

CREATING A STRATEGY
FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

PERSPECTIVES FROM
THE FASHION INDUSTRY

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by

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Abstract

Social media have altered the communication landscape and significantly impacted on marketing communication. Research suggests that with the rise of social media, marketing communication has been democratised, and the power has shifted from those in marketing to the individuals and communities that create and consume content on social media and redistribute it across a variety of channels. Yet the implications of social media are still largely unknown among practitioners and managers.

Interest in the use of social media in marketing is growing. In particular with the recent special issues on social media published by marketing journals, the body of research is rapidly developing. But despite the growing interest, there are no specific theories that focus on social-media marketing in the fashion industry, and limited empirical research exists on the implications of social media in the fashion sector overall. Research in this area has the potential to inform both further study and practice in relation to the use of social media in fashion-marketing communications.

This study explores the development, implications and impact of social media as a part of marketing communications in the fashion industry through case studies and key-informant interviews. In particular, the aim is to build an empirically grounded framework that enables the understanding, explanation and description of the process of building a social-media strategy. The findings arising from this research can help practitioners and managers to make sense of the social-media environment and better understand how to design social-media activities and effectively use social media in marketing communications. As the field is emerging, the methodologies, theories and their application are likely to evolve considerably.

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1 Introduction

1.1 New directions

The foundations of marketing practices online have radically altered since Hoffman and Novak's (1996) article outlining how organisations should interact with consumers. Social media have created highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities can discuss, share and co-create (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden, 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011). With consumers spending more and more time on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat, communication about brands increasingly takes place in this new environment (Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012). In respect to marketing communications, this means that interaction with brands and exposure to marketing campaigns occur within social media too. The emergence of new communication channels has thereby transformed consumers from passive participants in marketing to active creators and influencers (Kozinets et al., 2010). Research suggests that with the rise of social media, marketing communication has been democratised, and the power has shifted from those in marketing to the individuals and communities that create and consume content on social media and redistribute it across multiple channels (Edelman, 2010; Kotler, 2011; Berthon et al., 2012; Kumar and Sundaram, 2012; Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012; Gensler et al., 2013; Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching, 2013). Yet among practitioners and managers, there seems to be no consensus on the outcomes of social media.

Despite the numerous social-media applications and technologies available, many companies ignore or mismanage the opportunities and threats presented by creative consumers in social media (Berthon et al., 2012). One factor that perhaps

accounts for this ineffectiveness is a failure to understand the potential of social media as a strategic marketing-communications tool. Recently, an increasing number of marketing scholars have examined why consumers use social media (e.g. Brodie et al., 2011, Chu and Kim, 2011; Moe and Trusov, 2011; Eisenbeiss et al., 2012; Moe and Schweidel, 2012; Chu, Kamal and Kim, 2013; Peters et. al, 2013; Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014), but limited academic research exists from the marketers' perspective on how to develop sustainable social-media strategies and allocate resources to engage efficiently with these new channels. In particular, there is a lack of more refined, standard methods for evaluating professional social media practices and underlying strategies.

1.2 Fashion and social media

Until recently, the fashion industry has shown low commitment towards digital technology in the sector's marketing and overall business strategies. For instance, large international fashion houses such as Versace and Prada did not have corporate websites until 2005 and 2007 respectively (Okonkwo, 2009). Despite the recent developments, many fashion brands in the premium and luxury segments remain slow to build their digital capabilities and lack e-commerce sites geared towards important emerging markets, including China, Brazil, Russia, South Korea and the UAE, and some lack e-commerce altogether (Exane BNP Paribas, 2014). Coupled with the growing demand for a stronger digital presence overall, the rise of social media has brought new challenges to the fashion industry. Many fashion companies are still unable or reluctant to develop strategies and allocate resources to engage with social media. A well-known example from the luxury fashion sector is LVMH-owned Céline, which has neither e-commerce nor a social media presence in any market and whose creative director Phoebe Philo has been quoted as saying 'I'd rather walk down the street naked than join Facebook' (Kansara, 2014).

This attitude has changed in recent years; social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat have become an integral part of how fashion brands connect with consumers, providing substantial opportunities for innovative marketing communications (Kim and Ko, 2010, 2012; Chu, Kamal and Kim, 2013; Dhaoui, 2014). While new channels of communication emerge through digital and social media, an increasing number of designers are questioning traditional marketing formats and research argues that there is a fundamental shift in how fashion is communicated (Barnes, 2014; Heine and Berghaus, 2014; Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli, 2014). These developments and consumer demands situate fashion brands at a crossroads. As suggested by fashion editor Suzy Menkes (2010), ‘fashion brands have to decide which way to go: back to the comfort zone of craftsmanship and quality, as Gucci has done; fast forward into the world of live screening and e-commerce; or a delicate balance between the two?’ Clearly, the question of the presentation of fashion in the digital context needs further research, especially with regards to the particularities of fashion marketing (Lea-Greenwood, 2013), which have posed a challenge in adopting digital technologies in the sector over the past two decades.

1.3 Rationale

Social media have altered the communication landscape and significantly impacted on marketing (Hutter et al., 2013). Although academics have begun to invest considerable effort in understanding why consumers engage with social media (e.g. Adjei, Noble and Noble, 2010; Brodie et al., 2013; Chu and Kim, 2011; Moe and Trusov, 2011; Blank and Reisdorf, 2012; Eisenbeiss et al., 2012; Moe and Schweidel, 2012; Seraj, 2012; Chu, Kamal and Kim, 2013; Peters et al., 2013; Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014), the majority of the existing research tends to focus on consumer behaviour and much less research exists

regarding the motivations from a company perspective. Moreover, there is a lack of effective frameworks for developing, analysing and comparing social-media strategies (Effing and Spil, 2016). The early research in this topical area consists of articles primarily focused on the identification of specific social-media-related strategies – not strategies for social media specifically. Scholars have just started giving their attention to the subject of ‘social media strategy’ as such, highlighting a gap in our knowledge, which this study seeks to address. Research in this area has the potential to inform both further study and practice in relation to the role of social media as a strategic marketing-communications tool.

Moreover, the relationships between social media and fashion require further interrogation. Recent academic literature has raised the issues of the compatibility of fashion and the Internet, the suitability of fashion products to the virtual environment and strategic approaches to maximising a fashion brand’s presence online (Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli, 2014). Additionally, the interest in the use of social media in marketing – especially in the marketing of luxury brands – is growing (Phan and Park, 2014). In particular, with the launch of the recent special issues on social media published by marketing journals, the body of research is rapidly developing. Despite the growing research interest, there are no specific theories that focus on social-media marketing in the fashion industry, and limited empirical evidence exists on the implications of social media in the fashion sector overall. With the emergence of social media as tools for marketing communication, and given their attractiveness to consumers in the fashion industry, there is room for further research and opportunities for the development of new models for fashion marketing. To address this gap, the study explores the likely development, implications and impact of social media as a strategic marketing communications tool in the fashion industry.

1.4 Aim and objectives

The aim of this research is to understand the role of social media as a strategic marketing communications tool. More specifically it seeks to build an empirically grounded framework that enables an understanding, explanation and description of the process of building a social-media strategy. In order to achieve this aim, the following research objectives were developed:

- To define the concepts of fashion and fashion marketing, and understand the unique attributes that make fashion a particularly interesting context for social-media research.
- To define social media and explore the role and nature of the different platforms.
- To understand brands' motivations for using social media.
- To identify the key factors constituting a social-media strategy and study their characteristics.

These questions are answered using an iterative research process that synthesises the literature review, the preliminary frame of reference and the empirical material in order to develop understanding of the phenomenon. The developed framework attempts to illustrate and describe the process of designing a social-media strategy in the context of the fashion industry. The intention of this study is, in essence, theory development.

