. An experiment is used in explanatory research to answer “what”, “how” and “why” questions which allows the researcher to examine the mechanism that explains the relationship between two variables (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Moreover, an experiment allows the researcher to control extraneous variables that potentially weaken the inferences drawn between the independent and dependent variable (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.4.1 Justifications for the online experiments of Studies 2, 3 and 4

There are two kinds of experiments that could have been used in Studies 2, 3 and 4: a laboratory experiment and an online experiment. In this thesis, three online experiments were conducted. Specifically, Amazon Mechanical Turk was used, which provides internationally diversified samples (Ross, Zaldivar, Irani, & Tomlinson, 2009) that have been regarded as representative of the USA population (Camilleri, 2017; Sugathan, Ranjan, & Mulky, 2017; Wakefield & Wakefield, 2018).

The benefit of a laboratory experiment is that it allows the researcher control over the research process, which thus, can increase internal validity (Saunders et al., 2009). On the other hand, it can be a challenge to recruit a sample if it is related to a particular population (Schmidt, 1997). The benefits of an online experiment are that it can provide diverse participants, a quicker and higher response rate (Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004; Mason & Suri, 2012; Pettit, 2002), a bigger sample (Birnbaum, 2000; Mason & Suri, 2012) and is low in cost (Mason & Suri, 2012). Thus, an online experiment can increase external validity (Horton, Rand, & Zeckhauser, 2011). Furthermore, it can provide the same internal validity as a laboratory or field experiment (Horton et al., 2011). Because the samples for the three studies needed to be Facebook and blog users, it was more feasible to recruit a sample for an online than for a laboratory experiment.

However, there were disadvantages in using an online experiment. First, there was a risk of bias selection that could threaten valid inferences (Horton et al., 2011). For example, one worker could participate in the same experiment multiple times

(Horton et al., 2011). This was fixed by using a technical function on Amazon Mechanical Turk site to guarantee that participants could only perform the experiment once. Specifically, on Amazon Mechanical Turk, qualifications with the attribute, “no-retake”, was designed and assigned for each participant to strictly make sure that participants could only participate once.

A second disadvantage was that workers could interact with each other and discuss the topic on the discussion board. However, this disadvantage was addressed by the fact that the researcher could join in the discussion website, and monitor and report to the forum moderators so that they could remove the experiment information (Sharpe Wessling, Huber, & Netzer, 2017).

Third, another concern about online experiments is the risk of low quality data (Mason & Suri, 2012). Participants might join the experiment to gain money but are not interested in the quality of their responses (Mason & Suri, 2012). In this research, to resolve this issue, attention check questions were designed so that the researcher could monitor whether participants genuinely completed the survey. Specifically, attention check questions asked the participants to reveal which product categories and brands were presented in the treatment conditions.

Fourth, an important concern in using Amazon Mechanical Turk sample has been the potential for character misrepresentation (Sharpe Wessling et al., 2017). Character misrepresentation refers to participants who intentionally claim a false identity, ownership or behaviour (Sharpe Wessling et al., 2017). Sharpe Wessling et al. (2017) indicated that the risk of misrepresentation often occurs to rare screening options and flexible attributes, such as ownership rather than demography. The solution for this risk is to disguise the desired screener answers. Specifically, the screening questions should have various items where it is difficult for participants to know which response directs them to continue the experiment (Chandler & Paolacci, 2017). In this thesis, the misrepresentation might have happened from users who did not own blogs but claimed that they were using a blog. This is because users might be least likely to use blogs compared with other social media types, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In order to reduce this risk, the screen questions contained different options so that it was hard for participants to identify the social

media types required for the three online experiment. The screening items included Blog, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, YouTube, Pinterest and LinkedIn.

Despite these potential risks, prior research has shown that Amazon Mechanical Turk samples can provide reliability and validity relative to a traditional panel and, thus, can replicate traditional behaviour experiments (Ho, Kowatsch, & Ilic, 2014; Horton et al., 2011). Indeed, many researchers have used Amazon Mechanical Turk as a data collection source (Camilleri, 2017; Sugathan et al., 2017; Wakefield & Wakefield, 2018).

3.4.2 Sampling process for Studies 2, 3 and 4

3.2.2.1 Convenience sampling

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was utilized in this research. A convenience sample refers to one that is easy to approach by researchers (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Non-probability sampling is usually used when there are limitations in time and resources (Zikmund, 2011). Even though convenience sampling is commonly used, there is a risk of bias. Furthermore, it can provide limited credibility (Saunders et al., 2009). However, Saunders (2012) indicated that convenience samples are regularly related to the objective of the research. In this thesis, the participants were required to use Facebook and blogs, which was relevant to the aim of the research. Furthermore, controlled experiments with random sampling conducted in an online experiment allows researchers to isolate variables and the relationships between them (Mahar, 2016). If the manipulation is successful, there should be an effect in both probability and non-probability samples (Mahar, 2016). Therefore, using a convenience sample is not a problem. In this thesis, the samples were participants who used Facebook and blogs and were recruited on Amazon Mechanical Turk. The parameters were set so that when recruiting international participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk, each IP address could only have one chance to complete the survey (for pre-test, Studies 1 and 2, and Studies 2 and 3). When recruiting USA participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk for Study 4, each IP address could only participate in the survey once.

3.2.2.2 Sample size for Studies 2, 3 and 4

For a traditional laboratory experiment, while Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2014) recommended having at least 20 participants per cell (Hair et al., 2014), Moher, Dulberg, and Wells (1994) suggested that the sample size should be range from 10-12 participants per condition. While some scholars have advised the recruitment of a sample size for an online experiment that is similar to a laboratory experiment sample size, other researchers have suggested having an average of 20-30 participants per cell (Kittur, Chi, & Suh, 2008). In this research, Studies 2 and 3 consisted of two cells (low vs high materialism). Each cell included 49 to 70 participants per cell, which followed the sample sizes of previous research (Sokolova & Krishna, 2016). Study 4 included four cells (low vs high materialism) and (low vs highly symbolic brand). The sample size in each of these cells was range from 22 to 36 participants per cell on Facebook and from 20 to 25 on blogs (Balagué & De Valck, 2013).

3.5 STUDY 1 PROCEDURE

3.5.1 Coding categories

In study 1, to identify the attributes of brand-related UGC about style, it was first necessary to understand the attributes of brand-related UGC about style that highly materialistic consumers were likely to create on social media sites. Before coding data, materialism categories were developed from a prior literature review and from an inductive analysis of brand-related UGC conducted by the researcher (Smith et al., 2012). A coding dictionary that comprised attribute categories and operational definitions was derived from previous theory. A coding dictionary allows more than one coder to engage in the classification of the categories (Bryman & Bell, 2015) in order to secure consistency and validity (Kerr, Mortimer, Dickinson, & Waller, 2012; Smith et al., 2012). The materialism categories are described below.

Highly materialistic consumers are likely to view social power as a central value in their life (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002). They tend to believe that products and brands can help them to indicate social status (Richins, 2017). Thus, highly materialistic consumers, who are likely to feel vulnerable from social power threat, are more likely to rely on brands to cope with their state of powerlessness

than low materialistic consumers (Richins, 2017). Values can be formed through style by combining consumption items (Kjeldgaard, 2009). As a result, highly materialistic consumers might be more likely to depend on products or brands to indicate style that can express social status than low materialistic consumers. The desire for social status style can be manifested through the followings categories:

To show a celebrity's style; to look like a celebrity; to show a positive emotional response toward a celebrity's style. Materialism is significantly related to a high level of celebrity worship (Reeves et al., 2012). Associating with celebrities can communicate status because they are related to success and wealth (Gountas et al., 2012). To associate with a celebrity on social media can refer to imitate the poses of models/celebrities reflected in traditional fashion magazines (Engholm & Hansen-Hansen, 2014; Harju & Huovinen, 2015; McQuarrie et al., 2013). Moreover, consumers tend to present their knowledge and passion for their favourite celebrity styles (Hamilton & Hewer, 2010).

To show luxurious qualities of brands. Highly materialistic consumers are likely to view possessions and acquisitions as vehicles to strengthen their status (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Luxury brands are those that can convey status (Grossman & Shapiro, 1986), and are usually reflected through their luxurious qualities (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). The luxurious qualities of brands are exquisite, glamorous, stunning, crafted, the best quality, sophisticated and superior (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004).

To boast about expensive price. Materialism is positively related to conspicuous consumption in order to show social status (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). Conspicuousness refers to publicly consumed luxury products, including extremely expensive items (Richins, 1994a), that cost the high price of products (Richins, 1994a; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004).

To show a fashionable trend. Social status can be gained from the ways individuals can reflect contemporary trends through consumption (O'cass & McEwen, 2004).

To show a positive emotional response to a fashionable trend. Positive emotional expression can serve as a vehicle to signal a positive impression (Leary,

1995). For example, when consumers are exposed to dissatisfying purchase experiences, they are often less likely to spread negative WOM because they want to “avoid an undesirable self-image as an incompetent consumer”, such as a lack of ability to seek a good bargain, an unwise purchase decision, and an incapability of superior product knowledge (Philp & Ashworth, 2014; Philp, Pyle, & Ashworth, 2014). Rather, consumers are likely to generate a positive word-of-mouth but share (transmit) a negative word-of-mouth in order to maintain a positive self-view (Angelis, Bonezzi, Peluso, Rucker, & Costabile, 2012).

To promote the content of a user’s blog. On social media sites, social status can be expressed through the number of views, followers and comments (McQuarrie et al., 2013). Thus, in order to accumulate views, followers and comments, highly materialistic consumers who use blogs are likely to promote their blog content. Blogs are considered to be an online personal journal for self-presentation (McQuarrie et al., 2013) that can indicate deep information about brands (Li & Du, 2011; Pan et al., 2007; Stubb, 2018). Compared with blogs, on Facebook, users tend to create frequent and shallow UGC (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Davenport et al., 2014). Therefore, it was argued that promoting a rich UGC on blogs might support highly materialistic consumers to gain more followers and views than re-sharing a shallow UGC on Facebook

Highly materialistic consumers are likely to have greater needs for meaning than low materialistic consumers (Micken & Roberts, 1999; Richins, 1994a), hence, apart from desire for social status meaning, highly materialistic consumers might rely on material objects to seek other meaning. This desire can be regularly manifested when acquiring brands. For example, highly materialistic consumers are motivated to purchase products in order to express their identity (Dittmar & Kapur, 2011). Thus, Highly materialistic consumers who tend to emphasize “concrete” meaning in life (Micken & Roberts, 1999) and regularly feel self-threat (Richins, 2017), might be more likely to rely on goods or brands to respond to the need for meaning than others. The desire for meaning can be expressed through the following categories:

To display personal style. Highly materialistic consumers have more ability to identify meanings expressed by different types of brands than low materialistic

consumers (Richins, 1994a). Personal style can be achieved through arrangement (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry Jr, 1989; Kron, 1983), and a combination of various brands (Holt, 1998; Tian et al., 2001).

To show the uniqueness of the brands. Personal meaning can be shaped through engaging with unique products, such as a scarcity or limited supply of products (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004), vintage goods, thrift brands, hand-crafted goods, and personalized items that are not sold in mass marketplaces, but may be only found in non-conventional outlets (Tian et al., 2001). Another way of forming unique value is to customize product designs to suit individual tastes and preferences (Tian et al., 2001).

To show expertise about the brands; to show how a product can be use; to recommend brands. Highly materialistic consumers are likely to consider themselves as opinion leaders who enjoy providing information about products to affect purchase decisions and attitudes of other consumers toward brands (Fitzmaurice & Comegys, 2006). Opinion leaders can influence other individuals through their experience, expertise and superior knowledge about a product (Eastman, Eastman, & Eastman, 2002). Personal meaning can be created through expert knowledge about products and from evaluations of different consumption options (Holt, 1998).

To show a positive emotional response toward brands; to show how their styles make them feel. Highly materialistic consumers are likely to be loyal to a brand (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012) and are likely to experience positive, product-evoked emotions before and shortly after purchasing luxury products (Richins, 2013). Personal value can be created through the capability of expressing intense emotion toward products (Holt, 1998).

To interact with other audiences about personal style. Highly materialistic consumers are likely to use brands for significant self-transformation (Richins, 2011). Improving relationships with others is one type of self-transformation that highly materialistic consumers expect to achieve when using brands (Richins, 2011). Personal meaning can be formed through interactions with others about one's distinctive style (Holt, 1998).

Table 3.2 presents the categories of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites.

Table 3.2

Attribute categories of Brand-Related UGC about Style on Social Media Sites

Attribute category	Definition
<i>To look like a celebrity</i>	Use body, hairstyle, muscles and facial expression to imitate the pose of models/celebrities
<i>To show luxurious qualities of brands</i>	Crafted, work of art, exquisite beauty, sophisticated, timeless
<i>To show a style of celebrity</i>	Demonstrate styles of celebrity
<i>To boast about expensive price</i>	Mention high price of the brands
<i>To show a fashionable trend</i>	Pictures or clips about the trends of products from webpages, e-tailers
<i>To show a positive emotional response towards a celebrity's style</i>	Expressing positive sentiment toward a celebrity's style
<i>To show a positive emotional response towards a fashionable trend</i>	Positive sentiment toward fashionable trend
<i>To display personal style</i>	Presenting combinations of various products (with brand names included)
<i>To show the uniqueness of the brands</i>	Scarcity, limited supply of products, vintage goods, thrift brands, hand-crafted goods, and personalized items
<i>To promote the content of a user's blog</i>	Share content of their own blogs
<i>To show how a product can be used</i>	Practical attributes of product, performance of products
<i>To interact with other audiences about personal style</i>	Invite others to communicate about the style; link their content with the name of other users' accounts
<i>To show a positive emotional response towards brands</i>	Positive sentiment toward brands
<i>To show how their styles make them feel</i>	Emotion about personal styles
<i>To recommend brands</i>	Mention the name of brand when displaying personal styles or suggesting that the brands are "must have"
<i>To show expertise about the brands</i>	Consumers share the content of the clip about the information of brands; content about product/ service characteristics or business activities (take-over, brands' collaborations)

3.5.2 Coding process

Data was coded manually by the researcher. If brand-related UGC contained more than one materialism category, it was coded “yes” to more than one category. Furthermore, 5% of the data was coded by one of the researcher’s supervisors. Any disagreements in coding were discussed to reach common agreement. The disagreements were mainly around the definitions of “recommending brands” and “expertise about the brands”. The details of the coding process are described below. (See Appendix A for an example of the brand-related UGC for the coding process).

To look like a celebrity. Brand-related UGC was coded as “yes” if the content showed pictures and/or a video of consumers using their body, hairstyle, muscles or facial expression to imitate the pose of models/celebrities; otherwise, it was coded “no”.

To show the luxurious qualities of brands. Brand-related UGC was coded as “yes” if the content indicated one of the following attributes about brands: crafted/ work of art/ exquisite beauty/ sophisticated/ /timeless; otherwise, it was coded “no”. For example, a tweet was coded “yes” when it said: “The craftsmanship is impeccable”.

To boast about expensive price. Brand-related UGC was coded as “yes” if the content indicated that consumers mentioned the expensive price of the brands; otherwise, it was coded “no”. For example, a post on a blog was coded “yes” when it showed: “These were \$298 but worth every penny”.

To show a celebrity’s style. Brand-related UGC was coded “yes” if the content explicitly featured the style of a celebrity through a picture or text; otherwise, it was coded “no”. For example, a tweet on Twitter was coded “yes” when it showed the picture of a celebrity with a post: “Daria Korchina wearing the beautiful sunflower dress at Dolce & Gabbana Alta #DGLovesNaples”.

To show a fashionable trend. Brand-related UGC was coded “yes” if the content showed a picture or a clip about products from webpages and/or e-tailers; otherwise, it was coded “no”.

To show a positive emotional response to a celebrity’s style. Brand-related UGC was coded as “yes” if the content showed a positive emotion toward a celebrity’s style; otherwise, it was coded “no”. For example, a tweet was coded “yes” when it showed the picture of a celebrity’s outfit and said: “not too crazy about the colour but this is beautiful”.

To show a positive emotional response to a fashionable trend. Brand-related UGC was coded “yes” if the content showed a positive sentiment toward a fashionable trend; otherwise, it was coded “no”. For example: a tweet was coded “yes” if it read: “my favourite”.