Derived from the research objectives, Table 1.1 on the following page presents the research questions.

TABLE 1.1 INITIAL SET OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	KEY REFERENCES
Why do brands engage with social media?	Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014
What are the factors that affect the brands' motivations?	Yadav et al., 2013
What is the role and nature of the different social-media platforms?	Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010
What are the key factors constituting a social media strategy?	Effing and Spil, 2016

1.5 Approach

This study adopts 'interpretivism' as a philosophical position. The position of interpretivism in relation to ontology and epistemology is that interpretivists believe reality is multiple and relative (Carson et al., 2001). The knowledge acquired in this discipline is socially constructed rather than objectively determined and perceived (Carson et al., 2001; Black, 2006). In this study, the main point of the research is not an attempt to discover general laws, but to describe and understand the process of building a social-media strategy. Derived from ontological and epistemological assumptions, the chosen methodology for this research is an idiographic one (Denzin, 1989; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), namely case-study research (Yin, 2008).

Case-study strategy was adopted because it is ideally suited to creating managerially relevant knowledge (Gibbert and Ruigrok, 2010) and considered particularly useful in the critical, early phases of a new management theory, when key variables and their relationships are being explored (Eisenhardt, 1989; Elg and Johansson, 1997; Yin, 2008). Three case studies of fashion companies (Acne Studios, Hunter

and Matthew Williamson) are presented using multiple sources of evidence. These are further supported by a series of qualitative key-informant interviews with digital fashion professionals in London and in New York. The research design is elaborated on in Chapter 5.

1.6 Thesis structure

The dissertation is divided into nine chapters as outlined in Table 1.2 below.

TABLE 1.2 THESIS STRUCTURE

CHAPTER	TITLE	OBJECTIVE
Chapter 1	Introduction	To establish a rationale for the research, present the aim and objectives, and summarise the research design
Chapter 2	Fashion and marketing	To define the concepts of fashion and fashion marketing, and understand the unique attributes that make fashion a particularly interesting context for social-media research
Chapter 3	Social media	To define social media and explore the role and nature of different social-media platforms
Chapter 4	Preliminary conceptualisations	To establish the foundations for developing a conceptual framework and present the key research questions
Chapter 5	Methodology	To present the research approach and provide a description of the research strategy and research design
Chapter 6	Case studies	To present the case studies: Acne Studios, Hunter and Matthew Williamson
Chapter 7	Cross-case analysis	To provide the cross-case analysis
Chapter 8	Discussion of the findings	To discuss the findings arising from case studies and key informant interviews and propose an empirically grounded framework
Chapter 9	Conclusions	To present conclusions, addressing the theoretical and managerial contributions of the study, the limitations as well as the directions for future research

The next chapter, Chapter 2, defines the concepts of fashion and fashion marketing in the context of this research. The purpose is to understand the unique attributes that make fashion a particularly interesting context for social-media research. Chapter 3 focuses on the evolving social-media environment. The aim is to define social media and explore the role and nature of its different platforms. Motivations for engaging with social media are investigated from the company perspective and the initial factors of social-media strategy are explored, drawing from theoretical considerations and supported by references from the recent literature on social media. After the theoretical foundations have been established, Chapter 4 introduces the preliminary conceptualisations and summarises the key research questions. Chapter 5 presents the research approach and provides a description of the research strategy and research design. Chapter 6 presents the case-study descriptions (Acne Studios, Hunter and Matthew Williamson) while Chapter 7 focuses on the cross-case analysis. Chapter 8 provides a detailed discussion of the findings arising from the within and cross-case analysis, exploring the factors that constitute social-media strategy and discussing their characteristics. An empirically grounded framework is proposed to understand, explain and describe the process of building a social-media strategy. Finally, Chapter 9 presents conclusions, addressing the theoretical contribution of the work, the managerial implications of the findings, their limitations as well as the directions for future research.

2 Fashion and marketing

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to define the concept of fashion marketing, and understand the unique attributes that make fashion a particularly interesting industry for studying social media. First, the term ‘fashion’ is defined in the context of this research and its particularities as an industry and business are discussed. Second, fashion marketing is discussed and defined, and its characteristics are examined. Finally, a summary of current key research themes in fashion marketing is provided. The focus is on digital fashion-marketing research, in particular e-commerce, mobile commerce, omnichannel, blogs and social media.

2.2 The concept of fashion

Fashion can be related to any object or phenomenon that changes over time and is based upon individuals’ collective preferences (Barnard, 1996). The term ‘fashion’ is used in a range of areas and thus it is essential to specify its usage in this dissertation.

2.2.1 *Defining fashion*

Over the past several decades, fashion studies have emerged as an interdisciplinary field of scholarly research, and fashion scholars have engaged in a variety of

different projects, exploring a variety of themes. For example, scholars have looked at the material and symbolic production of fashion (Evans and Thornton, 1989; McRobbie, 1998; Rocamora, 2001, 2009; Ryan, 2005, 2007; Entwistle, 2009). In general, the term ‘fashion’ may refer to an aesthetic style that appeals to our senses and emotional well-being and is found in many commercial areas of contemporary life (Abrahamson, 1996). Whereas aesthetic fashion has often been perceived as being concerned with appearing ‘beautiful and modern’, Abrahamson (1996: 254–257) argues that changes in, for example, management fashion may be regarded as rooted in a technical and economic basis.

From a more general perspective, fashion can be defined as something with short-term popularity applied to different product categories (such as clothing, cars, food or technology), lifestyles and business sectors, and can be used in describing the characteristics of an individual; for example, a person described as being ‘fashionable’ would be someone who embraces the aspects of what is considered popular at a given time (Lipovetsky, 2002; Hines and Bruce, 2007).

Apart from the various evaluations of the basis and concerns of fashion in different areas, the common denominator seems to be change. As Lipovetsky (2002: 16) argues: ‘Fashion is a specific form of social change, independent of any particular object; it is first and foremost a social mechanism characterised by a particularly brief time span and by more or less fanciful shifts that enable it to affect quite diverse spheres of collective life.’

Another aspect that is often attached to fashion is a psychological or intangible ‘something extra’, which Kawamura (2005: 4) expresses as follows: ‘Fashion is not visual clothing but is the invisible elements included in clothing.’

Although this research focuses on ‘clothing fashion’ as the industry and context within which to study social media, as Levy and Czepiel (1999: 90) indicate, fashion does not just exist in clothing, but in all spheres of life. Scholars have

long recognised fashion as a phenomenon affecting many aspects of our existence (Abrahamson, 1996). However, historically and theoretically, fashion has referred mainly to clothing and personal adornment, which have been recognised as tools for constructing one's desired look (Davis, 1992). As noted by Kawamura (2005), fashion and clothing remain deeply interconnected.