To display personal style. Brand-related UGC was coded “yes” if the content featured a picture showing a consumer displaying combinations of various products. Furthermore, a brand name were included to illustrate their style; otherwise, it was coded “no”. For example, a brand-related UGC in a blog was coded “yes” when it showed a picture of a blogger wearing an outfit together with various brands: “Blouse, Maeve (consignment). Pants, Polo Ralph Lauren. Shoes, Seychelles. Sunglasses, Marc Jacobs. Earrings, Francesca’s Closet. Necklace, handmade gift. Bag, Nordstrom Rack”.

To show the uniqueness of the brands. Brand-related UGC was coded “yes” if the content explicitly indicated one of the following brand attributes: vintage, hand-crafted, scarce or no longer produced, customized, and limited supply; otherwise, it was coded “no”. For example, one brand-related UGC on a blog was coded “yes” when it showed: “I completely adore this wonderful handmade (in France!) vintage silk Pierre Cardin pencil skirt”.

To promote the content of a user’s blog. Brand-related UGC was coded “yes” if the content showed that consumers shared links of their own blog content; otherwise, it was coded “no”.

To show how a product can be used. Brand-related UGC was coded “yes” if the content featured a practical attribute and/or performance of a product. For example, one brand-related UGC on a blog was coded “yes” when it showed: “Easy pieces to take off and put back on”; otherwise, it was coded “no”.

To interact with other audiences about personal style. Brand-related UGC was coded “yes” if the content indicated the fact that consumers invited others to communicate style and/or link their content with the name of other users’ accounts; otherwise, it was coded “no”. For example, one brand-related UGC on a blog was coded “yes” when it said: “What’s your take on patriotic apparel?” or “Linking up to Patti’s “Visible Monday” over at Not Dead Yet Style”.

To show a positive emotional response to brands. Brand-related UGC was coded “yes” if the content featured a positive sentiment about the brand; otherwise, it was coded “no”. For example, one brand-related UGC on Facebook was coded “yes” when it indicated that: “I’m so in love with it”.

To show how their styles make them feel. Brand-related UGC was coded “yes” if the content showed the fact that consumers expressed their feelings toward their style; otherwise, it was coded “no”. For example, one brand-related UGC on blog showed that: “Excessive bling. Sometimes you want subtle and sometimes you want to shout”.

To recommend brands. Brand-related UGC was coded “yes” if the content mentioned the name of the brand when displaying a personal style or suggested that the brands were “must have”; otherwise, it was coded “no”. For example, one brand-related UGC on blog was coded “yes” when it indicated that: “Blouse, Maeve (consignment). Pants, Polo Ralph Lauren. Shoes, Seychelles. Sunglasses, Marc Jacobs. Earrings, Francesca’s Closet. Necklace, handmade gift. Bag, Nordstrom Rack” when featuring styles. Or one brand-related UGC on Facebook showed that: “Must have for your closet” #tweet #red #musthave #ootd #look.

To show expertise about the brands. Brand-related UGC was coded “yes” if the content presented the links indicating information about the brands or content

about product/ service characteristics or business activities (take-over, brands' collaborations); otherwise, it was coded "no". For example, one brand-related UGC on Facebook was coded "yes" when it featured a link about a fair of vintage products including entry price, product collections, date and time of event.

3.5.2.1 Inter-coder reliability

Inter-coder reliability refers to the notion that more than one person codes the data and then the results are compared each other (Amy, 2012). Inter-coder reliability for the categories was calculated by using Holsti's (1969) formula: $N * (\text{average percent agreement}) / 1 + [(N-1) * (\text{average percent agreement})]$, where N referred to the number of coders. The formula for percent agreement was: $2M / N_1 + N_2$, where M referred to the coding decisions on which the two coders were in agreement, and N_1 and N_2 referred to the number of coding decisions made by coder one and code two, respectively (Chang, 2011). The inter-reliability rate was 88% which was an acceptable result (Kassarjian, 1977).

3.6 STUDY 2 PROCEDURE

3.6.1 Experimental design

One hundred and twenty eight international participants were recruited on Amazon Mechanical Turk comprised of 58.6% males and 41.4% females (Mean_{age} = 33.68). Participants were assigned to one of the two groups with two levels (low vs high materialism). Materialism was a measured independent variable. Participants were told that the aim of the study was to explore the impact of brands on user-generated content on social media sites.

The participants were offered an appealing motivation to prevent them from quitting the experiment and to continue in the experiment (Horton et al., 2011). Specifically, participants were paid \$3 for 20 minutes. Hara et al. (2018) analysed 2,676 workers performing 3.8 million tasks on Amazon Mechanical Turk. They found that the median hourly wage was about \$2 per hour. Only 4% of workers earned more than \$7.25 per hour, and the average requester paid more than \$11 per hour (Hara et al., 2018). Therefore, \$3 per 20 minutes was fair in the current study

and could motivate workers to complete the task. Furthermore, the important questions were put first, followed by the less important questions. This question order was set up so that in case participants became bored or felt fatigue towards the end of the experiment, it would not affect the important parts of the experiment.

The procedure of the online experiment is described as follows. At the beginning of the online experiment, participants first answered the questions about gender and age. Then, they were told to select among various kinds of social media they were currently using. The social media options comprised blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, YouTube, Pinterest and LinkedIn. Only Facebook users were allowed to continue the experiment and the other social media users were screened out. After that, the participants were asked to rate the Materialism Values Scale (MVS) by Richins (2004). Next, participants rated the scale of the intention to create brand-related UGC. Then, participants were asked to rate their reasons for creating brand-related UGC. Kellogg, Kleenex, Nike and Rolex were selected because these were global brands that covered a variety of consumption domains and had different levels of high and low symbolic value. Finally, the participants were asked to reveal the brands and the types of product categories mentioned in the online experiment for attention checks. The entire procedure took approximately from 20 minutes.

3.6.2 Measurements

3.6.2.1 Independent variable

3.6.2.1.1 Materialism. Since materialism is a life value that is constructed over a long time, it is highly resistant to temporary experimental manipulation (Shrum, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2005). Therefore materialism was not manipulated but was measured by the 8-item Materialism Values Scale (MVS) by Richins (2004).

There was a reason to use eight of the nine items from the MVS. The MVS was developed based on the USA context (Richins & Dawson, 1992), and the original scale contained 18 mixed items, including reverse and positive items. A short-form scale that consists of nine items was developed in 2004 (Richins, 2004). The scale has shown acceptable reliability, validity and psychometrics for measuring

the overall materialism value (Richins, 2004), and scholars have previously used the MVS (Richins, 2004) successfully (Kim & Kramer, 2015; Rindfleisch et al., 2009). The 9-item MVS scale, which has not shown good internal consistency when applied in a cross-border context (Afonso Vieira, 2009; Wong, Rindfleisch, & Burroughs, 2003), contains one reverse item, “I try to keep my life simple, as far as the possessions are concerned”. Research has found that this reverse item has caused measurement problems when applied in a cross-nation context (Griffin, Babin, & Christensen, 2004). To solve this issue, many scholars have suggested only using the positive items of the scale (Marsh, 1996; Meloni & Gana, 2001; Schriesheim & Eisenbach, 1995). For example, some research dropped the reverse item when applied in an international context (Cleveland, Laroche, & Hallab, 2013; Cleveland, Laroche, & Papadopoulos, 2009; Felix & Garza, 2012). In this study, the samples were selected internationally from Amazon Mechanical Turk, the reverse item was eliminated. Thus, the 8-item scale was used in this research.

3.6.2.2 Dependent variables

3.6.2.2.1 Intention to create brand-related UGC. This variable was measured by giving participants an instruction:

Imagine you recently purchased a new box of Kellogg’s cereal; a new roll of Kleenex paper towel; a new pair of Nike sneakers and a Rolex watch. How likely are you to create digital content about the brand and publish it on your Facebook?

The intention to create brand-related UGC was measured by three items, measured on a 7-point Likert scales (Unlikely/Likely, Definitely would not/ Definitely would, Improbable/Probable) (Till & Busler, 1998) .

3.6.2.2.2 Brand-related UGC about style. This variable was measured using the coding categories found from the content analysis of Study 1. Participants were asked to rate the reasons (14 items found in the content analysis) to create digital content about the brand on their Facebook on a 7-point scale (1 = Extremely unimportant to 7 = Extremely important). Two items were removed including “to express my positive emotional response to celebrity’s style” and “to boast about expensive price of the brands” due to the time constraint and they featured very little on social media sites 0.53 % and 0.17% respectively.

Table 3.3 summarises the measurement items in Study 2.

Table 3.3

Summary of Measurement Items in Study 2

Construct	Measurement item
Materialism (Richins, 2004)	<p>I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.</p> <p>The things I own say a lot about how well I am doing in life.</p> <p>I like to own things that impress people.</p> <p>Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.</p> <p>I like a lot of luxury in my life.</p> <p>My life would be better if I owned certain things I do not have.</p> <p>I would be happier if I could afford to buy more things.</p> <p>It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I cannot afford to buy all the things I would like.</p>
Intention to create brand-related UGC	<p>How likely are you to create digital content about the brand and publish it on your Facebook/blogs?</p>
Brand-related UGC about style	<p>To look like a celebrity</p> <p>To show the style of my favourite celebrity</p> <p>To show fashionable trends</p> <p>To show how luxurious the brand is</p> <p>To show my positive emotional response to a fashionable trend</p> <p>To display my personal style</p> <p>To show the uniqueness of the brands</p> <p>To recommend the brand</p> <p>To promote my blog content</p> <p>To show my expertise about the brands</p> <p>To show how a product can be used</p> <p>To interact with other audiences about my personal style</p> <p>To show my positive emotional response to the brands</p> <p>To show how my personal style makes me feel</p>

3.6.2.3 Attention checks

Participants were asked the following attention checks questions:

- 1) What brands were presented in this study?
- 2) What product categories were presented in this study?

3.7 STUDY 3 PROCEDURE

One hundred and thirty two Amazon Mechanical Turk international participants (participants who joined in Study 1 were eliminated) comprising 56 % males and 44 % females (Mean_{age} = 35.18) were recruited for the Study 3 online experiment. Only participants who used blogs were allowed to take part in. Participants were randomly assigned into one of the two groups (low vs high materialism). Materialism was a dependent variable measured by 8 positive item MVS (Richins, 2004). The rest of the online experiment procedure and measurement were identical to that of the online experiment in Study 2.

3.8 STUDY 4 PROCEDURE

3.8.1 Stimulus development

In order to test the impact of varying levels of symbolic brands, symbolic value of brands was manipulated. Thus, various pairs of low and highly symbolic brands were selected for pre-testing (pre-test 1). In addition, another pre-test (pre-test 2) was conducted to eliminate possible alternative explanations (brand attitude and brand familiarity).

3.8.1.1 Pre-Test 1

The aim of the first pre-test was to select brands that had high and low symbolic scores. Brand symbolism was measured by two items using a 7-point scale: “How much does this brand symbolize what kind of person uses it?” (1 = Not at all symbolic to 7 = Highly symbolic); and “To what extent does this brand communicate something specific about the person who uses it?” (1 = Does not communicate a lot to 7 = Communicates a lot) (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Thirty participants (participants who took part in Studies 1 and 2 were removed) were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk to rate a list of 20 strong, international brands. The brands were selected from a previous study (Chernev, Hamilton, & Gal, 2011) and Euromonitor (2016). The brands involved Nike, Adidas, Puma, Polo, Lacoste, Abercrombie & Fitch, The NorthFace, Timberland, Columbia, Seiko, Omega, Rolex, Coke, Pepsi, Gatorade, Powerade, Kellogg’s (Chernev et al., 2011), Viva, Kleenex and Sprite (Euromonitor, 2016).

It was found that Rolex ($M = 5.58, SD = 1.23$) and Nike ($M = 5.42, SD = 1.26$) had the highest mean of symbolic value while Kellogg ($M = 3.38, SD = 2.08$) and Kleenex ($M = 3.70, SD = 2.02$) had the lowest mean of symbolic value. Therefore, Rolex (watch) and Nike (sneakers) were selected as highly symbolic brands while Kellogg (cereal) and Kleenex (paper towel) were chosen as low symbolic brands. Thus, Rolex and Nike were averaged to create one composited highly symbolic brand variable. Similarly, Kellogg and Kleenex were averaged to create one composited low symbolic brand variable (Cronbach's $\alpha > .70$ for all brands). Furthermore, the General Linear Model (GLM) test revealed that the mean score of the highly symbolic brands ($M = 5.50, SD = .98$) was higher than the mean score of low symbolic brands ($M = 3.54, SD = 1.96$), Wilks' Lambda = .44, $F(1, 29) = 37.59$, $p = .00$.

3.8.1.2 Pre-test 2

The aims of pretest 2 were to examine whether the highly symbolic brands and the low symbolic brands had equal brand attitude and familiarity scores. Brand attitude was measured using a 3-item scale with a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Bad to 7 = Good; 1 = Unpleasant to 7 = Pleasant; 1 = Dislike to 7 = Like) (Shen & Chen, 2007). Brand familiarity was measured using a 1-item scale with a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all familiar to 7 = Very familiar) (Cronbach's $\alpha > .70$ for all brands) (Swaminathan, Page, & Gürhan-Canli, 2007).

Data were collected from 72 participants (who were different from the participants recruited for Studies 1 and 2 and Pre-Test 1) on the following brands: Nike, Adidas, Puma, Polo, Lacoste, Abercrombie & Fitch, The NorthFace, Timberland, Columbia, Seiko, Omega, Rolex, Viva, Kleenex, Coke, Pepsi, Sprite, Gatorade, Powerade, and Kellogg's.

The GLM test indicated that highly symbolic brands ($M = 5.94, SD = 1.18$) and the low symbolic brands had a similar mean score on brand attitude ($M = 6.00, SD = .95$), Wilks's Lambda = 1.00, $F(1, 71) = .16, p = .69$, ns. Furthermore, highly symbolic brands ($M = 6.22, SD = .69$) and low symbolic brands ($M = 6.28, SD = .80$) had similar brand familiarity, Wilks' Lambda = 1.00, $F(1, 71) = .37, p = .55$, ns.

Pre-tests 1 and 2 indicated that Nike and Rolex had higher symbolic value than Kellogg and Kleenex. Furthermore, consumers had a similar brand attitude and familiarity toward highly symbolic brands (Nike & Rolex) and low symbolic brands (Kellogg & Kleenex).

3.8.2 Experimental design

The design of the Study 4 online experiment consisted of one manipulated factor (brand symbolism: low vs high) between participants' factorial design, with materialism used as a measurable independent variable and knowledge self-efficacy about brands as a mediating variable (continuous). A between-participants approach was used rather than a within-participants to avoid the impact of order effects, such as practice, fatigue, sensitization, and carry-over (Chang, Chen, & Tan, 2012).

Participants were informed that the main aim of the study was to investigate the impact of brands on user-generated content on social media. The online experiment was set up on Amazon Mechanical Turk with the requirement that participants were to be located in the USA. Two hundred and nine USA citizens who were users of Facebook and users of blogs were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk. The sample comprised 44% males and 55 % females (Mean_{age} = 37.72).

First, participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, types of social media usage and annual income, and then they were asked to rate the MVS by Richins (2004). After that, participants were randomly assigned into two conditions: low vs highly symbolic brands. In the highly symbolic condition, participants were asked to imagine that they had recently purchased a new pair of Nike sneakers and a Rolex watch. In the low symbolic brand condition, participants were told to imagine that they had recently purchased a new box of Kellogg's cereal and a new roll of Kleenex paper towels (See Appendix H for details of the study 4 experiment). Then, they rated the intention to create brand-related UGC. After that, participants evaluated the reasons to create brand-related UGC. Next, participants assessed the knowledge self-efficacy about brands scale, and then answered the brand symbolism scale for manipulation checks, and brand attitude and brand familiarity for

confounding checks. Last, the participants were asked to reveal the types of product categories and brands mentioned in the online experiment for attention checks. The entire procedure lasted approximately 20 minutes for one condition.

3.8.3 Measurements

3.8.3.1 Independent variables

3.8.3.1.1 Materialism was measured by the 9-item Materialism Values Scale (Richins, 2004) on a 7-point scale (1= Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree). Since the participants were representative in the USA, the reverse item, “I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned” was not deleted.