The last two quotations present central perspectives on the term 'fashion' in this dissertation, where fashion refers to clothing and the changes in perceptions of what is regarded 'new and trendy', but also includes the inherent understanding that fashion is clothing with 'something extra' that makes it particularly desirable. Fashion consumers are often easily persuaded to pay relatively high prices for products because of their perceived value, for example, in design, fashion or brand terms (Barnes, 2014). This psychological or invisible element of 'something extra' makes fashion a particularly interesting context for social-media research, since social media offer new and increased opportunities for communicating the intangible qualities of a product or a brand. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

2.2.2 *Fashion cycles*

Fashion has been defined as 'the process of social diffusion by which a new style (of fashion clothing) is adopted by some group(s) of consumers' (Solomon, 2007: 589). Atik and Firat (2013) illustrate that this process of diffusion has transformed into a principle of the marketing institution, and thus it is important to specify its usage in this dissertation. The concept of fashion is such that it remains popular for a limited period of time, which could be a matter of days, weeks, months or years (Hines and Bruce, 2007). Regardless of its duration, something that is in fashion will, by definition, inevitably lose popularity at some point to be replaced by a new fashion, and the cycle begins again (Barnes, 2014). This notion of a 'cycle' relates closely to Rogers' theory of 'diffusion of innovation' and to the

product life cycle (PLC) model. The ‘diffusion of innovation’ theory proposed by Rogers (2003; original work published in 1962) seeks to explain how something new (a product, idea, technology or concept) is taken up or adopted by a group of individuals, which could be a neighbourhood, society, country or club. He then provides ‘adopter categories’, by which individuals may be categorised in terms of their readiness to adopt and diffuse an innovation model. These categories are: ‘innovators’, ‘early adopters’, ‘early majority’, ‘late majority’ and ‘laggards’ (Rogers, 2003). By contrast, product life cycle (PLC) theory is a separate theoretical concept grounded in marketing theory, which models the sales of a product through its lifetime (Barnes, 2014). It is represented, mirroring the behaviour of Rogers’ adopter categories, by a normal distribution curve, representing an initial slow growth of sales as consumers become aware of the product, followed by rapid growth and then a maturity phase when the product has achieved sustained sales, which finally begin to decline. This profile follows the pattern of a fashion trend. By linking the life cycle of a fashion trend to Rogers’ classification of adopter categories, it is possible to gain some understanding of the types of consumers ‘buying in’ to a new fashion, and the stages at which they do it (Evans, 1989). The categories of adoption are based on a normal distribution curve; therefore, the early-majority and late-majority categories might represent a typical ‘mass market’ fashion response. Whilst Rogers is widely considered to be the seminal theorist on the diffusion of innovations, his work has developed over the past decades and he now incorporates the work of many other innovation diffusion scholars into his ‘diffusion of innovation’ theory (Freathy, 2003; Lundblad, 2003).

The diffusion of innovation theory and PLC theory are not the only theoretical models used to explain the concept of fashion (Barnes, 2014). Motives that guide the behaviour of people who play a part in fashion cycles are often the result of their social, economic or political conditions and positions in society (Atik and Firat, 2013). This has been true for theories of fashion diffusion that are prominent today. The ‘trickle-down’ theory is often applied to fashion and is derived from

the consumer-behaviour and sociology literature. Simmel (1957; original work published in 1904), for example, developed the trickle-down theory of fashion a century ago from a sociological perspective when he observed that new fashions were transferred from the upper social classes to the lower ones. In the course of their descent through the status hierarchy, new fashions became diluted and vulgarised. As a result, they lost their ability to register the appropriate desired status distinctions and soon came to be regarded by the upper classes as unfashionable and in bad taste. Thus conditions were set for a new fashion cycle to be launched by the upper classes to maintain their desired distinction, and it was such desire for differentiation (by the upper classes) and emulation (by the lower classes) that maintained the cycle of fashion. Similarly, Veblen's (1899) notion of conspicuous consumption confirmed that status was a product of economic wealth, and fashion was mainly a practice of the leisured class. The wealthy consumed in order to display their prosperity by wearing expensive and exclusive clothing. Good taste became associated with the expression of distance from the world of work, the practical or the natural world, which was generally regarded as 'cheap'.

The modern interpretation of the trickle-down theory shares the same principles in that it works on the basis of a structure of 'layers', at the top of which is the luxury and premium end of the market, active in creating and adopting new and innovative fashions and ideas. These new fashions then trickle down to the ready-to-wear designer sector and are finally interpreted at a mass-market level. The argument in contemporary theory is that only the wealthiest consumers have the taste, confidence and purchasing ability to try new styles and fashions. By the time these fashions have been diluted and interpreted at the high-street level, the fashion leaders are ready for a new fashion to be introduced so that they can continue to differentiate themselves (Keiser and Garner, 2012). This idea was further supported by the notion that the dominant 'haute couture' brands such as Chanel, Lanvin and Dior were so powerful and well respected that they could dictate what the fashions of the season would be, unveiling them to the world via

exclusive catwalk shows. Even in the era of the 1970s, which first witnessed the ‘democratisation’ of fashion, when it became widely available to the mass market (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006), the supply-chain structures of brands and retailers would only allow for versions of these fashions to be available to consumers at lower prices at least twelve months later. However, it can be argued that the trickle-down model lacks resonance in the contemporary market, where high-street, mass-market and value players have been very successful in providing low-price high fashion and react very quickly to the latest designs, getting them into stores in a matter of weeks (Barnes, 2014). In particular, with the emergence of digital and social media, the market has been democratised further and the trickle-down model fails to explain the current fashion mechanism.

The trickle-down theory of fashion, while highly respected, began to attract criticism within the academic literature too, when cycles of fashion other than trickle-down were observed. Indeed, researchers suggest that there is also a horizontal flow in fashion. In mass production and mass-communication environments, fashions tend to spread simultaneously within each social class (Atik and Firat, 2013). Mass-production makes new fashions available at all price levels, while mass communication rapidly disseminates information and influences new fashion offerings. Subsequently, Blumer (1969), in his wide-ranging critique of theories of fashion, ‘collective selection theory’ (Levy and Czepiel, 1999), suggested that new fashions appear not in response to a need for class differentiation, but in response to a wish to be ‘in fashion’ and in order to express new tastes that are emerging. Fashion becomes an occupation for everyone; it is not only a matter of interest for the upper classes, later imitated by the lower classes. A variety of simultaneous fashion trends emerge and compete at the same time, and successful fashion leads to a progressive collective transformation in mass taste and habit (Blumer, 1969).

This is known as ‘trickle-across’ theory, a mass-market-oriented approach, which has emerged along with the growth in consumerism and the aforementioned

‘democratisation of fashion’ (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006). It argues that as consumers have gained access to multiple channels of information relating to fashion and style available simultaneously to all socio-economic groups, fashion diffusion can occur at the same time regardless of the class of the consumer (Atik and Firat, 2013). The rise of digital and social media has been a major catalyst in this process. The trickle-across theory argued that fashion leaders were not necessarily distant (economically or socially) but were typically from within a consumer’s own social class and peer group. The trickle-across theory held much resonance in academic circles for many years as a persuasive model for fashion leadership and diffusion and it continues to have some resonance today, particularly with the advent of social media and the emergence of fashion bloggers as key opinion leaders. This, alongside the changes in supply-chain structures, which have paved the way for ‘fast fashion’ (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006, 2010), discussed later in this chapter, implies that the latest fashion, looks and styles are available for everyone to see, and also to buy, almost instantaneously.

In effect, in contemporary society, an impulse of differentiation is observed in all socio-economic strata, in subcultures (Hebdige, 1981), and in neo-tribes (Giddens, 1991). Moreover, this impulse is not simply arising from the upper classes’ desire to differentiate from the lower classes. Strong trends in the politics of ethnicity and gender, as well as the neo-politics of class, motivate this urge for distinction among the members of all strata (Atik and Firat, 2013). The literature suggests that certain individuals who stand out from the crowd can initiate a new potential fashion trend because they have influence within their subculture (Gladwell, 1997). These are mostly ‘cool’ adolescents who seek sensation, and have the respect, admiration and trust of their friends for reasons different from simple status envy. This phenomenon represents a revolution that departs from earlier models. In fact, in this new mechanism, people are not initially concerned with matters of status; their purpose is to occupy a unique position in the culture in order to differentiate themselves from others and make a social statement about their ideals (Gladwell, 1997).

For instance, Kawamura (2005), claiming fashion as a mode for social change as discussed in the previous section, suggests that the punk subculture movement was an attempt to challenge both the bourgeois culture and the capitalist system.