3.8.3.1.2 Brand symbolism was measured by two items on a 7-point scale: “How much does this brand symbolize what kind of person uses it?” (1= Not at all symbolic to 7 = Highly symbolic); and “To what extent does this brand communicate something specific about the person who uses it?” (1 = Does not communicate a lot to 7 = Communicates a lot) (Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

3.8.3.1.3 Knowledge self-efficacy about brands was adapted from the Knowledge Self-Efficacy scale in Kankanhalli et al. (2005) by changing the relevant words so that the items could be fit into this thesis context.

3.8.3.2 Dependent variables

3.8.3.2.1 Intention of creating brand-related UGC. Participants received an instruction stating: Imagine you recently purchased a new box Kellogg’s cereal; a new roll of Kleenex paper towel; a new pair of Nike sneakers and a Rolex watch. How likely are you to create digital content about the brand and publish it on your Facebook?” The intention to create brand-related UGC was measured by three items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Unlikely to 7 = Likely; 1= Definitely would not to 7 = Definitely would, 1 = Improbable to 7 = Probable) (Till & Busler, 1998).

3.8.3.2.2 Reasons to create brand-related UGC about style Two additional items were added in this study: “to express my positive emotional response to

celebrity’s style” and “to boast about expensive price of the brands”. Thus, the scale was measured by 16 items.

Table 3.4 presents the summary of Summary of Study 4 Measurement

Table 3.4
Summary of Study 4 Measurements

Construct	Measurement item
Materialism (MVS, Richins, 2004)	<p>I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.</p> <p>The things I own say a lot about how well I am doing in life.</p> <p>I like to own things that impress people.</p> <p>I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.</p> <p>Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.</p> <p>I like a lot of luxury in my life.</p> <p>My life would be better if I owned certain things I do not have.</p> <p>I would be happier if I could afford to buy more things.</p> <p>It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I cannot afford to buy all the things I would like.</p>
Intention to creating brand-related UGC	How likely are you to create digital content about the brand and publish it on your Facebook/blogs?
Brand-related UGC about style	<p>To look like a celebrity</p> <p>To show the style of my favourite celebrity</p> <p>To show fashionable trends</p> <p>To show how luxurious the brand is</p> <p>To show my positive emotional response to fashion trends</p> <p>To brag about expensive price of the brand</p> <p>To show my positive emotional response to the celebrity’s style</p> <p>To display my personal style</p> <p>To show the uniqueness of the brand</p> <p>To recommend the brand</p> <p>To promote my blog content</p> <p>To show my expertise about the brand</p> <p>To show how the product can be used</p> <p>To interact with other audiences about my personal style</p> <p>To show my positive emotional response to the brand</p> <p>To show how my personal style makes me feel</p>
Knowledge self-efficacy about brands (Kankanhalli et al., 2005)	<p>I have confidence in my ability to provide knowledge about the brands that others in my blogs/ Facebook consider valuable.</p> <p>I have the expertise required to provide valuable knowledge about the brands for my blogs/ Facebook.</p> <p>It does not really make any difference whether I share my knowledge about the brands with others in my bogs/Facebook (Reverse coded).</p> <p>Most others can provide more valuable knowledge about the brands than I can. (Reverse coded)</p>

3.8.3.3 Confounding check

Brand attitude was measured by three items on seven point scale (1 = Bad to 7 = Good; 1 = Unpleasant to 7 = Pleasant, 1 = Dislike to 7 = Like). (Martin, Wentzel, & Tomczak, 2008)

Brand familiarity was measured by one item using a 7-point scale (1 = Not at all familiar to 7 = Very familiar) (Swaminathan et al., 2007).

3.8.3.4 Attention check

Participants were asked to answer the two attention check questions identical to those used in Study 2.

A summary of the measurements in Study 4 is presented in Table 3.4.

3.9 SUMMARY

This chapter provides the rationale for the use of the content analysis in Study 1 and for the experimental method used in Studies 2, 3 and 4. In addition, the chapter describes the procedure for the content analysis and the experiments. The next chapter illustrates the results from the four studies.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter reports the results of the four studies. First, the chapter presents the results of Study 1 which shows the summary of the attributes of brand-related UGC about style (Section 4.1.1). In addition, the implications of these results are discussed, which formed the basis of Study 2 (Section 4.1.2). Second, the chapter discusses the results of Study 2 (Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2), which formed the direction for Study 3. Third, the chapter discusses the results of Study 3 (Sections 4.3.1 4.3.2), which set the ground for Study 4. Fourth, the chapter provides the results of Study 4 (Section 4.4.1) and their discussion (Section 4.4.2).

4.2 STUDY 1 RESULTS

Study 1 aimed to identify the attributes of brand-related UGC about style. The study was conducted using the process outlined in Chapter 3 (see Sections 3.2.1 and 3.3.1). The objective of Study 1 was to address the following research question:

RQ1: What are the attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites?

Cross-tabulations was run to examine the frequencies of the attribute categories. The frequencies of the materialism attribute categories across the blogs, Facebook and Twitter are summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Category frequencies and percentage of Attributes of Brand-Related UGC Style across Blogs, Facebook and Twitter

Category of brand-related UGC about style	Attribute Categories	
	<i>n</i>	%
To display personal style	1,229	29.34
To look like a celebrity	788	18.81
To show a fashionable trend	499	11.91
To show how their styles make them feel	292	6.97
To recommend brands	280	6.68
To show the uniqueness of the brands	373	8.90
To show a positive emotional response to a fashionable trend	148	3.53
To promote the content of a user's blog	129	3.08
To show a celebrity's style	101	2.41
To show how a product can be used	98	2.34
To show the luxurious qualities of brands	63	1.50
To show expertise about the brands	62	1.48
To show a positive emotional response toward brands	50	1.19
To interact with other audiences about personal style	48	1.15
To show a positive emotional response to a celebrity's style	22	0.53
To boast about expensive price	7	0.17
Total	4,189	100

The aim of this study was to identify the attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites. The findings in Table 4.1 reveal that “display my personal style” category featured the most frequently (29.34%), while the second most frequent category was “to look like a celebrity” (18.81%). The results indicated that displaying one's self-image that is inspired by celebrities and showing how to combine different brands in order to shape personal style were important aspects of brand-related UGC about style. This result is consistent with prior research. For example, Dolbec and Fischer (2015) and McQuarrie et al. (2013) showed that

displaying personal style and celebrity looks were an important element for brand-related UGC on social media sites. The current results also supported the finding by Pihl (2014) who stated that for brand-related UGC about style, showing how a wide range of brands is assembled and combined is more important than emphasizing a specific brand. The distinctive attribute of brand-related UGC about style that advocates a set of brands rather than a focal brand and the image that is inspired from celebrity might explain the reason that other categories occurred less significantly.

First, the results in this study was a contrast with earlier studies, such as Kozinets et al. (2010) and Schau and Gilly (2003), which mainly focused on using one brand to define one's identity on social media. This finding is also different from prior research that highlighted the important role of brand advocacy (Schau & Gilly, 2003) and positive emotions towards brands in brand-related UGC (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Nikolinakou & King, 2018; Yuki, 2015). The explanation might be that consumers emphasized a technology product that tended to focus on evaluation (Schau & Gilly, 2003) while other products such as fashion led to more taste presentation that tended to more often combine different brands (Pihl, 2014). This might explain why categories in the present study that were related to a particular brand occurred relatively infrequently. For example, "fashionable trend", "positive emotion toward particular brands", "uniqueness of the brands", "luxury product quality", and "boast about expensive price" occupied 11.91%, 1.19 %, 8.90 %, 1.50 % and 0.17 % respectively.

Second, unlike previous research by Erz and Christensen (2018) and Lampel and Bhalla (2007) indicated sharing opinions and expertise were important vehicles for expressing self-identity on social media sites, the present study found that "how a product can be used", "recommend brands", and "expertise about the brands" occupied relatively infrequently (2.34%, 6.68% and 1.48% respectively). Moreover, McQuarrie et al. (2013) emphasized how passion, opinion expression and evaluation of brands, trends and styles can contribute to define consumers' style on social media sites. The results of the present study were different because they indicated that "how my styles makes me feel" and "positive emotion to fashionable trend"

appeared relatively infrequently (6.97% and 3.53%). In addition, while prior research has indicated that presenting “celebrity’s styles” and “positive emotion to celebrity’s style” were important in the online community (Hewer & Hamilton, 2012), the key difference here was that these categories occurred very relatively infrequently (2.41% and 0.53%).

Third, “interact with other audience” occupied 1.15 % of the coding frequencies, indicating that interaction with other audiences was not an important attribute of brand-related UGC about style. “Interact with other audience” referred to the fact that individuals asked others to talk about their style and tag the name of other users’ accounts. This result is congruent with prior research (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2015; McQuarrie, et al., 2013; Phillips et al., 2014). For example, McQuarrie et al. (2013) indicated that initially, bloggers interacted with their audience; however, when they managed to build a huge audiences, they stopped communicating with them. This was contrasted with previous research that found that one of the primary experiences of bloggers was to build a sense of community among other bloggers (Gannon & Prothero, 2016) and to interact with community members (Kozinets et al., 2010). Specifically, a blogger created tagged posts which requested other bloggers to create a post about a particular subject. Tagging another blogger was considered an activity that strengthened the relationships among users on social media (Gannon & Prothero, 2016). Lastly, another results of the current study was that the category, “promote my blog content”, however, occurred infrequently, being only 3.08 % of the total number of codings.

Taken together, the results highlighted the role of personal style and the celebrity look in brand-related UGC about style. The remaining attributes only played a relatively minor role in brand-related UGC about style. However, the findings had a number of limitations as follows:

First, the data was collected from social media sites (Facebook, Twitter and blogs). Therefore, the analysis was mainly focused on the content of online communicative acts rather than the complete set of observed acts of consumers in real-life (Kozinets, 2002). There were certain risks in online data collection, such as a lack of control, participants with an agenda, and participants’ masking of the truth

(Dickinson-Delaporte & Kerr, 2014). As a result, the generalizing of the results to the offline community could have limitations and require additional evidence (Kozinets, 2002). Specifically, the MVS was not measured in this study. Therefore, it was unknown whether the attributes of brand-related UGC about style were created by highly materialistic consumers.

Second, there was a bias in the sample selection. The account samples were not randomly selected in order to guarantee that they were free from commercial purposes and representative of materialism. In addition, brand-related UGC across all platforms focused on fashion product categories. Therefore, there were limitations in the generalization of the results to other product categories. Moreover, all of social media accounts in this study were created by female users. Therefore, Study 2 aimed to address these limitations and its results are presented in the next section.

4.3 STUDY 2 RESULTS

The aim of Study 2 was to examine the main effect of materialism on the intention to brand-related UGC about style. The study was conducted using the process outlined in Chapter 3 (see Sections 3.2.2 and 3.3.2). The study addressed the following research question:

RQ2: How does materialism affect the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on Facebook?

In order to address the research question above, hypothesis 1 (H1) was formulated as following:

H1: Consumers with a high level of materialism will report more favourable intentions to create brand-related UGC about style than consumers with a low level of materialism on Facebook.

ANOVA was used for the data analysis to identify whether there were any significant differences between two or more groups (Hair et al., 2014). The aim of this study was to find out if there was any significant difference between the low and highly materialistic consumers in terms of their intention to create brand-related

UGC about style. Before running ANOVA to test the hypotheses, attention questions were checked.

Attention check: most of the participants answered the attention check. In addition, 96% participants provided proper answer about the brands mentioned in this study. Furthermore, 87% participants answered properly about product category mentioned in this study. Among participants who did not answered properly about product category, 81% participants answered rightly all brands used in the experiment while only 19% participants answer properly one brands used in the study. Therefore, most of the participants were kept for analysis.

Before investigating whether there was effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style, a range of ANOVA was run in order to examine the effect of materialism on the reasons to create brand-related UGC on Facebook. The results showed that there was significant effect of materialism on 11 reasons on Facebook: “To display personal style”, “To look like a celebrity”, “To show fashion trend”, “To show style of celebrity”, “To show uniqueness of brand”; “To show how luxurious brand is”; “To promote my blog content”; “To show expertise of brands”; “Positive emotion to brand”; “To recommend brand”; and “How my styles make me feel”. Materialism had marginally significant effect on positive emotion to fashion trend on Facebook. In addition, there was non-significant effect of materialism on the intention to create UGC in order to show how product can be used and interact with other audiences on Facebook. Therefore, the two items “To show how product can be used” and “To interact with other audiences” were omitted. Thus, the total items for brand-related UGC about style on Facebook were reduced from 14 to 12.

Table 4.2 shows Means and p value for Effects of Materialism on reasons of creating UGC on Facebook

Table 4.2

Means and p value for Effects of Materialism on the reasons to create UGC on Facebook

Variables	Materialism		p
	Low Mat n=70	High Mat n=58	
To display personal style	4.09 (1.73)	4.98 (1.67)	.00
To look like a celebrity	2.34 (1.58)	3.52 (2.14)	.00
To show fashion trend	3.13 (1.76)	4.58 (1.90)	.00
To show style of celebrity	2.48 (1.73)	3.48 (2.05)	.00
To show uniqueness of brand	4.16 (1.56)	4.76 (1.73)	.04
To show how luxurious brand is	3.40 (1.73)	4.51 (1.82)	.00
To promote my blog content	3.52 (1.85)	4.23 (2.04)	.04
To show expertise of brands	3.71 (1.70)	4.53 (1.70)	.01
To show how product can be used	4.44 (1.42)	4.83 (1.71)	.17
To interact with other audiences	4.76 (1.62)	5.12 (1.69)	.22
Positive emotion to brand	4.81 (1.43)	5.47 (1.26)	.01
To recommend brand	4.91 (1.46)	5.53 (1.14)	.01
Positive emotion to fashion trend	4.02 (1.89)	4.68 (1.88)	.05
How my styles make me feel	3.96 (1.72)	4.89 (1.71)	.00

Before running ANOVA to investigate the effect of materialism on brand-related UGC about style, preliminary analyses were conducted to check: 1) the internal consistency of the scales of materialism, brand-related UGC about style; and 2) assumption checks of the variables, materialism and brand-related UGC about style on Facebook (see Appendix C for details).

Cronbach's (1951) alpha reliability coefficient was conducted in SPSS to assess the internal consistency of the items of the variables of materialism and brand-related UGC style on Facebook. According to Table 4.3, Cronbach's alphas of the scales were more than .7, which showed good reliability (Hair et al., 2014). Table 4.2 shows Cronbach's alphas for the measurement scales for each construct on Facebook.

Table 4.3

Cronbach's Alphas of Measurement Scales for each scale on Facebook (Study 2)

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Materialism Values Scale	8	.92
Brand-related UGC about style scale	12	.95

Participants were assigned to the low versus high materialism groups using a median split. ANOVA was run to test the main effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style.

The results showed that there was a statistically significant main effect of materialism on the intention to create UGC about style on Facebook, $F(1,126) = 13.54, p = .00$, with highly materialistic respondents ($M = 3.71, SD = 1.32$) found to be significantly more likely to create UGC about style on Facebook than low materialistic respondents ($M = 4.60, SD = 1.40$). Therefore, H1 was supported.

Table 4.4 shows Means, Standard Deviations and 95% Confidence Intervals for the Effects of Materialism on the Intention to Create UGC about Style on Facebook

Table 4.4

Means, Standard Deviations and 95% Confidence Intervals for the Effects of Materialism on the Intention to Create UGC about Style on Facebook

Materialism	Brand-related UGC about style*		
	<i>M (SD)</i>	95% CI	
		Lower bound	Upper bound
Low materialism ($n = 70$)	3.71 (1.32)	3.40	4.03
High materialism ($n = 58$)	4.60 (1.40)	4.23	4.97

Note. CI = confidence interval.

* $p < .01$

The data was collected solely on Facebook. Therefore, there was a limitation in generalization of the results to another social media platform such as blogs given the fact that Facebook and blogs are different; blogs focus on a specific topic (Müller, Goswami, & Krcmar, 2011), and provide an easy platform for self-presentation

through UGC. They are highly textual and visual, which can allow consumers to integrate their personal narratives about style (Kozinets, 2010). In addition, brand-related UGC on blogs can impact on sales (Dhar & Chang, 2009). Thus, it would be worthy examining whether the result could be generalized to blogs. The next section explores whether the effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style could be generalized from Facebook to blogs.