The most recent theory of fashion leadership to emerge is 'trickle-up' theory, which explains the phenomenon of street fashions and avant-garde consumer groups, as opposed to designers or product developers, creating new fashions (Keiser and Garner, 2012). Although this interpretation is highly relevant to the modern fashion sector, it was first proposed in the 1970s by Blumberg (1974) and Field (1970), who identified the emergence of new fashions being initiated by subcultures in the USA. An obvious example of the trickle-up theory in action was the emergence of punk fashion, as suggested above.

Yet these critiques are not sufficient to conclude that trickle-down diffusion as observed by Simmel (1957) is no longer valid. They simply imply that trickle-up and trickle-across diffusions are also possibilities. The actual dynamic in the mass market that represents the largest segment of the population is mediated and complex, with signs of all diffusions: trickle-down, trickle-up and trickle-across. Atik and Firat (2013) note that one key reason for observed changes in the cycles of fashion diffusion is the institutionalisation of marketing and the inclusion of fashion as a systemic part of this institution. The purpose of the marketing institution is not to preserve or reproduce distinctions but to utilise all means to expand the market within all levels of society (Firat and Dholakia, 2006). The differences between Simmel's and Veblen's theories relying largely on observations of class distinctions based on wealth, and the more recent observations of fashion diffusion, arise from the entrenchment of modernity, specifically in the twentieth century. Modern industrial mass-production systems and a new organisation of wage relations and systems gave rise to the growth of a relatively large middle class (Firat and Dholakia, 2006). Thus the differences in patterns of diffusion attest to a transition from a traditional, aristocratic, social-status-generated system of fashion to

a modern, market-generated fashion system. This is also a sign of the institutionalisation of marketing as the organising principle of desires in the modern market culture. In effect, Atik and Firat (2013) observe that fashion is transformed from a particular process that articulated class distinctions (specifically related to costume) in traditional society to a key principle of the modern marketing institution for expanding markets in all areas of modern life. Fashion cycles in all spheres of life provide the impetus for the market to grow constantly. The fashion principle is that all products are frequently renewed through the cycle of fashion so that the market is rejuvenated and grows.

Some fashion trends do tend to be inspired by what is in the streets, but their adoption and diffusion is a complex institutional process (Evans, 1989). These street impulses provide a sociological explanation of the inspirations for a new fashion but not its diffusion. The diffusion process requires a complex intervention by the constituents of the fashion-marketing institution (Davis, 1992; Saviolo and Testa, 2002) and does not occur through social classes simply imitating each other, as in the trickle-down version. Atik and Firat (2013) argue that in modern society, even the trickle-down movement of fashion observed by Simmel and others is a process actualised by the institution of marketing. This dissertation will attempt to expose this institutional process with empirical data from the marketer's perspective.

Fashion is an expression of belonging to various social and cultural groups, and fashion, dress and clothing are forms of communication about our self-identity (Barnes, 2014). What we wear defines our perceived attractiveness and status (Field, 1970). Much of the sociological fashion theory focuses on the concept of fashion, clothing and dress as a cultural phenomenon; the idea is that the clothes you wear make a statement about who you are. Yet for the purposes of this research, fashion is examined from the point of view of 'fashion business' rather than in the broader sociological context, and with emphasis on the fashion-clothing industry, whose systems and structure are discussed below.

2.2.3 *The fashion system*

The 'fashion system' has been defined as consisting of all the people and organisations involved in creating symbolic meanings and transferring these meanings to cultural goods: 'In order to get meaning into things, creative directors and fashion designers discover structural equivalents and draw them together in the compass of an advertisement to demonstrate that the meaning that inheres in the advertisement also inheres in the product in question' (McCracken, 1988: 120). For example, one can promise athletic accomplishments, sex appeal, popularity or status through certain commodity signs (Evans, 1989). Cronin (2004: 366) suggests that through multiple regimes of mediation, advertisements and products are constantly appropriated by consumers, and their meanings and social function reworked. Atik and Firat (2013) argue that these explanations, although informative, fall short in that they sustain the production-consumption distinctions and fail to recognise all the elements, including the producers, the mediators and the consumers, who operate as agents of the marketing institution – thus they are not separate but highly connected constituents of the same institution.

Davis (1992: 123) suggests that 'the process of fashion refers to the complex of influences, interactions, exchanges, adjustments, and accommodations among persons, organisations, and institutions that animate the fashion cycle from its inception to its demise'. Saviolo and Testa (2002: 13) explain that the elements involved in this complex process of fashion include fashion designers (independents, or those operating within a fashion-house or industry, or retailers), producers (of semi-finished or finished products), distributors, retailers, mass media, research and trend institutes (including fairs), consumers (opinion and market leaders), product category associations, banks and government. All these different constituents of fashion fulfil their roles in order for the market to work and expand. For example, creative experts engaged in trend forecasting spend a considerable amount of time observing street styles, often travelling around the world,

identifying consumption patterns through which they can anticipate the directions in which the society as a whole will move (Easey, 1995). Competition among designers and fashion centres, the fashion choices of buyers for major department stores, the fashion press and merchandising strategies all play a major role in how high fashion happens (Davis, 1992; Saviolo and Testa, 2002, Rocamora, 2009). New collections all go through an extensive filtering process, where, as argued by Davis (1992: 136), ‘more gestures are arrested than completed, and more ideas are abandoned than kept’ by the time they are displayed to the public.

Along with the complex fashion system consisting of all people and organisations involved in the process (Evans, 1989; Saviolo and Testa, 2002), the structure and complexity of the fashion industry needs to be discussed. The modern interpretation of the trickle-down theory presented in the previous section works on the basis of a structure of ‘layers’ in the fashion industry, with the haute couture or luxury end of the market forming the top layer, the one most active in creating and adopting new and innovative fashions and ideas. These new fashions are then trickled down to the ready-to-wear designer sector and finally interpreted at a mass-market level. Thus a common way to describe the structure of the fashion industry is to see it as a pyramid, with luxury or premium brands at the top, designer ready-to-wear in the middle, and a wide range of mass-market retailers at the base. However, as Tungate (2012) notes, the pyramid metaphor is a simplification, and around the structure are street-wear, sportswear and semi-couture, among others. Consumers, too, rather than staying in any fixed sector, move promiscuously from one to the other, mixing a Louis Vuitton bag with a Zara jacket, or wearing a Topshop T-shirt and Gap jeans under a coat from Chanel.