4.4 STUDY 3 RESULTS

This study aimed to examine whether the impact of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style could be generalized from Facebook to blogs. The study was conducted using the process outlined in Chapter 3 (see Sections 3.2.2 and 3.3.3). This study addressed the following research question:

RQ2: How does materialism affect brand-related UGC about style on blogs?

In order to address the research question above, hypothesis 1 (H1) was formulated as following:

H2: Consumers with a high level of materialism will report more favourable intentions to create brand-related UGC about style than consumers with a low level of materialism on blogs.

Before running ANOVA to test the hypotheses, attention questions were checked.

Attention check: Most of the participants answered the attention check questions. 96% of the participants answered properly the two names of the brands mentioned in this study. 3% of the participants answered properly one brands used in the experiment while only 1 % of the participants could not answer the name of the brands; however they could mention the two types of product categories. In addition, 96 % of the participants could identify the product categories. 2 % of the participants can reveal one product category but they could mention the two name of the brands. 1% of the participants could not answer the two product categories but they could clarify the two name of the brands. 1% of the participants could not provide the name of the two product categories properly but they could reveal one name of the two brands. Therefore, all of the participants were kept for analysis.

Before investigating whether there was effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style, a range of ANOVA was run in order to examine the effect of materialism on the reasons to create brand-related UGC on blogs. The results showed that there was significant effect of materialism on 13 reasons on Facebook: “To display personal style”, “To look like a celebrity”, “To show fashion trend”, “To show style of celebrity”, “To show uniqueness of brand”; “To show how luxurious brand is”; “To promote my blog content”; “To show expertise of brands”; “Positive emotion to brand”; “To recommend brand”; “Positive emotion to fashion trend”; “How my styles make me feel” and “To show how product can be used”. Furthermore, there was non-significant effect of materialism on the intention to create UGC in order to interact with other audiences on blogs. Therefore, the item “To interact with other audiences” were omitted. Thus, the total items for brand-related UGC about style on blogs was reduced from 14 to 13.

Table 4.5 shows means and p value for Main Effects of Materialism on reasons to create UGC on blogs

Table 4.5

Means and p value for Main Effects of Materialism on the reason to create UGC on blogs

Variables	Materialism		
	Low Mat n = 67	High Mat n = 65	p
To display personal style	4.11 (1.58)	4.99 (1.38)	.00
To look like a celebrity	1.84 (.93)	3.91 (1.86)	.00
To show fashion trend	3.12 (1.55)	4.68 (1.63)	.00
To show style of celebrity	1.76 (.93)	3.79 (1.84)	.00
To show uniqueness of brand	4.13 (1.65)	5.25 (1.25)	.00
To show how luxurious brand is	3.08 (1.55)	5.08 (1.29)	.00
To promote my blog content	4.99 (1.73)	5.52 (1.18)	.04
To show expertise of brands	4.01 (1.61)	5.23 (1.35)	.00
To show how product can be used	4.78 (1.52)	5.34 (1.27)	.03
To interact with other audiences	5.06 (1.60)	5.33 (1.26)	.28
Positive emotion to brand	4.69 (1.55)	5.38 (1.12)	.01
To recommend brand	5.04 (1.39)	5.61 (.97)	.01
Positive emotion to fashion trend	3.51 (1.61)	4.90 (1.67)	.00
How my styles make me feel	3.91 (1.65)	4.85 (1.54)	.00

Before performing an ANOVA to test the main effect, preliminary analyses examined: 1) the internal consistency of the scales of materialism and brand-related UGC about style on blogs; and 2) assumptions of the variables of materialism and brand-related UGC about style on blogs (see Appendix E for details).

Cronbach's (1951) alpha reliability coefficient was run in SPSS to examine the internal the consistency of the items of the scales on variables of materialism and brand-related UGC about style on blogs. The table revealed that Cronbach's alpha of all scales were more than .7 which indicated good reliability (Hair et al., 2014, p. 123). Table 4.6 shows Cronbach's alphas of measurement scales for each construct on blogs.

Table 4.6
Cronbach's Alphas of Measurement Scales for Each scale on Blogs (Study 3)

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Materialism Values Scale	8	.92
Brand-related UGC about style on blogs	13	.95

Participants were labelled either low- or high-level materialism using a median split. An ANOVA tested the main effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on blogs.

There was a statistically significant main effect of materialism on the intention to create UGC about style on blogs, $F(1, 130) = 36.63, p = .00$, with highly materialistic respondents ($M = 3.77, SD = 1.11$) found to have a significantly stronger intention to create UGC about style than low materialistic respondents on blogs ($M = 4.96, SD = 1.16$). Therefore, H1 was supported. Table 4.7 describes the means, standard deviations and 95% CI for the effects of materialism on the intention to create UGC about style on blogs.

Table 4.7

Means, Standard Deviations and 95% Confidence Intervals for Effects of Materialism on the Intention to Create UGC about Style on Blogs

Materialism	Brand-related UGC about style*		
	<i>M (SD)</i>	95% CI	
		Lower bound	Upper bound
Low materialism (<i>n</i> = 67)	3.77 (1.11)	3.50	4.04
High Materialism (<i>n</i> = 65)	4.96 (1.16)	4.68	5.25

Note. CI = confidence interval.

**p* < .01

Although this thesis examined the main effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style, it had not investigated the underlying mechanism that explained how materialism affects the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. Furthermore, a wide range of brands were used in Studies 2 and 3. It was unknown whether different types of brands may have had a different impact on the mechanism, which in turn could have affected the intention to create brand-related UGC about style among the highly materialistic consumers. Hence, studies 2 and 3 had not demonstrated the mechanism that explained the effects of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. In addition, the two studies had not examined the types of brands that could moderate the effect of the mechanism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style.

In addition, there were potential threats to the internal validity in Studies 2 and 3 which could have affected confidence in the causal inferences.

First, the samples in Studies 2 and 3 were recruited internationally from Amazon Mechanical Turk. In both studies, a wide range of brands with different symbolic values were used involving Nike, Rolex, Kleenex and Kellogg. Kleenex and Kellogg are global brands with low symbolic value. Amazon Mechanical Turk provided two groups of samples: a non-USA and a USA group (Smith, Roster, Golden, & Albaum, 2016). Among the non-USA participants, 62% were from Asia, India and the Pacific (Smith et al., 2016, p. 3142). Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden,

Steenkamp, and Ramachander (2000) found that consumers in developing countries perceived international brands as indicators of social status more than consumers in developed countries for the following reasons.

In developing countries, foreign brands are often more expensive than local products due to import costs. Consumers in these countries are relatively less wealthy than developed countries, leading to a desire to use global brands as an indicator of competence (Batra et al., 2000). Global brands can support users to build a global identity (Batra et al., 2000). Therefore, the preference for global brands might be an explanation for the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. Since, Studies 2 and 3 did not control for this effect, Study 4 should be conducted to rule out this alternative explanation. In addition, Study 4 should be implemented for participants located in the USA to produce generalization.

Second, Studies 2 and 3 did not control for brand effects, such as brand attitude, brand familiarity and brand symbolism. Third, Study 1 indicated that the items, “boast about expensive price” and “strong positive about celebrity’s style”, featured very infrequently on social media sites (0.17% and 0.53% respectively). Thus, these items were not measured in Studies 2 and 3 due to time constraints. Study 4 aimed to address these shortcomings.

4.5 STUDY 4 RESULTS

The objective of this study was to test the conditional, indirect effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style mediated by knowledge self-efficacy about brands. The mediation was contingent on brand symbolism. More particularly, it was proposed that materialism would leads to knowledge self-efficacy about brands. Furthermore, it was further proposed that knowledge self-efficacy about brands would mediate the relationship between materialism and the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. This objective was addressed by the following research question:

RQ3: What is the mechanism that drives highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style?

In addition, the study tested brand symbolism as a moderator for the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. Thus, the study addressed the following research question:

RQ4: Under what condition does the mechanism drive highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style?

In order to answer the research questions, two following hypotheses were formulated:

H3: Materialism predicts knowledge self-efficacy about brands which mediates the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on Facebook when brands have highly symbolic value. When brands have low symbolic value, the mediation effect will not occur.

H4: Materialism predicts knowledge self-efficacy about brands which mediates the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on blogs when brands have high symbolic value. When brands have low symbolic values, the mediation effect will not occur.

These hypotheses were tested on two groups of participants: 1) participants who used Facebook; and 2) those who used blogs. The study was conducted using the procedure explained in Chapter 3 (see Sections 3.2.2 and 3.3.4).

Before testing the hypotheses, a ranges of ANOVA were run in order to examine the main effect of materialism on the reasons to create brand-related UGC in order to 1) show positive emotion to celebrity style and 2) to boast about expensive price of the brands on Facebook and blogs (because these two reasons have not been measured in Study 2&3 yet). The results showed that there was a significant effect on materialism on the reason to create brand-related UGC about style to boast about expensive price of the brands on Facebook, ($F(1, 156) = 16.72, p = .00$) with highly materialistic consumers ($M = 3.43, SD = 1.92$) found to have a significantly stronger intention to create UGC to boast expensive price of the brands on Facebook than low materialistic respondents ($M = 2.27, SD = 1.64$). Moreover, there was a significant effect on materialism on the reason to create brand-related UGC about style to show

positive emotion to celebrity style on Facebook, ($F(1, 156) = 10.73, p = .00$) with highly materialistic consumers ($M = 3.37, SD = 1.92$) found to have a significantly stronger intention to create UGC to express positive emotion to celebrity style than low materialistic respondents on blogs ($M = 2.43, SD = 1.66$). Therefore, these two items were added to brand-related UGC about style on Facebook. In total, brand-related UGC about style on Facebook consisted of 14 items.

In addition, there was a significant effect on materialism on the reason to create brand-related UGC about style to show positive emotion to celebrity style on blogs, ($F(1, 79) = 4.31, p = .04$) with highly materialistic consumers ($M = 4.44, SD = 2.37$) found to have a significantly stronger intention to create UGC to express positive emotion to celebrity style than low materialistic respondents on blogs ($M = 3.39, SD = 2.19$). Furthermore, there was a non-significant effect on materialism on the reason to create brand-related UGC about style to boast about expensive price of the brands on blogs, ($F(1, 79) = 2.47, p = .12, ns$) with highly materialistic consumers ($M = 4.61, SD = 1.96$) found not to have a significantly stronger intention to create UGC to boast expensive price of the brands on blogs than low materialistic respondents on blogs ($M = 3.92, SD = 1.96$). Therefore, the item “to boast about expensive price of the brands” was omitted and the item “to show positive emotion to celebrity style” was added. In total, brand-related UGC about style on blogs consisted of 14 items.

4.5.1 Preliminary checks

4.5.1.1 Assumption and internal consistency checks

Before performing 1,000 bootstrap resamples using Hayes’ (2013) SPSS Macro Process Model 14 to test the conditional indirect effects, preliminary analyses were run to examine the assumptions of the variables of knowledge self-efficacy about brands and brand-related UGC about style on Facebook and blogs (see Appendix D for details).

In addition to these assumption checks, Cronbach’s (1951) alpha reliability coefficient was conducted in SPSS to investigate the internal consistency of the items of the scales that measured the following variables: materialism, brand-related

UGC about style on blogs and Facebook, brand symbolism, brand attitude, and knowledge self-efficacy about brands on blogs and Facebook. Cronbach's alphas were greater than .7, demonstrating good reliability (Hair et al., 2014). Table 4.8 shows Cronbach's alphas of measurement scales for each construct on Facebook and blogs

Table 4.8
Cronbach's Alphas of Measurement Scales for Each Scale on Facebook and Blogs (Study 4)

Scales	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Materialism Values Scale	9	.89
Brand-related UGC about style on Facebook	14	.97
Brand-related UGC about style on blogs	14	.96
Low symbolic brand on Facebook	2	.97
Highly symbolic brand on Facebook	2	.95
Low symbolic brand on blogs	2	.96
Highly symbolic brand on blogs	2	.91
Attitude of low symbolic brands on Facebook	3	.95
Attitude of highly symbolic brands on Facebook	3	.98
Attitude of low symbolic brands on blogs	3	.91
Attitude of highly symbolic brands on blogs	3	.98
Knowledge self-efficacy about brands on Facebook	4	.70
Knowledge self-efficacy about brands on blogs	4	.81

4.5.1.2 Manipulation check

A one-sample *t*-test revealed that highly symbolic brands ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 1.24$) had a significantly higher mean score than low symbolic brands ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.72$), $t(115) = 17.28$, $p = .00$, indicating that participants perceived Nike and Rolex as highly symbolic brands and Kellogg and Kleenex as low symbolic brands. It indicated that the manipulation check was successful.

4.5.1.3 Confounding check

A one sample *t*-test showed that highly symbolic brands ($M = 5.67$, $SD = 1.19$) and low symbolic brands ($M = 5.55$, $SD = .84$) had similar mean scores of brand attitude $t(115) = 1.09$, $p = .28$, ns, indicating that the result was not explained by brand attitude. Furthermore, highly symbolic brands ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.19$) had a significantly lower score on brand familiarity than low symbolic brands ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.09$), $t(115) = -2.60$, $p = .01$. Therefore, brand familiarity was included in the analysis as a covariate variable.

The aim of this study was to test the conditional indirect effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. Specifically, it was proposed that materialism would predict the intention to create brand-related UGC about style mediated by knowledge self-efficacy about brands, and that the mediator would be moderated by brand symbolism. Therefore, a moderated mediation analysis using Hayes' (2013) SPSS macro Process Model 14 with 1,000 bootstrap resamples, was conducted. The variables put into the analysis were materialism as the independent, categorical variable (using a median split), knowledge self-efficacy about brands as the continuous mediator variable, brand symbolism as the categorical moderator variable (low vs highly symbolic brands), and brand familiarity as a covariate.

4.5.2 Participants who used only Facebook

The results (see Table 4.9) showed that materialism predicted knowledge self-efficacy about brands on Facebook ($\beta = .70$, 95% BCBCI [.25, 1.15], $p = .00$). In addition, brand familiarity was reported to increase knowledge self-efficacy about brands ($\beta = .35$, 95% BCBCI [.16, .54], $p = .00$). The direct path from materialism to the intention to create brand-related UGC about style was not significant ($\beta = .26$, 95% BCBCI [-.25, .78], $p = .31$). Furthermore, brand familiarity had marginally effect on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style ($\beta = .20$, 95% BCBCI [-.03, .42], $p = .08$). Knowledge self-efficacy about brands did not lead to the intention to create brand-related UGC about style ($\beta = -.23$, 95% BCBCI [-.91, .45], $p = .51$). However, the moderating role of brand symbolism on the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC

about style was significant ($\beta = .45$, 95% BCBCI [.05, .84], $p = .03$). The index of moderated mediation was not different from zero ($\beta = .31$, boot SE = .16, 95% BCBCI [.09, .77]). The effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style was significant in highly symbolic brand condition (conditional effect = .47, boot SE = .15, 95% BCBCI [.21, .84]) but was nonsignificant in low symbolic brand condition (conditional effect = .15, boot SE = .12, 95% BCBCI [-.01, .49]). Thus, H1 was supported. Table 4.9 shows the model coefficients for the conditional process model on Facebook.

Table 4.9
Model Coefficients for the Conditional Process Model on Facebook

Antecedent	Consequent							
	Know self-eff			UGC about style				
		Coeff.	SE	p		Coeff.	SE	p
Materialism	a	.70	.23	.00	c'	.26	.26	.31
Brand familiarity		.35	.10	.00		.20	.11	.08
Know self-eff		----	---		b ₁	-.23	.34	.51
Brand symbolism		----	---		b ₂	-1.20	.91	.19
BS*Know self-eff		----	---		b ₃	.45	.20	.03
Constant	i ₁	1.36	.64	.04	i ₂	1.75	1.67	.30
		$R^2 = .17$				$R^2 = .34$		
		$F(2,113) = 11.70, p = .00$				$F(5,110) = 11.25, p = .00$		

Note. Know self-eff = knowledge self-efficacy about brands; BS = brand symbolism.

Table 4.10 presents inference for the Conditional Indirect Effect of Materialism and Bootstrap Confidence Intervals on Facebook.

Table 4.10
Inference for the Conditional Indirect Effect of Materialism and Bootstrap Confidence Intervals (CI) on Facebook

Brand symbolism	ω	95% Bias-corrected bootstrap CI
Low symbolic brands	.15	-.01 to .49
Highly symbolic brands	.47	.21 to .84

Note. CI = confidence interval; percentile bootstrap CI based on 1,000 bootstrap samples.

4.5.3 Participants who used blogs

Materialism had a marginally positive effect on knowledge self-efficacy about brands on blogs ($\beta = .53$, 95% BCBCI [-.05, .1.11], $p = .07$). Moreover, brand familiarity was reported to increase knowledge self-efficacy about brands ($\beta = .37$, 95% BCBCI [.11, .63], $p = .01$). The direct path from materialism to the intention to create brand-related UGC about style was significant ($\beta = .96$, 95% BCBCI [.40, 1.52], $p = .00$). Brand familiarity did not affect the intention to create brand-related UGC about style ($\beta = .12$, 95% BCBCI [-.14, .38], $p = .37$). Knowledge self-efficacy about brands did not impact on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style ($\beta = -.24$, 95% BCBCI [-.88, .39], $p = .45$). However, the interaction effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands and brand symbolism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style was significant ($\beta = .42$, 95% BCBCI [.04, .81], $p = .03$). Specifically, the index of moderated mediation differed from zero ($\beta = .22$, boot SE = .14, 95% BCBCI [.02, .60]). The conditional effect demonstrated that the indirect effect of materialism mediated by knowledge self-efficacy about brands was significant when brands were highly symbolic (conditional effect = .32, boot SE = .17, 95% BCBCI [.01, .67]), not significant than when the brands were low symbolic (conditional effect = .09, boot SE = .11, 95% BCBCI [-.03, .41]). Thus, H2 was supported. Table 4.11 presents the Coefficients and Inferences for the Conditional Process.

Table 4.11

Model Coefficients for the Conditional Process Model on Blogs

Antecedent	Consequent								
	Know self-eff				UGC about style				
		Coeff	SE	p		Coeff	SE	p	
Materialism	a	.53	.29	.07	c'	.96	.28	.00	
Brand familiarity		.37	.13	.01		.12	.13	.37	
Know self-eff		----	----	----	b ₁	-.24	.32	.45	
Brand symbolism		----	----	----	b ₂	-1.20	.90	.19	
BS*Know self-eff		----	----	----	b ₃	.42	.19	.03	
Constant	i ₁	1.64	.81	.05	i ₂	1.46	1.58	.36	
		$R^2 = .13$					$R^2 = .35$		
		$F(2,85) = 6.31, p =$					$F(5,82) = 9.67, p = .00$		
		.00							

Note. Know self-eff = knowledge self-efficacy about brands; BS = brand symbolism.

Table 4.12 presents the Conditional Indirect Effect of Materialism and Bootstrap Confidence Interval on Blogs.

Table 4.12

Inference for the Conditional Indirect Effect of Materialism and Bootstrap Confidence Intervals (CI) on Blogs

Brand symbolism	ω	95% Bias-Corrected Bootstrap CI
Low symbolic brands	.09	-.03 to .41
Highly symbolic brands	.32	.01 to .67

Note. CI = confidence interval; percentile bootstrap CI based on 1,000 bootstrap samples.

The summary of results are presented in the Table 4.13 below.

Table 4.13

Summary of Study 4 Results

Hypothesis	Result
H3: Materialism predicts knowledge self-efficacy about brands which mediates the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on Facebook when brands have highly symbolic value. When brands have low symbolic value, the mediation effect will not occur.	Supported
H4: Materialism predicts knowledge self-efficacy about brands which mediates the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on blogs when brands have high symbolic value. When brands have low symbolic values, the mediation effect will not occur.	Supported

The aim of Study 4 was to test the conditional, indirect effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style mediated by knowledge self-efficacy about brands and whether this mediation was conditional on brand symbolism. The study tested two groups of participants: 1) those who used Facebook; and 2) those who used blogs. The results indicated that materialism predicted the intention to create brand-related UGC about style that was mediated through knowledge self-efficacy about brands on Facebook and blogs. The mediation was moderated by brand symbolism on Facebook and blogs.

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter illustrates the results of the four studies. Overall, these results contribute to an understanding of how materialism can affect the intention to create brand-related UGC among highly materialistic consumers. The next chapter provides an in-depth discussion of these findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter concludes the thesis by discussing the overall research purpose (Section 5.1), the relationship among the four studies (Section 5.2), the key research findings (Section 5.3), the contributions to theory (Section 5.4), contributions to practice (Section 5.5), and the limitations and suggestions for future directions of the research (Section 5.6).

5.2 OVERALL RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The overall research objective was to investigate how materialism affected the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on social media sites. Specifically, the research identified the important attributes of brand-related UGC about style. Furthermore, it examined knowledge self-efficacy about brands as a mechanism for the effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. In addition, the research investigated brand symbolism as a moderator for the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. The purpose of the thesis was captured by four specific research questions outlined in Chapter 1:

RQ1: What are the attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites?

RQ2: How does materialism affect the intention to create brand-related UGC about style?

RQ 3: What is the mechanism that drives highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style?

RQ 4: Under what condition does the mechanism drives highly materialistic consumers to create brand-related UGC about style?

5.3 RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE FOUR STUDIES

In order to answer these research questions, four studies were conducted in this thesis. Study 1 was a content analysis of 600 brand-related posts collected from blogs, Facebook and Twitter to identify the important attributes of brand-related UGC about style. However, the study was based on an exploratory examination of brand-related posts, and the materialism scale was not measured in Study 1. Thus, whether materialism had an effect on brand-related UGC about style was not addressed in Study 1.

The second study aimed to address the limitations in Study 1. More specifically, the study examined a causal relationship between materialism and the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. Furthermore, the experiment used a variety of product categories to increase generalization. However, the data collection in Study 2 was only limited to participants who used Facebook; it was still unknown whether the result could be generalized to other social media platforms.

The purpose of Study 3 was to examine whether there was any effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC on blogs. However, this study (and Study 2) had not explained how materialism influenced the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. Furthermore, there might have been potential threats to the internal validity in Studies 2 and 3. Specifically, the two studies did not rule out the effects of brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style among highly materialistic consumers.

Study 4 demonstrated the conditional indirect effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style mediated by knowledge self-efficacy about brands.

5.4 KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

As a result of these four studies and in answer to the overarching research question, five key findings emerged, which are discussed in this chapter. These findings are:

- The thesis identified the important attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media sites.
- Materialism was an important personality trait that explained the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on social media sites.
- Materialism was a predictor of knowledge self-efficacy about brands.
- The effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on highly materialistic consumers' intentions to create brand-related UGC about style was significant only when brands had a high symbolic value, and not when brands had a low symbolic value on Facebook and blogs.
- Highly materialistic consumers used various types of brands; however, in the public context, they were more likely to employ highly symbolic brands to express self-identity.

5.5 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

5.5.1 The attributes of brand-related UGC about style

The research identified the important attributes of brand-related UGC about style on social media. Previous research has highlighted the crucial role of style in brand-related UGC because this UGC content can influence consumers' purchasing decision (Dolbec & Fischer, 2015; McQuarrie et al., 2013) and viewing time (Stubb, 2018). To date, the current literature on brand-related UGC about style has explored in some studies (Dolbec & Fischer, 2015; Kulmala, 2013; McQuarrie et al., 2013; Pihl, 2014); however, the attributes of style in brand-related UGC is still inconsistently defined. Study 1 revealed that displaying personal style and celebrity looks were the most prominent aspects of brand-related UGC about style. Furthermore, this study provided a contribution in terms of research method. Specifically, while prior research has conducted exploratory studies on brand-related UGC about style (Kulmala et al., 2013; McQuarrie et al., 2013), by using content

analysis, Study 1 was the first study that investigated the attributes of brand-related UGC about style systematically and objectively. This is important because it contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of style in brand-related UGC.

5.5.2 The link between personality and brand-related UGC about style

Personality traits can be a potential part of understanding the intention to create brand-related UGC (Muntinga et al., 2017; Poch & Martin, 2014; Yoo & Gretzel, 2011). This study confirmed this view, indicating the relevance and importance of materialism as a personality trait in understanding the motivation to create brand-related UGC. The study's results have important implications for the developing body of research into the impact of personality traits on the intention to create brand-related UGC. Studies 2 and 3 confirmed that materialism had been proved as a personality trait that can leads to brand-related UGC creation. More importantly, the literature on how a specific personality trait can affect brand-related UGC about style has been still limited. Even though brand-related UGC about style is featured in some studies (Dolbec & Fischer, 2015; Kulmala et al., 2013; McQuarrie et al., 2013; Pihl, 2014), they have not explored the antecedents that could leads to the creation of brand-related UGC about style. Thus, this thesis contributes to an understanding of the antecedents that predicts brand-related UGC about style on social media.

In addition, Study 2 and 3 extends prior research by establishing a causal link between a personality trait and a specific type of brand-related UGC. More specifically, Sung, Kim, and Choi (2017) examined the phenomenon of brand selfies on social network. The study revealed that materialism was related to the intention to post brand selfies. However, their paper did not aim to establish a causal relationship between materialism and brand-related UGC. Studies 2 and 3 of the present research showed that materialism predicted the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. Given that certain types of brand-related UGC can impact on consumers' brand attitudes (Kim & Song, 2018), this thesis was the first study to demonstrate a causal link between personality and brand-related UGC about style.

Furthermore, by establishing a causal link between personality trait and brand-related UGC, this thesis contributes to the method of using the 8-item Materialism Values Scale (MVS; Richins, 2004) in the experiment to understand UGC behaviour in the international context, unlike Sung et al. (2017) who used a 15-item (Richins, 2004) online survey to investigate brand selfie behaviour in the Korean context. To the best knowledge of the researcher, this research was the first to show that the short form, 8-item MVS could be applied in an online experiment. This is important because the short form of the MVS can provide several benefits. It does not occupy much space on the list of survey items and it can allow researchers to disguise the purpose of the experiment, thus decreasing the guessing of the hypotheses (Richins, 2004).

5.5.3 Materialism as an antecedent that predicts knowledge self-efficacy about brands

While there has been substantial literature on the effect of knowledge self-efficacy on brand-related UGC creation (Hsu et al., 2007; Lu & Hsiao, 2007; Papadopoulos et al., 2013), there has been no research that has established an antecedent that predicts knowledge self-efficacy about brands that, in turn, influences the intention to create brand-related UGC. The current thesis demonstrated that materialism was a predictor of knowledge self-efficacy about brands. Thus, Study 4 is the first that highlights the important role of knowledge self-efficacy as a fundamental antecedent that leads to knowledge self-efficacy about brands.

5.5.4 Brand symbolism moderates the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style

This research contributes to the literature on the impact of brand symbolism on the intention to create brand-related UGC by reconciling conflicting findings. While prior researchers have commonly asserted that consumers are more likely to create brand-related UGC about highly symbolic brands than low symbolic brands on social media (Bernritter, Verlegh, & Smit, 2016; Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012; Thomas et al., 2017), another study suggested that consumers can rely on both utilitarian and symbolic brands to create brand-related UGC (Schau & Gilly, 2003).

The present study suggested that brand symbolism moderated the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style among highly materialistic consumers. Since highly materialistic consumers often undergo self-threat (Richins, 2017), the finding is consistent with the results of the study by Thomas et al. (2017), which indicated that individuals with constant self-threat created brand-related UGC only when the brands were highly symbolic and not when the brands were low in symbolic value.

While there have been inconsistent results on the influence of knowledge self-efficacy about brands (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Hsu et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2006; Lu & Hsiao, 2007; Papadopoulos et al., 2013), Study 4 reconciled these conflicting results by indicating that brand symbolism was a condition that facilitated the impact of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the likelihood of creating brand-related UGC on social media sites.

5.5.5 Materialism and brands

This results of this thesis may also help to extend the body of research on how highly materialistic consumers use brands to respond to self-threat. While some scholars found that highly materialistic consumers can rely on various types of brands and products to express self-identity (Richins, 2011, 2013; Rindfleisch et al., 2009), other researchers have argued that highly materialistic consumers primarily use brands that have the capability to communicate self-identity (Alden et al., 2006; Clark & Goldsmith, 2012; Fitzmaurice & Comegys, 2006; Flynn et al., 2016; Richins, 1994b). In Study 4, brands were used in the experiment, including Nike and Rolex, that were highly symbolic while Kellogg and Kleenex were low symbolic brands. The study found that highly materialistic consumers led to knowledge self-efficacy about brands, indicating that they might use both low and highly symbolic brands. Furthermore, brand symbolism moderated the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the likelihood of creating brand-related UGC about style on social media.

The findings suggested that even though in the offline context highly materialistic consumers tended to use any type of brand, on social media they were more likely to rely on highly symbolic than low symbolic brands to activate their

knowledge self-efficacy to express style. This finding is consistent with previous research by Swaminathan, Stilley, and Ahluwalia (2008) who showed that individuals with self-doubt had a tendency to connect with highly symbolic brands to express self-identity only when brands were consumed in a public setting. Social media is a public place (Bazarova et al., 2012). Therefore, the result might provide an explanation for the difference in the two findings. Specifically, in daily life, highly materialistic consumers might use various kinds of brands to deal with their self-threat (Richins, 2011, 2017). However, in the public context, such as social media, they may tend to link with highly symbolic brands to express self-identity.

5.5.6 Model of the conditional indirect effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style mediated by knowledge self-efficacy about brands (Figure 5.1)

This research contributes to academic theory by testing a model of the conditional indirect effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style mediated by knowledge self-efficacy about brands. Hence, this research is important as it contributes to the knowledge of materialism and the intention to create brand-related UGC creation. It provides evidence that personality traits can be important predictors for the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. There is debate about the relevance of personality traits on the likelihood of brand-related UGC creation (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011). This findings of this research aligns with other prior research (Muntinga et al., 2017; Poch & Martin, 2014) by making a strong case for including personality traits in UGC-creation behaviour. Since there has been a growth in academic interest to explain brand-related UGC behaviour, the results of this research can encourage scholars who want to examine the predictors of brand-related UGC creation to test a particular personality trait.

Furthermore, this thesis highlights the role of knowledge self-efficacy about brands as a mediator variable for the relationship between materialism and brand-related UGC about style. While there have been inconsistent findings about the critical role of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the likelihood of brand-related UGC creation, the results of this research makes a contribution to the current literature by confirming that knowledge self-efficacy about brands can be an important factor that predicts brand-related UGC creation.

Moreover, the present research also indicated that brand symbolism was a moderator for the effect of knowledge self-efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. While there has been conflicting views in past research about the role of brand symbolism on social media, the results of this thesis are the first to show that for highly materialistic consumers, brand symbolism can activate knowledge self-efficacy about brands, which in turn leads to the intention to create brand-related UGC about style. Taken together, to the researcher's knowledge, materialism, knowledge self-efficacy about brands, brand symbolism and brand-related UGC about style have not been previously explored in this manner.

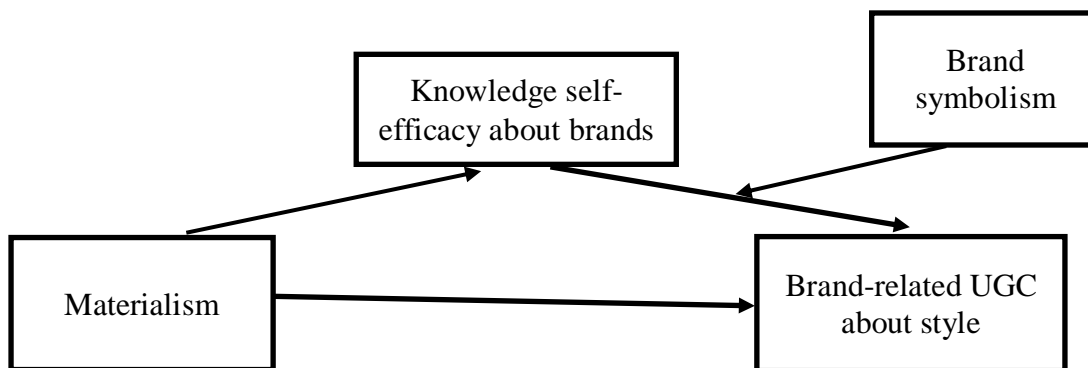


Figure 5.1. Model of conditional indirect effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style mediated by knowledge self-efficacy about brands.