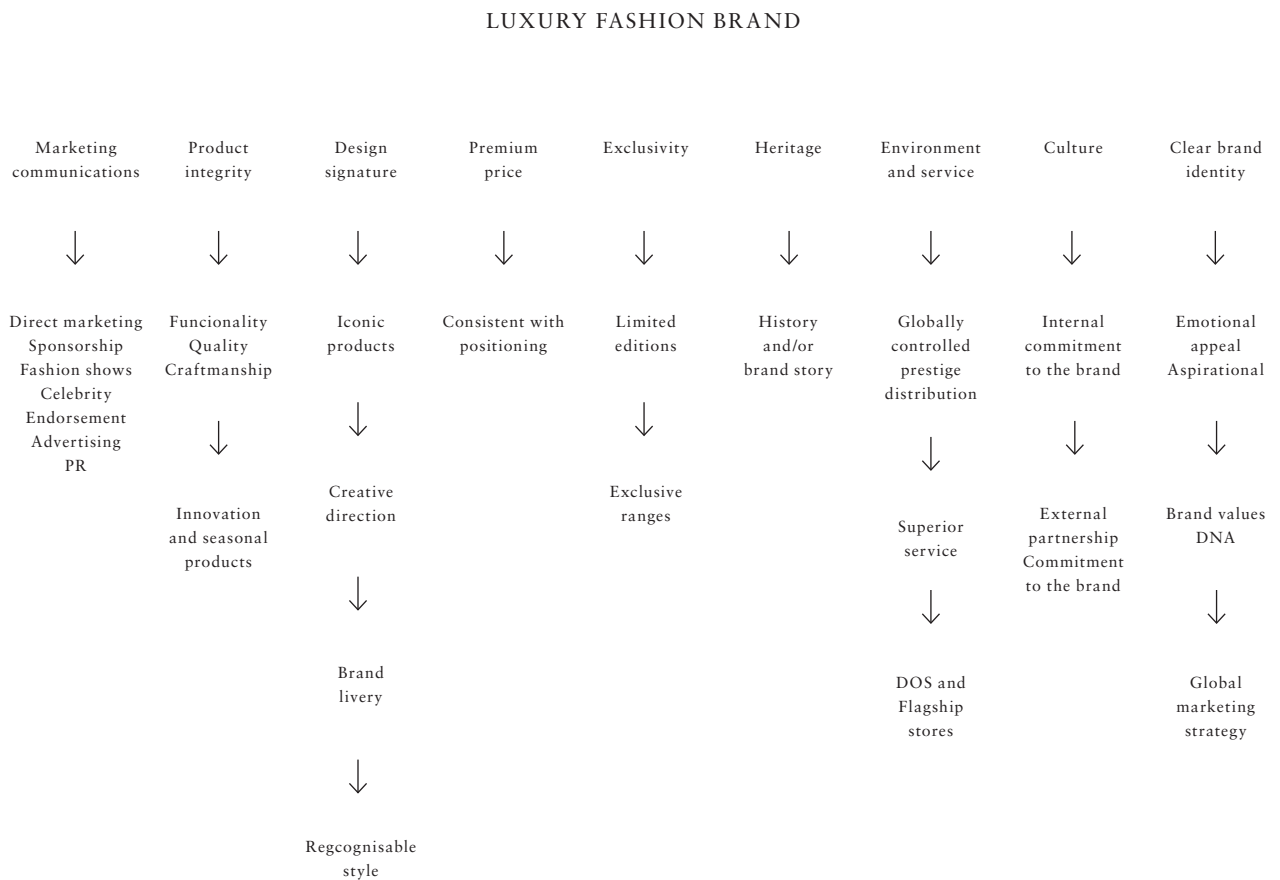
At the top of the traditional pyramid metaphor, the luxury and premium segments need further differentiation in the context of this research. Conceptualisations of luxury are typically derived from either a consumption perspective (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000; Vickers and Renand, 2003) or from

an application as a product-branding device (Nueno and Quelch, 1998; Jackson, 2004). A strong strand of literature has emerged that seeks to explain luxury consumption, particularly in terms of having a symbolic function that operates at the individual and collective level. As such, luxury is identified in terms of its psychological value (Vickers and Renand, 2003), its function as a status symbol (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000; Chadha and Husband, 2006) and as a highly involved consumption experience that is strongly congruent with a person's self-concept (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). From a product perspective, luxury brands are frequently defined in terms of their excellent quality, high transaction value, distinctiveness, exclusivity and craftsmanship (Nueno and Quelch, 1998; Jackson, 2004; Kapferer, 2008). Jackson (2004: 158) proposes four core characteristics of the luxury product, namely exclusivity, premium price, image and status, which combine to make them more desirable for reasons other than function.

The four characteristics suggested by Jackson (2004) arguably apply for both luxury brands and premium brands in the current market environment. However, several other researchers contend that there are more attributes that define a luxury brand. In 2003, Alleres (2003, cited in Bruce and Kratz, 2007: 132) suggested six characteristics of a luxury fashion brand that are derived from the strong influence of the French luxury heritage brands. Similarly, but considering the Italian model, Moore and Birtwistle (2005) examine Tom Ford and Domenico De Sole's strategy for the repositioning of Gucci as an authentic luxury fashion brand. They identify dimensions that all require careful management to develop and create a successful brand. Although the authors make no claim that the Gucci template can be universally applied, they argue that it serves to provide a more comprehensive account of luxury-brand development when compared with other studies. Okonkwo (2009) provides insights into the management of a luxury brand by proposing a model in which she identifies ten core characteristics of the successful luxury fashion brand.

Consolidating the previous taxonomies, a more recent model is provided by Fionda and Moore (2009), who explore case studies of twelve international fashion retailers, and identify nine interrelated key luxury fashion-brand attributes that are crucial in the creation and maintenance of the brand proposition. Each attribute consists of a number of sub-categories, which must all be consistent in order to create the brand. These are illustrated in Figure 2.1.

FIGURE 2.1 LUXURY FASHION BRAND
(SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM FIONDA AND MOORE, 2009)



According to Fionda and Moore (2009), all of these elements are interdependent and need to be maintained simultaneously, since independently they do not confer luxury status. While some of the elements, such as clear brand identity, product integrity or powerful marketing communications, apply to both premium and luxury brands, other elements only apply to the luxury fashion brand, such as heritage or iconic product. As such, Fionda and Moore's model was deemed useful in differentiating luxury and premium brands in the context of this research.

Identified within the literature are a number of reoccurring and divergent key attributes necessary to creating and maintaining luxury-fashion positioning. While both premium and luxury brands are positioned high in the market and many of the attributes of a luxury brand apply to premium brands too, there are differences. For example, heritage is an element that does not necessarily apply to all premium brands but is considered central in most definitions of a luxury brand, including the models of Alleres (2003), Beverland (2004), Moore and Birtwistle (2005), Fionda and Moore (2009) and most recently, Maman Larrauffe and Kourdoughli (2014). Many luxury brands have a long history, which adds to the authenticity of the brand (Jackson, 2004) and is considered one of its hallmarks (Alleres, 2003). The retention of heritage has the ability to create nostalgia and credibility for a brand and is often correlated to the heritage of the country of origin (Fionda and Moore, 2009). Luxury is a matter of historic heritage and authenticity, especially through strong brand DNA and iconic products (Beverland, 2004). With historical brands, credibility is reinforced over time (Chaudhuri and Majumdar, 2006). Hence, luxury products are simultaneously timeless and modern. Such brand history is often linked to the people and families who bring values and traditions to the empires they have built (e.g. Carcano, Minichilli and Corbetta, 2011), adding a level of story-telling.

Heritage, as described above, provides a fundamental differentiator between luxury and premium brands. While most of the characteristics of luxury fashion brand

positioning apply to the premium segment too, many high-end fashion brands, such as Stella McCartney, Marc Jacobs, Mary Katrantzou or Matthew Williamson, are more recently established, and as such, cannot be considered luxury brands according to the literature (Beverland, 2004; Moore and Birtwistle, 2004, 2005; Fionda and Moore, 2009; Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli, 2014). Additionally Reddy et al. (2009) differentiate between luxury brands and premium brands in terms of price. The authors argue that both luxury and premium brands are positioned high in terms of quality, but the price is lower and distribution is less selective for premium than for luxury brands.

For the empirical part of this study, in particular for the case studies, the scope of discussions is limited to premium brands, although the literature review and final part touch on the notion of luxury fashion and luxury digital fashion in a broader context, considering both premium and luxury segments.

To sum up, fashion as an academic subject has emerged as an interdisciplinary field of scholarly research, and fashion scholars have explored a variety of different themes. In the context of commercial and business-oriented research, fashion has only recently been considered an academic subject, in line with the growth in consumerism (Hines and Bruce, 2007). For the purposes of this research, fashion is examined from the point of view of 'fashion business' rather than in the broader sociological context, and with emphasis on the fashion-clothing industry. Below, the area of fashion marketing is discussed in detail.

2.3 Fashion and marketing

As discussed in the previous section, because the very nature of fashion means that it has short-term popularity, a fashion product has limited life expectancy

(Atik and Firat, 2013; Lipovetsky, 2002; Solomon, 2007). Historically, fashion in garments has been driven by 'seasonality' (Easey, 1995) whereby consumers bought new fashion garments in tune with the seasons, typically 'Spring/Summer' and 'Autumn/Winter' collections (or 'Fall/Winter' in the US market). However, over the last decade, the rise of 'fast fashion' has seen fashion life cycles contract to durations of sometimes only a few weeks, after which the fashion product becomes somewhat out-dated as a new set of fashion ranges become available (Atik and Firat, 2013; Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006, 2010). Defined broadly, the 'fast fashion' approach allows companies to produce new fashion garments to replenish fast-selling lines, to react to emerging trends by introducing new ranges quickly, to meet changing consumer demands and to keep ranges looking new and fresh in store (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006, 2010).

In the early 2000s, whilst fast fashion was being widely reported in the fashion-industry press and was gathering much momentum in the industry, it had been neglected in academic research. When fast fashion was first considered in the academic literature it was defined by Barnes and Lea-Greenwood (2006) as a consumer-driven strategy, giving rise to a new model of supply-chain management featuring a continuous consumer influence on the entire pipeline. At this stage, the emphasis of the research was on exploring and conceptualising the issues. Over the last decade fast fashion has become a key feature in the industry (Ko and Megehee, 2012). Although it was initially regarded as a niche concept offered by a few key players such as Zara, H&M and Topshop (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2010; Ko and Megehee, 2012), versions of the concept have now been implemented by the majority of own-label retailers using enhanced and more effective supply chains to respond more quickly to changing fashion and consumer demand. The importance and impact of the concept has resulted in a large body of literature in the area, and the rise of fast fashion has triggered a shift from 'seasonal' fashion products to a constant cycle of newness in the mass-market fashion sector.

The increasing short-termism of consumer demands in relation to fashion products is one key characteristic of fashion, but the other key feature of fashion garments is the significance of creativity and design in producing them (Easey, 1995). In this context, Saviolo and Testa (2002: 23) address the challenges of balancing creativity and commercial viability by differentiating between ‘artistic creativity’ and ‘commercial creativity’.

The purpose of artistic creativity is not to satisfy the needs of a mass market. Artistic creativity is above all the means through which artists express themselves. Commercial creativity, on the other hand, does not have this freedom of expression. This is because its purpose is to achieve another subject’s objective, the firm. The firm’s reason for existence lies in its ability to satisfy market needs.

Similarly, Atik and Firat (2013: 845) note that designers’ artistic freedom is restricted by forces both within and outside the company. Some of these factors include the image, production constraints and technical limitations of the firm and its suppliers, capacity considerations, availability of raw materials or subcontracted accessories, and the strictures imposed by the whole supply chain. In this debate, Atik and Firat (2013) argue that perpetuation of the modern fashion marketing institution necessitates the maintenance of all its entities, and this includes the firm’s livelihood.

Fashion designers take inspiration from a huge range of sources in order to create their collections. The level of design varies according to the brand or designer concerned, from the most extreme avant-garde creations of Alexander McQueen through to the reinvention of ‘basics’ from Gap. Whatever the design, it has to be commercially viable, as suggested in the previous quote by Saviolo and Testa (2002), and the target market has to want to buy it. As Luigi Maramotti (2000: 96), CEO of Max Mara Fashion Group puts it: ‘I must emphasize that I consider a designed garment “fashion” only when it is marketed and worn by someone’.

Fashion consumers are unpredictable both in terms of which trends they will buy into and how they might be influenced to purchase (Hines and Bruce, 2007). In fashion, whilst some aspects of design can be developed in response to clearly identified consumer demand, fashion consumers cannot always articulate what they want. As a consequence, in general marketing terms it is difficult to use conventional marketing methods to identify customer needs because the customers do not know what they need (Barnes, 2014). The challenge for marketers in the fashion industry is therefore how to achieve the right balance of being ‘fashionable’ or creative enough with products to maintain consumer interest and be regarded as innovative whilst producing collections that are commercially viable. As Easey (1995: 7) articulates, ‘at the centre of the debate over the role of fashion marketing within firms resides a tension between design and marketing imperatives’.

2.3.1 Defining fashion marketing

There is much debate about the definition of marketing (Levitt, 1960; Borden, 1964; Gummesson, 1997; Mattsson, 1997; Grönroos, 1994, 1997, 2006b; Gordon, 1998; Baker, 2003a). Broadly defined, marketing is about identifying and meeting human and social needs (Kotler et al., 2012). In more detail, marketing is considered as ‘the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organisational goals’ (Kotler et al., 2012). Moreover, Christian Grönroos (2006b: 407) has proposed a definition that encompasses customer value, relationship marketing, services marketing and the promise concept.

Marketing is a customer focus that permeates organizational functions and processes and is geared towards making promises through value proposition, enabling the fulfilment of individual expectations created by such promises and fulfilling such expectations through support to customers’ value-generating processes,

thereby supporting value creation in the firm's as well as its customers' and other stakeholders' processes.

Whilst the subject of 'fashion marketing' as a discrete area of study has gathered momentum, there has been little in the way of developing its definition. Given what is known about 'marketing' and 'fashion', the question is whether 'fashion marketing' can be considered to be significantly different from the understanding of 'generic' marketing (Hines and Bruce, 2007). Jackson and Shaw (2009) provide a useful analysis of the general subject of marketing in comparison with marketing as a functional business operation within the specific focus on the fashion industry. They (2009) suggest that, operationally, the fashion-marketing function of a business focuses on its promotion and communications aspect, leaving strategic decisions, such as those relating to design or brand concept, to other functions within the business – for example, design, buying and merchandising. In other words, they argue that fashion marketing is unique, because the specific demands of fashion require a substantially greater focus of attention on promotion and communications aspects than would be the case for the marketing function more generally. Moreover, Easey (1995) notes that fashion marketing is different from other areas of marketing because of the changing nature of fashion and the role that design plays in the sector in terms of both leading and reflecting customer needs. As the French fashion scholar Bruno Remaury (quoted in Tungate, 2012: 6) points out:

Traditional marketing is based on need. You take a product that corresponds to an existing demand, and attempt to prove that your product is the best in its category. But fashion is based on creating a need where, in reality, there is none. Fashion is a factory that manufactures desire.

If the definitions of marketing and fashion marketing are to embrace what is known about marketing in the fashion industry, and incorporate the unique

characteristics of fashion as described earlier, Barnes (2014: 194) argues that it is possible to develop a broader view of fashion marketing and define it thus:

Fashion marketing is concerned with understanding the complex needs and wants of consumers of fashion and with orienting both strategic and operational business activities to satisfy those demands; fashion marketing's particular complexity as a business philosophy arises from the diversity of fashion-related influences which shape consumer needs combined with the fast-moving pace of fashion-product life-cycles.

This quotation presents some of the central perspectives on the concept of fashion marketing in this dissertation, which not only considers the promotion and communication aspects of the business, as suggested by Jackson and Shaw (2009), but also refers to the strategic and operational business activities to lead and reflect customer demands. The characteristics of fashion marketing are discussed below.

2.3.2 Particularities of fashion marketing

The aim of this section is to understand the unique attributes of fashion marketing, which make it a particularly interesting context for studying social media. These are discussed along three dimensions: product, promotion and place.

First, marketing theory, as in Kotler (2003: 407), has traditionally defined a product as:

Anything that can be offered to a market to satisfy a want or need and is made up of a core benefit i.e. what is the key benefit the customer is buying, bundled with a set of additional values including the 'expected' product i.e. what the customer expects to get with a product, the augmented product i.e. how the marketer

exceeds expectations (the level at which competition normally takes place), and the 'potential' product i.e. future direction of the product.