5.6 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings suggested that marketers and advertisers who want to encourage consumers to create brand-related UGC could target highly materialistic consumers. This could be done by observing their social media profiles. This is because most of the time, these profiles are open to the public so that unknown audiences can comment on and follow them. For example, marketers could target profiles that indicate some of the following attributes: 1) profiles that focus on presenting a self-image that imitates the look of a celebrity; and 2) profiles that show how various brands are combined to define styles.

Furthermore, the thesis provides a substantive contribution by identifying practical solutions to encourage consumers to create UGC about both low and highly symbolic brands. For highly symbolic brands, this research demonstrates that knowledge self-efficacy about brands can be a central driver of highly materialistic consumers' intentions to create brand-related UGC about style. For this reason, a company may find that acquiring brand-related UGC creation from highly materialistic consumers is particularly easy, as they tend to have knowledge self-efficacy about brands. Specifically, marketers could assess the symbolic value of brands before targeting highly materialistic consumers, as highly symbolic brands can enhance the confidence to create brand-related UGC about style among highly materialistic consumers.

For low symbolic brands, marketers might conduct marketing strategies that increase the perceived symbolic value of the brands by positioning low symbolic brands to align with in-group attributes of the target group. More specifically, research has shown that consumers tend to accept meaning from brands that are connected to or consistent with their own group. Furthermore, they feel that they can express their self-identity by using the brands with which their group members associate (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). For example, kitchen products are commonly seen as having low symbolic product (Berger & Heath, 2007); however, when cooperating with other members of a high-taste in-group, consumers might perceive the functional attributes as highly symbolic (Berger & Heath, 2007). A high-end stove might not be widely perceived as an identity signal product; however, a high-end stove might be a symbolic indicator for an interior designer (Berger & Heath, 2007). Another example is that if consumer consider themselves to be intellectuals and their reference groups use a Volvo car, these consumers might also drive a Volvo car as a signal that they believe they are intellectual (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Research has also shown that highly materialistic consumers are more likely to use brands in order to gain social approval (Richins, 2011). Thus, highly materialistic consumers might increase their perceived symbolic value of brands when marketers position low symbolic brands to align with these consumers' in-group characteristics.

5.7 LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

There were several limitations with this research. Data for Study 1 was gathered from blogs, Facebook and Twitter while data for Studies 2, 3 and 4 were collected from participants who used blogs and Facebook. Therefore, there was a limitation in the generalization of the results to participants who used Twitter. Twitter differs from Facebook and blogs in certain functional ways. Compared with blogs and Facebook, Twitter may not be an effective platform for self-promotion because the length of tweets is restricted to 140 characters. Nevertheless, Twitter might provide a promising platform for creating brand-related UGC about style because the site allows users to upload images (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2015). Specifically, visual presentation can support users to deliver metaphoric expression, allowing users to present their style (McQuarrie et al., 2013). In addition, Twitter could provide functions for highly materialistic consumers to validate their self-esteem. Twitter users could have the possibility of reaching an unlimited, less familiar audience on Twitter (Panek et al., 2013) because followers do not need to become friends with users (Davenport et al., 2014). This could allow users to gain public followers (Panek et al., 2013). On Twitter, individuals can validate self-esteem through a larger numbers of “followers” or “retweets” (Panek et al., 2013). Therefore, it may be worthy examining whether the effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style could be generalized from blogs and Facebook to Twitter.

In addition to Twitter, Youtube, Instagram and Pinterest might be other potential social media platforms for highly materialistic consumers to display their styles. While both Instagram and Pinterest are image-based social media platforms (Kim, Seely, & Jung, 2017), they are different in certain aspects. The unique function of Pinterest is that it provides users with the capability to organize and curate a collections of pictures in one space (Mull & Lee, 2014). From collecting and organizing pictures, users can discover, develop and refine their personal tastes (aesthetic preference) and future fantasies (Phillips et al., 2014). Consumers do not tend to share personal information on Pinterest (Phillips et al., 2014). Users tend to gather existing images from the Internet rather than uploading their own photos (Phillips et al., 2014). Unlike other social network sites, social interaction is a not

primary focus for Pinterest users (Phillips et al., 2014). Thus, even though Pinterest may not facilitate self-validation like other social platforms, Pinterest might be a potential platform for highly materialistic consumers to display their style.

On the other hand, the unique function of Instagram is to allow users to create high-quality images (Lee, Lee, Moon, & Sung, 2015). The high quality photos enable users to express and impress their selves to others (Marwick, 2015). Furthermore, unlike Pinterest, social interaction is one of the sole motives for Instagram users (Ridgway & Clayton, 2016). Therefore, Instagram might be a promising platform for highly materialistic consumers because the platform can facilitate self-validation and display style.

Youtube is video-based function content that present reviews, demonstrations (Blythe & Cairns, 2009) and brand narratives (Pace, 2008). UGC content is ranked according to the number of views and comments (Benevenuto et al., 2008). Hence, Youtube might be a potential platform for highly materialistic consumers because the platform's culture promote self-promotion (Smith et al., 2012).

This thesis only investigated one kind of personality trait: materialism. Thus, there is a limitation in generalization of this results to other personality traits, such as self-monitoring, the need for uniqueness, an anxious attachment style, narcissism and jealousy. It might be worthy to investigate whether the results of this thesis can be generalized from materialism to these personality traits.

Self-monitoring individuals tend to be concerned about social norms and are more likely to adapt their self-presentation to suit a particular circumstance (Snyder, 1974). As they tend to control their self-expression to suit their social environment, social media might be a promising platform for them to use brands in order to display style.

Individuals with a need for uniqueness can have a desire to express their distinguishing image by using possessions in order to reassure their self-esteem (Tian et al., 2001). People who have a desire for uniqueness can feel that their individual self-concept can be assured when the brands they buy are recognized in a public setting (Tian et al., 2001). In addition, anxiously attached people tend to

employ brands as a vehicle to indicate their ideal self-identity to others in a public place (Swaminathan et al., 2009). Furthermore, narcissists are likely to use brands to enhance their self-worth (Pilch & Górnik-Durose, 2017). They have a tendency to strive for attention and admiration from others for external validation (Miller et al., 2011). Hence, social media could be a potential place where individuals who have a need for uniqueness individuals, are anxiously attached and narcissistic can indicate their style to gain self-validation.

Lastly, jealousy can increase people's preferences for attention-grabbing products and this might only happen when the product is consumed in public. This may be true even when products are low status and provoke social disapproval (Huang et al., 2017). Social media is a public venue (Bazarova et al., 2012). Therefore, brand-related UGC about style might be a solution for jealous individuals to catch others' intention on social media.

In Study 1, the inter-coder reliability was based on 5% sub-sample which was a bit small. Further research should be conducted on bigger sub-sample in order to check whether the coding is consistent across other coders.

In Study 4, the results were marginally significant for direct and significant for indirect effects of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on blogs. They indicated that highly materialistic consumers reported a greater intention to create brand-related UGC about style even after taking into account materialism's indirect effect through knowledge self-efficacy about brands. This can be explained as following: brand-related UGC about style refers to the notion that highly materialistic consumers are likely to use brand to present their looks inspired from celebrities and show how to combine different brands in order to form style. To be able to show celebrity looks, highly materialistic consumers may need to have knowledge about a celebrity's style. Thus, apart from knowledge self-efficacy about brands, knowledge self-efficacy about celebrity style might be also required for highly materialistic consumers to be able to create brand-related UGC about style on blogs.

However, on Facebook the direct effect of materialism on the intention to create brand-related UGC was not significant. The results were consistent with prior research that has indicated that both Facebook and blogs host self-promotion (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012; Kozinets, et al., 2010; McQuarrie, et al., 2013). However, compared with Facebook, blogs were the platforms that could empower explicit self-promotion. The results may be consistent with the view by Schau & Gilly (2003) stating that brands may only play minor role on blogs (Schau & Gilly, 2003) while on Facebook, consumers were more likely to rely on brands as subtle cues to express their self-image rather than explicitly show their self-image (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). Thus, highly materialistic consumers might need to have knowledge self-efficacy about celebrity style on blogs rather than on Facebook. However, the scale of knowledge self-efficacy about celebrity style was not measured in the experiment of Study 4. Thus, further research could test this plausible mechanism.

5.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has provided discussion into the findings from the four studies and has attempted to answer to this thesis's overarching research question which was

How can materialism affect the intention to create brand-related UGC on social media sites?

The five key research question findings that emerged from the four studies were outlined in this chapter as well as theoretical and practical contributions. The limitation of the study were discussed and the suggestions for future research were presented.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Examples of Brand-Related UGC that were Described in the Coding Process



Figure A1. To look like a celebrity - lace top, Gracia. dress, Prabal Gurung for Target; shoes, vintage and thrifted; sunglasses, toms. earrings, street fair.

Appendix A - Continued

Examples of Brand-Related UGC that were Described in the Coding Process



Figure A2. Luxurious product quality.

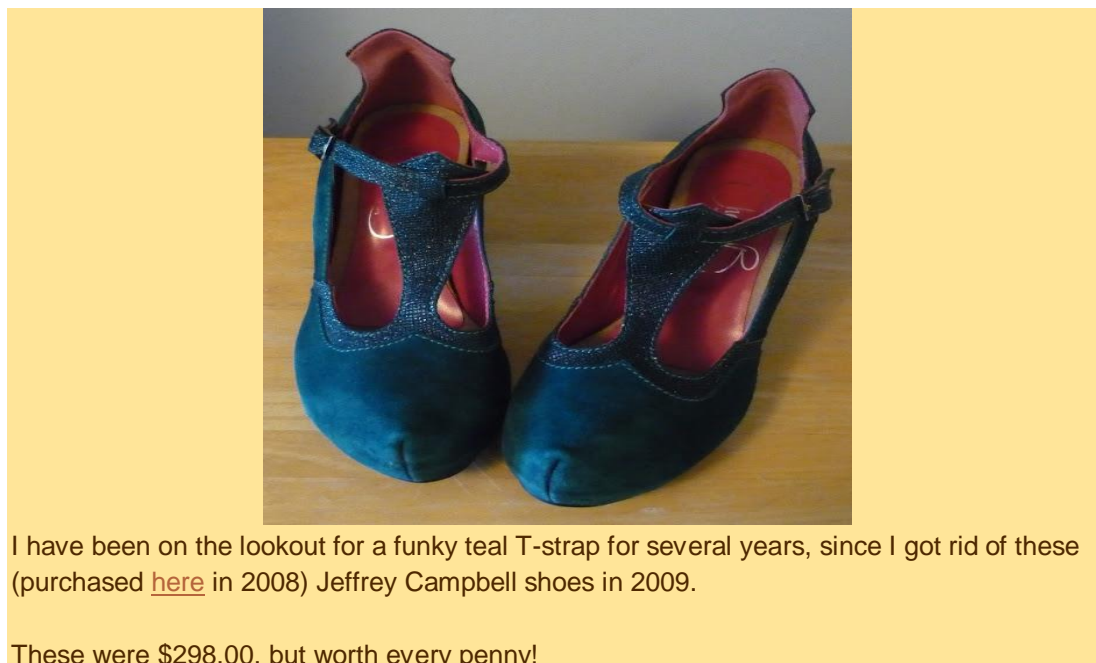


Figure A3. Boast about expensive price.

Appendix A - Continued

Examples of Brand-Related UGC that were Described in the Coding Process



Figure A4. Celebrity style.



Figure A5. Fashion trend.

Appendix A - Continued

Examples of Brand-Related UGC that were Described in the Coding Process



Figure A6. Positive emotional response to celebrity's style.

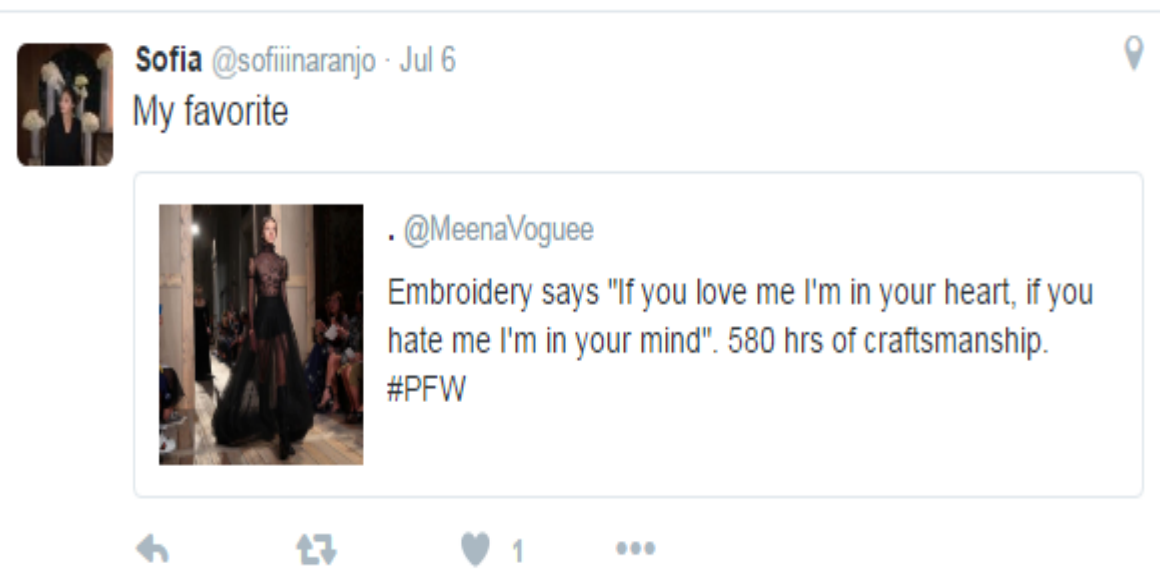


Figure A7. Positive emotional response to fashion trend.

Appendix A - Continued

Examples of Brand-Related UGC that were Described in the Coding Process



Blouse, Maeve (consignment). Pants, Polo Ralph Lauren. Shoes, Seychelles. Sunglasses, Marc Jacobs. Earrings, Francesca's Closet. Necklace, handmade gift. Bag, Nordstrom Rack.

Figure A8. Display my personal style.



Figure A9. To show uniqueness of the brand.

Appendix A - Continued

Examples of Brand-Related UGC that were Described in the Coding Process



Figure A10. To promote my blog content.



Easy pieces to take off and put back on. I change into workout gear at the field.

Figure A11. To show how a product can be used.

Appendix A - Continued

Examples of Brand-Related UGC that were Described in the Coding Process



What's your take on patriotic apparel?

Figure A12. To interact with other audiences about my personal style.

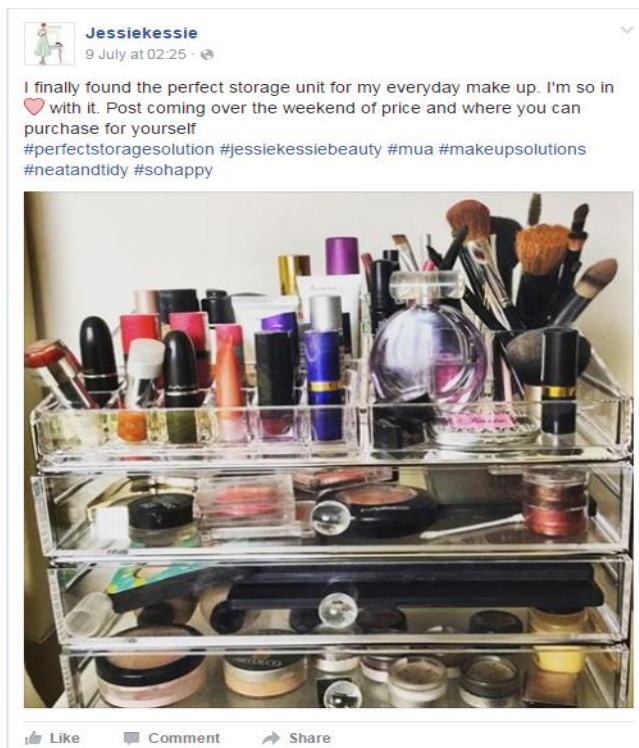


Figure A13. To show a positive emotional response to brands.

Appendix A - Continued

Examples of Brand-Related UGC that were Described in the Coding Process

Excessive bling:



Sometimes you want subtle and sometimes you want to shout!