The expected and augmented levels of a product are where marketing typically plays a part, for example, through branding, sales promotion and retail offerings (Kotler, 2003; Kotler et al., 2012). This generic theory of product marketing can be applied to fashion products, and perhaps like no other category, the fashion-marketing activity adding value to the core product is the aspect of the product that satisfies the consumer need (Barnes, 2014). For example, the core benefit or function of clothing is to provide protection and cover. For fashion consumers the need goes beyond that, and is also related to design, style and brand, i.e. all the attributes that are operating at expected and augmented levels (Hines and Bruce, 2007). As discussed previously, fashion consumers are often easily persuaded to pay relatively high prices for products because of their perceived value, for example, in design, fashion or brand terms. The existence of the psychological or intangible 'something extra' factor (Kawamura, 2005), discussed in the previous section, brings additional characteristics to fashion marketing in comparison to marketing in other industries.

Barnes and Lea-Greenwood (2006, 2010) suggest that fashion products can be divided into a set of categories not usually found in other sectors of marketing, inseparably connected to the concept of fashion's limited life cycle. In the earlier discussion about fashion, the product life cycle theory (PLC), diffusion theory, trickle-down theory, and seasonal structure of fashion were presented, explaining that the life expectancy of a particular fashion product could be a matter of a few weeks, one season or even many years. Keiser and Garner (2012) suggest that in fashion, the expected lifecycles of various fashion products are used to categorise the products into what they term 'fads', 'fashions' or 'classics'. The fad products are those with a very short life cycle. These might typically be based on more extreme or unusual designs, which appeal to only a limited group of consumers.

Fashion products are typically those that run through their PLC in one distinct season, whereas a classic is one that remains fashionable enduringly, such as the Chanel-style, five-pocket jacket (Keiser and Garner, 2012). These aspects of seasonality and unpredictable product life cycles bring unique characteristics to marketing practices in the fashion sector. Campaigns and promotions are scheduled according to seasons, and the irregular PLCs require constant revisiting of marketing plans.

Additionally, 'involvement' (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985) has been identified as a significant variable in consumer behaviour and consequently in marketing practices in the fashion industry (O'Cass, 2004; Kim, 2005; O'Cass and Choy, 2008). A consumer's level of involvement has been found to have a positive effect on brand-related responses such as perception of brand status and brand attitude. Further, brand status and brand attitude have positive impacts on the consumer's willingness to pay a premium for a specific brand or product (O'Cass and Choy, 2008). In this context, fashion is considered as a 'high involvement' product category, which refers to products that are expensive, rarely bought, linked to personal identity, or carry high risks (e.g. O'Cass, 2004; Kim, 2005; O'Cass and Choy, 2008). The higher the consumer's commitment of time and money in a product, the higher the expectations for the product. This high level of involvement adds to the distinctiveness of fashion as an interesting context for social-media research, since high-involvement products are known to attract conversations online and on social media. For social media, the high level of involvement creates interest and desire to follow and engage with brands.

Secondly, promotion has unique characteristics in the context of fashion marketing. In general marketing terms, the idea of 'promotion' is derived from sales promotion, i.e. telling consumers about the product (Barnes, 2014). This notion of promotion has more recently entered a new strand of promotion theory and is now more commonly referred to as 'marketing communications', taking into

account the interactive dialogue between the company and its customers (Kotler, 2003). Kotler et al. (2012: 776) define marketing communications as ‘the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade, and remind customers – directly or indirectly – about the brands they market’. Marketing communications are also compared to the ‘voice’ of the company and its brands, and are said to be the ways in which it can establish a dialogue and build relationships with customers (Kotler et al., 2012: 776). The traditional ‘marketing-communication mix’ includes eight major modes of communication: advertising, sales promotion, events and experiences, public relations and publicity, direct marketing, interactive marketing, word-of-mouth marketing and personal selling (Kotler et al., 2012). Moreover, the rise of digital and social media has disrupted marketing communication and added new channels to the traditional model (Edelman, 2010).

In fashion-marketing communications, or fashion promotion, all the tools of the marketing-communications mix tend to be utilised, and there are examples of techniques used in fashion marketing not used in other sectors (Lea-Greenwood, 2013). For example, the employment of the fashion show and catwalk collections in generating publicity and press is a distinctive feature of fashion promotion. What is even more complex is that especially at the luxury and premium end of the market, where the present study focuses, the catwalk shows are used less to sell the clothes and more to sell the brand and their full range of branded products geared towards the mass market such as cosmetics, sunglasses and perfumes (Lea-Greenwood, 2013). Additionally, the existence of fashion shows is central to the present study, since they have become significant digital milestones for fashion brands in the current social-media environment (Arthur, 2013). Indeed, the digital innovation during fashion weeks makes the fashion industry a particularly interesting context for social-media research.

Moreover, social media can be used across the market segments, from emerging designers and small independent fashion retailers to large multinational luxury

fashion houses, at a relatively low cost compared to catwalk shows or traditional print media (Barnes, 2014). In observing the industry, there is a sense that significant proportions of marketing budgets are being spent on social-media activities, yet with limited understanding of how these new channels can be used as a part of marketing communication. This represents a new opportunity for fashion marketing research and the present study aims to address the gap in the literature.

Another unique aspect of fashion-marketing communication (or fashion promotion) that is particularly interesting for research in digital and social media is the role played by the fashion press in identifying and capturing the new fashions as they are presented on the catwalks. The fashion magazines, particularly titles such as *Vogue*, *Elle* and *Harper's Bazaar*, have long been considered the opinion leaders when applied to the 'diffusion of innovation' theory in the fashion industry (Barnes, 2014). These have been deemed the most powerful medium for establishing what is considered fashionable in a particular season. Additionally Atik and Firat (2013) note that being 'alone' with the magazine, not being in the gaze of others, as when, for example, you are looking at a shop window, provides the possibility to fantasise and transport the self from actuality. Fashion magazines inspire consumers in terms of the anticipatory, imaginary and experiential consumption that they invite (Stevens and Maclaran, 2005). Through a glamorising interpretation, fashion-magazine advertisements become an inspirational source for idealised images of life, representing a pretend world that is fascinating to consumers, of which they would like to be a part (Thompson and Haytko, 1997). Atik and Firat (2013) suggest that the institutional role of fashion magazines is not to represent the actual life of the fashion consumer but to provide fodder for fantasy and imagination. Thus criticisms directed at the images in fashion magazines for misrepresenting women are unlikely to deter these images, since the institutional role of the images is not to represent actuality but to inspire dreams.

Traditionally, the fashion magazine has been a place for those most knowledge-

able about fashion to congregate; the styles picked up by the editors and featured in their show reports are those adopted by consumers (Thompson and Haytko, 1997; Jackson and Shaw, 2009; Lea-Greenwood, 2013). The arrival of digital and social media has disrupted this positioning, and there has been a rise in importance of new influencers, such as ‘fashion bloggers’, ‘Instagrammers’ and the creative consumers who engage with the shows in real time (Berthon et al., 2012; Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli, 2014; Mora and Rocamora, 2015; Rocamora, 2011, 2012, 2013). Additionally, the notion of being ‘alone’ and not in the gaze of others (Atik and Firat, 2013) when consuming content applies to digital and social media too. Indeed, the impact of digital technology on the fashion industry has been highly significant and represents a new direction both for the industry and for fashion-marketing communication. This shift also makes fashion a particularly interesting context for the present study. The power shift and the emergence of new fashion influencers are discussed in more detail in section 2.5.5.