- Fascinator - sex shop
- Grommet belt - gift from Ruth
- Turquoise leather belt - vintage 80s, thrifted
- Choker - consignment
- Earrings - vintage fair
- Ring - Soul Flower

After all that excitement, I had to nap for a while in the afternoon with Vizzini. Then up and get ready for Winesday!

Figure A14. To show how my styles make me feel.



Figure A15. To recommend brands.

Appendix A - Continued

Examples of Brand-Related UGC that were Described in the Coding Process



Figure A16. To show my expertise about the brands.

Appendix B

Assumption Checks for Materialism and Brand-Related UGC about Style on Facebook

Normality

The Shapiro-Wilk test showed significant results ($p < .05$) for the relationship between high level materialism and brand-related UGC about style. In terms of skewness, the z value of the variable, brand-related UGC about style, was -2.69, indicating that the data were a little skewed. However, in social science, it is common that the data show a non-normal distribution (Blanca, Arnau, López-Montiel, Bono, & Bendayan, 2013). For kurtosis, the z value of the variable was -0.05 which was within ± 2.58 , indicating that the data was normally distributed (Hair et al., 2014). The Shapiro-Wilk test demonstrated a non-significant result ($p = .69$) for the relationship between low level materialism and brand-related UGC about style. The z values for the skew and kurtosis of the two variables were within ± 2.58 , indicating that the data did not differ significantly from normality (Hair et al., 2014). Table B1 indicates the skewness, kurtosis and p -values of the Shapiro-Wilk test for the variables on Facebook.

Table B1

Skew, Kurtosis and p-values of Shapiro-Wilk Test for Variables on Facebook (Study 2

Brand-related UGC	Materialism					
	High			Low		
	p	skew	kurtosis	p	skew	kurtosis
Style	.00	-2.67	-0.05	.69	0.38	-0.13

Homogeneity of variance

Brand-related UGC about style was non-significant for the Levene' test, $F(1, 126) = .29, p = .60$), indicating that the assumption underlying the application of ANOVA was met.

Appendix C

Assumption Checks for Materialism and Brand-Related UGC about Style on Blogs

Normality

Table C1 shows that the Shapiro-Wilk test was significant for the relationship between high level materialism and brand-related about style ($p < .05$). However, brand-related UGC about style on blogs was fairly normally distributed for the high level of materialism because the z values for skew and kurtosis were within ± 2.58 (Hair et al., 2014). The Shapiro-Wilk test was non significant for the relationship between low-level materialism and brand-related UGC about style ($p = .60$), indicating that the data was normally distributed. Table C1 illustrates the skewness, kurtosis and p -values of the Shapiro-Wilk test for the variables on the blogs.

Table C1

Skew, Kurtosis and p -values of Shapiro-Wilk Test for Variables on Blogs (Study 3)

Brand-related UGC	Materialism					
	High			Low		
	p	Skew	Kurtosis	p	Skew	Kurtosis
Style	.04	-2.31	0.50	.60	-0.10	-0.52

Homogeneity of variance

Levene's tests were non significant for the variable, brand-related UGC about style on blogs, $F(1, 130) = .02$, $p = .90$, indicating that this assumption underlying the application of ANOVA was met.

Appendix D

Assumption Checks for Knowledge Self-Efficacy about Brands and the Intention to Create Brand-Related UGC about Style on Facebook and Blogs

A series of linear regressions were conducted to check the assumptions of the relationship between knowledge self-efficacy about brands and the intentions to create brand-related UGC about style on two groups of participants: 1) participants who used Facebook; and 2) participants who used blogs.

Linearity

In the regression analysis, the X variable should have a straight line relationship with the Y variable to minimize error (Hayes 2013). Figures D1 and D2 indicated that the regressions were linear because the Loess curve appeared to be near zero along the entire X axis (Kane & Ashbaugh, 2017).

Homoscedasticity

The data points should spread equally across the Y variable to guarantee homoscedasticity (Hayes, 2013). Figures D1 and D2 showed that the data points spread wider towards the right end, which was an indication of heteroscedasticity. However, this assumption is rarely met in real data analysis (Erceg-Hurn & Mirosevich, 2008). Furthermore, 1,000 bootstrapping resamples were used in the analysis. Bootstrapping can reduce the number of type I errors when the data are heteroscedastic (Erceg-Hurn & Mirosevich, 2008). Figures D1 and D2 demonstrate the homoscedasticity of all the variables.

Appendix D - Continued

Assumption Checks for Knowledge Self-Efficacy about Brands and the Intention to Create Brand-Related UGC about Style on Facebook and Blogs

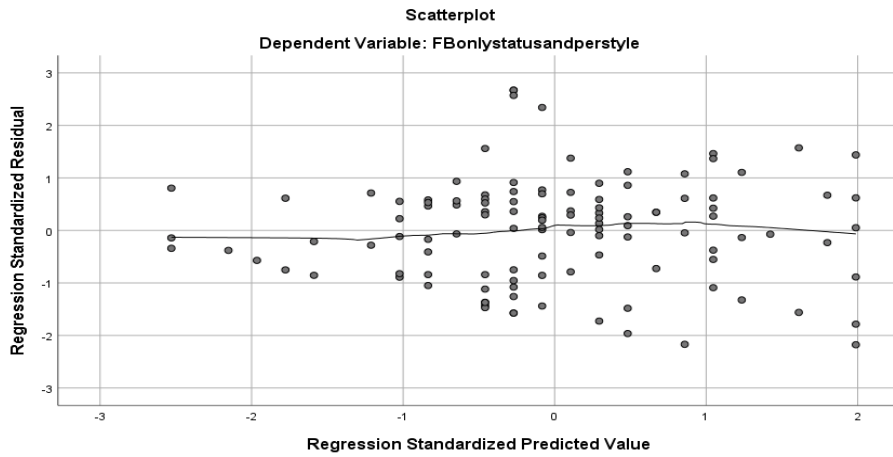


Figure D1. Homoscedasticity of knowledge efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on Facebook.

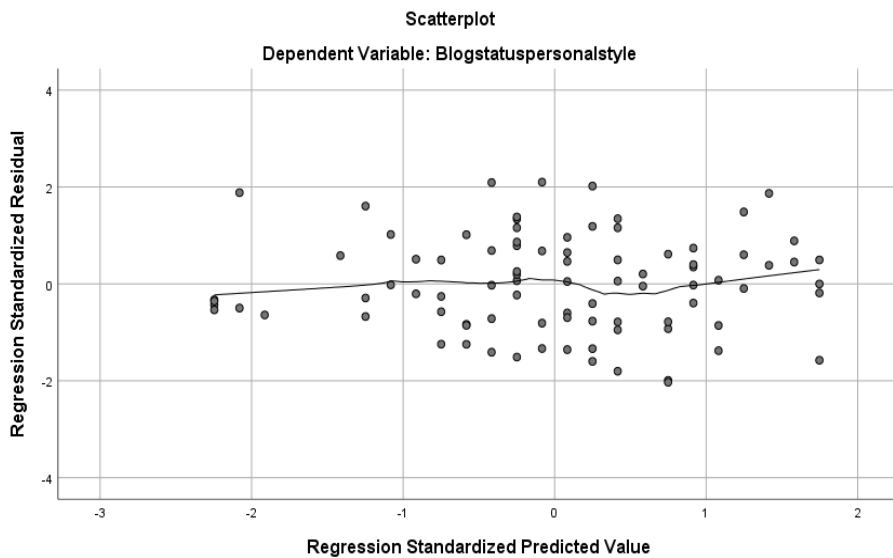


Figure D2. Homoscedasticity of knowledge efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on blogs.

Normality

Figures D3 and D4 indicate that the data fitted well with the diagonal line, showing that the data was relatively normally distributed.

Appendix D - Continued

Assumption Checks for Knowledge Self-Efficacy about Brands and the Intention to Create Brand-Related UGC about Style on Facebook and Blogs

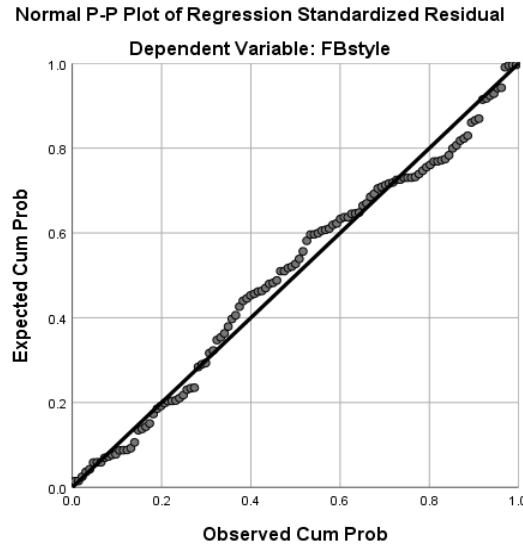


Figure D3. Normality of knowledge efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on Facebook.

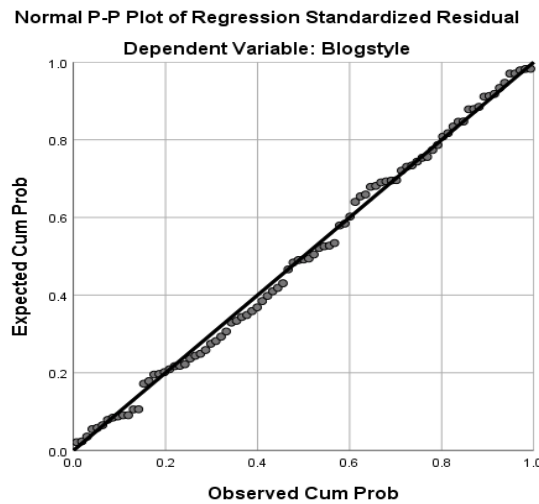


Figure D4. Normality of knowledge efficacy about brands on the intention to create brand-related UGC about style on blogs.

Independence of observations

Each participant was only counted as one observation for the outcome variable of intention to create brand-related UGC about style on Facebook. Similarly, each participant was only counted as one observation for the outcome variable of intention to create brand-related UGC about style on blogs.

Appendix E

Experiment Procedure



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FOR A QUT RESEARCH PROJECT The impact of brands on User Generated Content on social media QUT Ethics Approval Number 1800000637

RESEARCH TEAM

Principal Researcher:	Miss Han Nguyen	PhD student
Associate Researchers:	Professor Brett Martin	Principal Supervisor
	Professor Gayle Kerr	Associate Supervisor

**Advertising Marketing Public Relations, QUT Business
School Queensland University of Technology (QUT)**

DESCRIPTION

UGC (User Generated Content) refers to any positive or negative digital content (posts) created or shared by consumers about brands or company, which are made public on social media sites. Digital content (posts) can include: uploading or sharing links, audio, pictures about brands; writing or sharing experience, review, information and articles about brands.

This project is being undertaken as part of a PhD for Ms. Han Nguyen. The purpose of this project is to explore the impact of brands on user generated content on social media.

You are invited to participate in this project because you are an active user of social media sites.

PARTICIPATION

Participation will involve completing an anonymous web survey experiment with 7 Likert scale answers.

Firstly, you will be asked to imagine that you have purchased a new box of Kellogg

Appendix E – Continued

Experiment Procedure

cereal and a new roll of Kleenex paper towel or a new pair of Nike sneakers and a new Rolex watch .Then, you will be asked to evaluate the likelihood of creating digital content about the brand on social media sites on 7 Likert scale (Unlikely/Likely; Definitely would not/ Definitely; Improbable/ Probable). After that, you will be asked to rate the list of reasons to create digital content about the brand on 7 Likert scale (Extremely Unimportant/ Extremely Important). The experiment will be expected to take approximately 20-25 minutes.

Questions will include:

Imagine you recently purchased a new box of Kellogg cereal and a new roll of Kleenex paper towel or a new pair of Nike sneakers and a new Rolex watch.

How likely are you to create content about the brand and publish it on social media sites?

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you agree to participate you do not have to complete any question(s) you are uncomfortable answering. Your decision to participate or not participate will in no way impact upon your current or future relationship with QUT or Amazon Mechanical Turk. If you do agree to participate you can withdraw from the project during your participation without comment or penalty. However as the survey is anonymous once it has been submitted it will not be possible to withdraw. Partially completed surveys will be discarded and not included in the analysis.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

It is expected that this project will not directly benefit you. However, it may benefit marketer and consumer theory knowledge.

The research result will be available on January 2019. Please contact the researcher via email: thimaihan.nguyen@hdr.qut.edu.au for any feedback and results request.

Appendix E – Continued

Experiment Procedure

RISKS

There are no risks beyond normal day-to-day living associated with your participation in this project.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY

All comments and responses are anonymous and will be treated confidentially unless required by law. The names of individual persons are not required in any of the responses.

Any data collected as part of this project will be stored securely as per QUT's Management of research data policy.

Please note that non-identifiable data from this project may be used as comparative data in future projects or stored on an open access database for secondary analysis.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Submitting the completed online survey is accepted as an indication of your consent to participate in this project.

QUESTIONS / FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

If you have any questions or require further information please contact one of the listed researchers:

Han Nguyen thimaihan.nguyen@hdr.qut.edu.au +61731389178

Brett Martin brett.martin@qut.edu.au +61731387739

CONCERNS / COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF THE PROJECT

Appendix E – Continued

Experiment Procedure

QUT is committed to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. However, if you do have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Advisory Team on +617 3138 5123 or email humanethics@qut.edu.au. The QUT Research Ethics Advisory Team is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an impartial manner.

Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

The impact of brands on User Generated Content on social media sites

A. On blogs

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other

Please select age (please use slider provided)

What is your nationality?

What is your annual income? (in USD dollar) (please use slider provided)

What kind(s) of social media do you use?

Blog

Facebook

Appendix E – Continued

Experiment Procedure

Twitter

Instagram

Reddit

Youtube

Pinterest

Linkedin

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Scale: Strongly disagree to Strongly agree (1 to 7)

Answer options:

I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.

The things I own say a lot about how well I am doing in life.

I like to own things that impress people.

I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.

Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.

I like a lot of luxury in my life.

My life would be better if I owned certain things I do not have.

I would be happier if I could afford to buy more things

It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I cannot afford to buy all the things I would like.

I. Highly symbolic brands condition

Imagine you recently purchased a new pair of Nike sneakers. How likely are you to create digital content about the brand and publish it on your blog?

Scale: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7

Answer options:

Appendix E – Continued

Experiment Procedure

Unlikely|||Likely
Definitely would not|||Definitely would
Improbable|||Probable

Please rate the reasons to create digital content about the brand on your blog:

Scale: Extremely unimportant - - - - - Extremely important

Answer options:

To display my personal style.

To look like a celebrity.

To show the style of my favourite celebrity.

To show fashionable trends.

To show uniqueness of the brand.

To show how luxurious the brand is.

To recommend the brand.

To promote my blog content.

To show my expertise about the brand.

To show how the product can be used.

To interact with other audiences about my personal style on my blog.

To show my positive emotional response to the brand.

To show how my personal style makes me feel.

To show my positive emotional response to the fashionable trends.

To show my positive emotional response to the celebrity's style.

To brag about expensive price of the brand.

Appendix E – Continued

Experiment Procedure

To brag about cheap price of the brand.

Other reason

Imagine you recently purchased a new Rolex watch. How likely are you to create digital content about the brand and publish it on your blog?

Scale: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7

Answer options:

Unlikely|||Likely

Definitely would not|||Definitely would

Improbable|||Probable

Please rate the reasons to create digital content about the brand on your blog:

Extremely unimportant - - - - - Extremely important

Answer options:

To display my personal style.

To look like a celebrity.

To show the style of my favourite celebrity.

To show fashionable trends.

To show uniqueness of the brand.

To show how luxurious the brand is.

To recommend the brand.

To promote my blog content.

To show my expertise about the brand.

To show how the product can be used.

To interact with other audiences about my personal style on my blog.

To show my positive emotional response to the brand.

Appendix E – *Continued*

Experiment Procedure

To show how my personal style makes me feel.

To show my positive emotional response to the fashionable trends.

To show my positive emotional response to the celebrity's style.

To brag about expensive price of the brand.

To brag about cheap price of the brand.

Other reason

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Scale: Strongly disagree - - - - - Strongly agree

Answer options:

I have confidence in my ability to provide knowledge about the brands that others on my blog consider valuable.

I have the expertise required to provide valuable knowledge about the brands for my blog.

It does not really make any difference whether I share my knowledge about the brands with others on my blog.

Most others can provide more valuable knowledge about the brands than I can.

Please indicate the extent to which you are familiar with Nike sneakers:

Scale: Not at all familiar - Unfamiliar - Somewhat unfamiliar - Neutral - Somewhat familiar - Familiar - Very familiar

Please indicate the extent to which you are familiar with Rolex watch:

Scale: Not at all familiar - Unfamiliar - Somewhat unfamiliar - Neutral - Somewhat familiar - Familiar - Very familiar

Please indicate your attitude toward Nike sneakers:

Scale: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7

Answer options:

Bad|||Good

Unpleasant|||Pleasant

Appendix E – Continued

Experiment Procedure

Dislike|||Like

Please indicate your attitude toward Rolex watch:

Scale: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7

Answer options:

Bad|||Good

Unpleasant|||Pleasant

Dislike|||Like

How much do Nike sneakers symbolize what kind of person uses them?

Scale: Not at all symbolic - - - Neutral - - - Highly symbolic

To what extent do Nike sneakers communicate something specific about the person who uses them?

Scale: Does not communicate a lot - - - Neutral - - - Communicate a lot

How much does a Rolex watch symbolize what kind of person uses them?

Scale: Not at all symbolic - - - Neutral - - - Highly symbolic

How much does a Rolex watch symbolize what kind of person uses them?

Scale: Not at all symbolic - - - Neutral - - - Highly symbolic

What brands were presented in this study:

What product categories were presented in this study:

Appendix E – Continued

Experiment Procedure

II. Low symbolic brand condition

Imagine you recently purchased a new box of Kellogg's cereal. How likely are you to create content about the brand and publish it on your blog?

Scale: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7

Answer options:

Unlikely|||Likely

Definitely would not|||Definitely would

Improbable|||Probable

Please rate the reasons to create digital content about the brand on your blog:

Scale: Extremely unimportant - - - - - Extremely important

Answer options:

To display my personal style.

To look like a celebrity.

To show the style of my favourite celebrity.

To show fashionable trends.

To show uniqueness of the brand.

To show how luxurious the brand is.

To recommend the brand.

To promote my blog content.

To show my expertise about the brand.

To show how the product can be used.

Appendix E – Continued

Experiment Procedure

To interact with other audiences about my personal style on my blog.

To express my positive emotional response to the brand.

To show how my personal style makes me feel.

To express my positive emotional response to the fashionable trends.

To express my positive emotional response to the celebrity's style.

To brag about expensive price of the brand.

To brag about cheap price of the brand.

Other reason

**Imagine you recently purchased a new roll of Kleenex paper towel.
How likely are you to create content about the brand and publish it on
your blog?**

Scale: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7

Answer options:

Unlikely|||Likely

Definitely would not|||Definitely would

Improbable|||Probable

**Please rate the reasons to create digital content about the brand on
your blog:**

Scale: Extremely unimportant - - - - - Extremely important

Answer options:

To display my personal style.

To look like a celebrity.

Appendix E – Continued

Experiment Procedure

To show the style of my favourite celebrity.

To show fashionable trends.

To show uniqueness of the brand.

To show how luxurious the brand is.

To recommend the brand.

To promote my blog content.

To show my expertise about the brand.

To show how the product can be used.

To interact with other audiences about my personal style on my blog.

To show my positive emotional response to the brand.

To show how my personal style makes me feel.

To show my positive emotional response to the fashionable trends.

To show my positive emotional response to the celebrity's style.

To brag about expensive price of the brand.

To brag about cheap price of the brand.

Other reason

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Scale: Strongly disagree - - - - - Strongly agree

Answer options:

I have confidence in my ability to provide knowledge about the brands that others on my blog consider valuable.

Appendix E – Continued

Experiment Procedure

I have the expertise required to provide valuable knowledge about the brands for my blog.

It does not really make any difference whether I share my knowledge about the brands with others on my blog.

Most others can provide more valuable knowledge about the brands than I can.

Please indicate the extent to which you are familiar with Kellogg's cereal:

Scale: Not at all familiar - Unfamiliar - Somewhat unfamiliar - Neutral - Somewhat familiar - Familiar - Very familiar

Please indicate the extent to which you are familiar with Kleenex paper towel:

Scale: Not at all familiar - Unfamiliar - Somewhat unfamiliar - Neutral - Somewhat familiar - Familiar - Very familiar

Please indicate your attitude toward Kellogg's cereal:

Scale: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7

Answer options:

Bad|||Good

Unpleasant|||Pleasant

Dislike|||Like

Please indicate your attitude toward Kleenex paper towel:

Scale: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7

Answer options:

Bad|||Good

Appendix E – Continued

Experiment Procedure

Unpleasant|||Pleasant

Dislike|||Like

How much does Kellogg's cereal symbolize what kind of person uses it?

Scale: Not at all symbolic - - - Neutral - - - Highly symbolic

To what extent does Kellogg's cereal communicate something specific about the person who uses it?

Scale: Does not communicate a lot - - - Neutral - - - Communicate a lot

How much does Kleenex paper towel symbolize what kind of person uses it?

Scale: Not at all symbolic - - - Neutral - - - Highly symbolic

To what extent does Kleenex paper towel communicate something specific about the person who uses it?

Scale: Does not communicate a lot - - - Neutral - - - Communicate a lot

What brands were presented in this study:

What product categories were presented in this study:

B. On Facebook

For participants who used Facebook, the procedure was identical to those who used blogs. The difference was that the name of the platform was changed from “blogs” to “Facebook”.

Appendix F

Factor analysis

On Facebook

Principal Axis Factor is run on 14 items on Facebook by using Oblique rotation, requesting SPSS to calculate KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity.

Assumptions in Factor analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test: KMO refers to measure of sampling adequacy and should be >0.600 (Allen & Kellie, 2012). In this case, result from SPSS indicates that KMO is .94 so it can be assumed factor analysis affects the variables. Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant ($p=.00$). Therefore, there was sufficient correlations exist among the variables to proceed. It means the variables do group together well enough to generate factor analysis (Hair et al. 2014). Regarding communalities, all 14 items had extracted communalities values more than 0.67.

Deriving factors and assessing overall fit

In order to be retained, the factors should have eigenvalues greater than 1 (Hair et al. 2014). In this analysis, there were two factors that had eigenvalues higher than 1. Furthermore, the scree plot reveals two clear factors (Hair et al. 2014). Figure F1 indicates the scree plot.

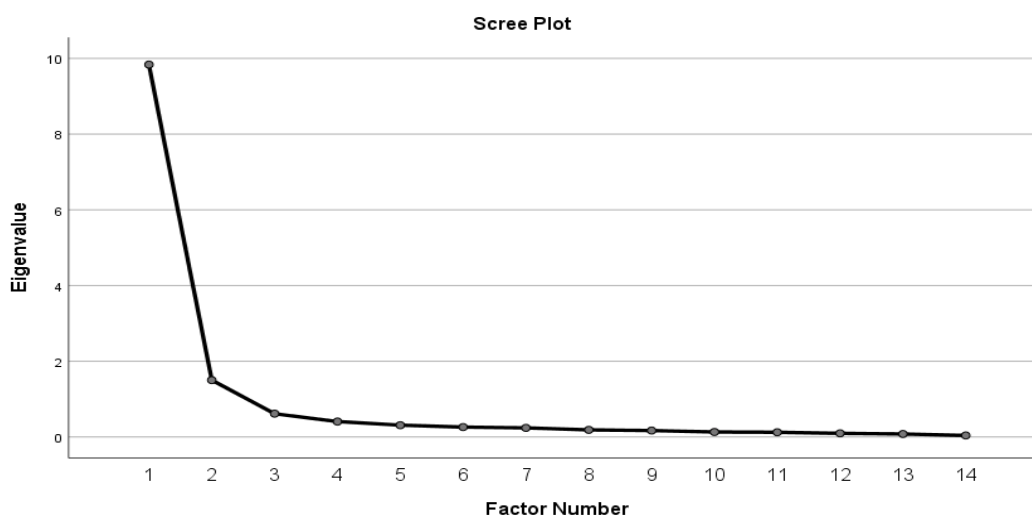


Figure F1. Scree plot of the factor analysis.

Appendix F – Continued

Factor analysis

Interpreting the factors

The factor loadings are interpreted according to pattern matrix (table F1) because it indicates how the variables load onto each of the factors after rotation (Allen & Kellie, 2012). Furthermore, for oblique rotations, pattern matrix is recommended to be interpreted (Plucker 2003). In order to decide the items belong to specific factor, the loading value should be greater than 0.50 (positive and negative) are required for significance. Furthermore, the items should not be loaded substantially on other factors (Hair et al., 2014). Most of the items have factor loading values more than .05 on one particular and had loading factor values lower than .05 on another factor. Table F1 shows the loading factor values for each items.

Table F1.

Pattern Matrix for 2 factor solution

Items	Factor	
	1	2
Recommend the brand	.97	
Express my positive emotional response to the brand	.96	
Promote my blog content	.83	
Show how my personal style makes me feel	.82	
Show uniqueness of the brand	.80	
Express my positive emotional response to fashion trends	.77	
Display my personal style	.76	
Show my expertise about the brand	.70	
Look like a celebrity		1.01
Show the style of my favourite celebrity		.97
Brag about expensive price of the brand		.82
Express my positive emotional response to celebrity's style		.71
Show how luxurious the brand is		.54
Show fashionable trends		.50

Appendix F - Continued

Factor analysis

Label the factors

Factor 1 (the first 8 items in table F1) was labelled brand-related UGC about personal style.

Expressing personal style can be achieved through arrangement, (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry Jr, 1989; Kron, 1983) and combination of various brands (Holt, 1998; Tian, et al., 2001). It can be created from evaluations of different consumption options; capability to express intense emotion toward products; expertise knowledge about products and interact with others about one's distinctive style (Holt, 1998). In addition, personal style can be shaped through engaging with unique products such as scarcity or limited supply of products (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004), vintage goods, thrift brands, hand-crafted goods, and personalized items that are not sold in mass marketplaces, but may only be found in non-conventional outlets (Tian, et al., 2001). Another way of forming personal style is to customize product designs to suit individual taste and preference (Tian, et al., 2001). Thus, the scale of personal style include eight items: to display my personal style, to show uniqueness of the brands, to promote my blog content, to show my expertise about the brands, to show positive emotional response to brands, to show how my styles makes me feel, to recommend brands

Factor 2 (the next 6 items in the table F1) was labelled brand-related UGC about status-related style.

Luxury brands are brands that can convey status (Grossman & Shapiro, 1986). Luxury brands are reflected through luxurious qualities of brands (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Luxurious quality of brands are exquisite, glamorous, stunning, crafted, best quality, sophisticated and superior (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). In addition, associating with celebrities can communicate status because they are related to success and wealth (Gountas, et al., 2012). To associating with celebrity on

Appendix F – Continued

Factor analysis

social media is to imitate the poses of models/ celebrities reflected in traditional fashion magazines (Engholm & Hansen-Hansen, 2014; Harju & Huovinen, 2015; McQuarrie, et al., 2013). Moreover, consumers present their knowledge and passion for their favourite celebrity styles (Hamilton & Hower, 2010). Furthermore, social status can be gained through the way individuals can reflect contemporary trends through consumptions (O'cass & McEwen, 2004) . Thus, the scale for status-related style consists of seven items: luxurious quality of brands, celebrity's styles, to look like a celebrity, fashionable trend, positive emotional response to fashionable trend, brag about expensive price and positive emotional response toward celebrity's style.

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients

Table F.2 shows cronbach's alphas of measurement scales for each construct on Facebook. Cronbach's (1951) alpha reliability coefficient was conducted in SPSS in order to investigate the internal consistency of the items of the scale brand-related UGC about personal style and status-related style on Facebook. Cronbach alpha were greater than .7, demonstrating good reliability (Hair, et al., 2014). Table F2 shows Cronbach's alphas of measurement scales for each construct on Facebook and blogs.

Table F2.

Cronbach's alphas of measurement scales for each factor on Facebook

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand-related UGC about personal style on Facebook	8	.96
Brand-related UGC about status-related style on Facebook	6	.95

On blogs

Principal Axis Factor is run on 14 items on blogs by using Oblique rotation, requesting SPSS to calculate KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity.

Appendix F – Continued

Factor analysis

Assumptions in Factor analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test: result from SPSS indicates that KMO is .92 so it can be assumed factor analysis affects the variables. Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant ($p=.00$). Therefore, the variables do group together well enough to generate factor analysis (Hair et al. 2014). Regarding communalities, all 14 items had extracted communalities values more than 0.55.

Deriving factors and assessing overall fit

There were two factors that had eigenvalues higher than 1. Furthermore, the scree plot reveals two clear factors (Hair et al. 2014). Figure F2 indicates the scree plot.

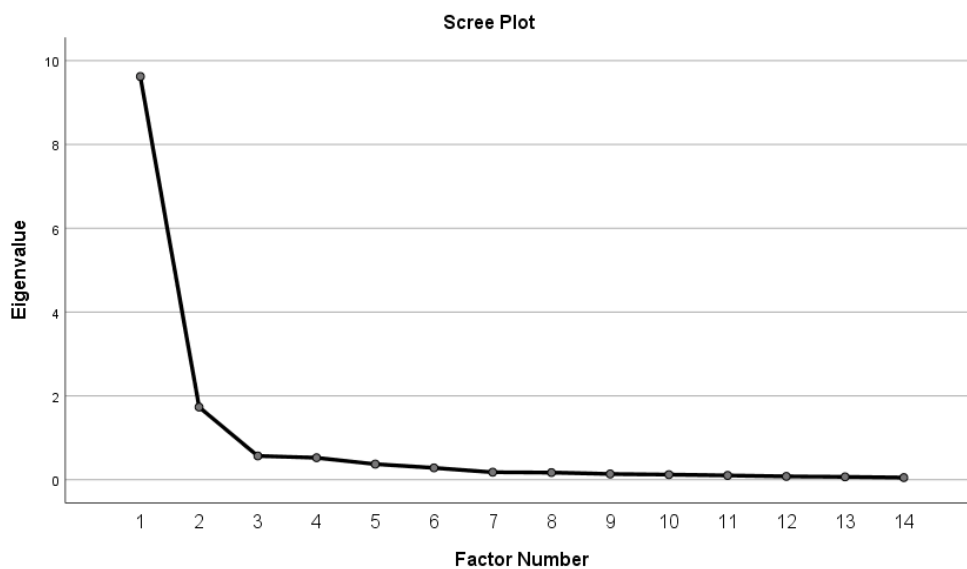


Figure F2. Scree plot of the factor analysis.

Interpreting the factors

Most of the items have factor loading values more than .05 on one particular and had loading factor values lower than .05 on another factor. Table F3 shows the loading factor values for each items.

Appendix F – Continued
Factor analysis

Table F3.

Pattern Matrix for 2 factor solution

Items	Factor	
	1	2
Recommend the brand	.96	
Express my positive emotional response to the brand	1.00	
Promote my blog content	.73	
Show how my personal style makes me feel	.90	
Show uniqueness of the brand	.83	
Express my positive emotional response to fashion trends	.84	
Display my personal style	.85	
Show my expertise about the brand	.83	
To show how product can be used	.97	
Show how luxurious the brand is	.63	
Show fashionable trends	.59	
Look like a celebrity		.95
Show the style of my favourite celebrity		.96
Express my positive emotional response to celebrity's style		.55

Label the factors

The first factor (the first 11 items in table F2) was labelled brand-related UGC about personal style.

The second factor (the next three items in table F2) was labelled brand-related UGC about status-related style.

Appendix F – Continued

Factor analysis

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients

Table F.4 shows Cronbach's alphas of measurement scales for each construct on Facebook. Cronbach's (1951) alpha reliability coefficient was conducted in SPSS in order to investigate the internal consistency of the items of the scale brand-related UGC about personal style and status-related style on Facebook. Cronbach alphas were greater than .7, demonstrating good reliability (Hair, et al., 2014). Table F4 shows Cronbach's alphas of measurement scales for each construct on Facebook and blogs

Table F4.

Cronbach's alphas of measurement scales for each factor on blogs.

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand-related UGC about personal style on Facebook	11	.97
Brand-related UGC about status-related style on Facebook	3	.89