Finally, place also has particularities to fashion marketing. In general marketing terms, ‘place’ is concerned with the distribution of products from where they are made to where they are sold (Kotler et al., 2012). It includes issues such as supply-chain management, distribution channels, retail structure, retail location and store design (Kotler, 2003). One of the key features of place in fashion marketing has been the growth in importance of the retailer-owned fashion brands such as Topshop, Gap and Zara (Barnes, 2014). These own-brand fashion retailers dominate mass-market fashion and have adapted their supply-chain structures to offer high fashion in season at value prices (Lea-Greenwood, 2013). There has been a merging and blurring of the distinction between brand and retailer in the fashion sector over the last few years (Barnes, 2014). For example, many designer brands have significantly increased their portfolio of owned or managed stores as a way of taking strategic control of their retail experience and environment.

Moreover, the rise of digital and social media has disrupted the retail landscape

and the concept of 'place' in fashion marketing (Kim and Ko, 2010, 2012; Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli, 2014; Mora and Rocamora, 2015). With digital channels replacing the traditional fashion place, commerce has increasingly moved from 'bricks and mortar' stores to online retailing and social media, and fashion firms use a range of new channels to market and sell their products (Siddiqui et al., 2003; Rowley, 2008, 2009; Marciniak and Bruce, 2004). For example, the luxury brand Matthew Williamson recently announced the closure of its brick-and-mortar store in London; the collections will be sold exclusively online, in season and directly to the customer (Bumpus, 2015). At the same time, other luxury fashion brands such as Burberry or Hunter are making significant new investments in large physical flagship stores. Researching this parallel shift is central to the present study since it fundamentally impacts on the role of social media in the fashion industry.

2.4 Digital fashion

Academic research in the field of fashion marketing has emerged as an interdisciplinary area of scholarly research, as discussed in previous sections. Research in the field of marketing, and thus also in fashion marketing, includes developing new ideas or solutions to marketing problems, conceptualising and theorising what is happening in businesses and other organisations and reporting on trends and key themes (Lea-Greenwood, 2013). The nature of marketing-research output is that it is intended to be applied to organisations in order to shed light on what is happening in the industry; either it provides the academic theory to explain and improve understanding of a phenomenon or it provides a solution that can be applied in a practical setting (Kotler, 2003; Grönroos, 2006b; Kotler et al., 2012). In this context, although it has been argued that the emphasis in fashion marketing is somewhat different from that of general marketing (Easey, 1995; Hines and

Bruce, 2007; Jackson and Shaw, 2009; Barnes, 2014), there are similarities. Nonetheless, the research questions can have a different focus as a result of the unique characteristics of fashion marketing identified earlier. Hence, it can be argued that the current fashion-marketing research agenda has its own specific focus (Ko and Megehee, 2012). In particular, the current research falls into four main areas: luxury fashion, fashion branding, fast fashion and digital fashion.

The present study focuses on the last area, research into digital fashion, which is a major theme in the current research agenda. Indeed, online fashion marketing has been widely researched and documented in the literature (Siddiqui et al., 2003; Goldsmith and Flynn, 2004; Park and Stoel, 2005; Ashworth et al., 2006; Rowley, 2009; Kim and Ko, 2010, 2012; Kim, Kim and Lennon, 2011; McCormick and Livett, 2012) and although the breadth of this research has incorporated aspects such as consumer behaviour, web design, online strategy, social media and brand trust, the emphasis of the research has primarily been on online and desktop websites. However, the more recent increase in the variety and number of devices through which consumers can access the Internet, as well as the rise in popularity of social media, has resulted in a renewed interest in digital fashion marketing, with a shift towards mobile and omnichannel applications on the research agenda.

In line with this shift, the exploration of digital fashion marketing is divided into five themes, namely e-commerce, mobile commerce, omnichannel retail, social media and the emergence of new fashion influencers. The remainder of this chapter will explore these in greater detail. The notion of social media will be introduced briefly but discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

2.4.1 Fashion and e-commerce

‘E-commerce’ as an academic research subject has been around since the incep-

tion of the web of as a medium for making purchases (Dennis, Harris and Sandhu, 2002; Dennis, Fenech and Merrilees, 2004). Yet until recently, the fashion industry has shown low commitment to digital technology in its marketing and overall business strategies. For instance, established international fashion brands such as Versace and Prada did not have corporate websites until 2005 and 2007 respectively (Okonkwo, 2010). Despite the recent developments, the majority of luxury brands remain slow to build their digital capabilities and lack e-commerce sites geared towards important emerging markets, including China, Brazil, Russia, South Korea and the UAE, and some lack e-commerce altogether (Exane BNP Paribas, 2014). The slowness of the fashion industry in establishing an online presence in comparison to other sectors overtly clashes with the common idea of an industry that is known for innovation, avant-gardism and creativity (Venturi, 2011).

In 2009, Okonkwo predicted that if the unique relationship that luxury has with its clients were to be placed in the context of the Internet, where the consumer is in total control and expects to be looked up to, it would probably lead to resistance, apprehension and anxiety from the top (the luxury brand) and confusion, surprise and disappointment from the bottom (the luxury client). This has been the position taken by luxury brands with regard to e-commerce over the past decade and explains why several brands have been slow in establishing a digital presence and why brands like Céline continue to resist e-commerce (Heine and Berghaus, 2014; Kansara, 2014).

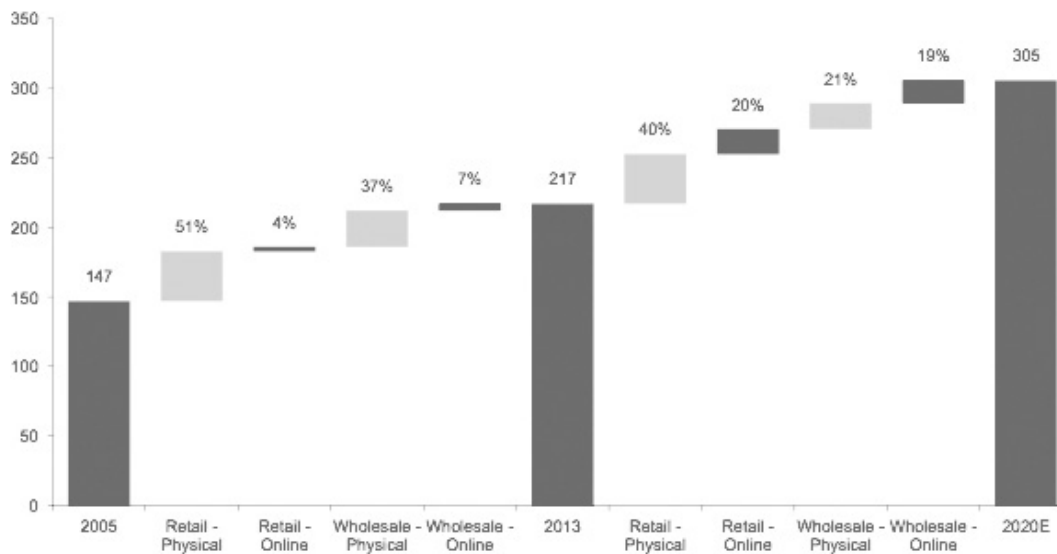
Despite the myriad of digital media, a major paradox lies in creating and retaining the 'desire' and 'exclusivity' attributes of luxury and premium brands online, and at the same time maintaining and enhancing the equity of the brand (Heine, 2010; Heine and Berghaus, 2014; Maman Larrauffe and Kourdoughli, 2014). Another contradiction that luxury and premium brands face online is the task of increasing sales and the risk of overexposure while maintaining a fragile perception of

limited supply (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009; Heine and Berghaus, 2014). These factors are inherently peculiar to the Internet, whose central features appear to be the opposite of luxury's core elements (Fionda and Moore, 2009). The characteristics of the Internet and e-commerce are: a global reach; a pull-marketing approach where customers are drawn to information and purchases, rather than a push medium, where customers are driven by advertising; a lack of physical contact with the goods and human contact with the sellers; a low switching cost, since it takes only one click to switch between websites; speed and convenience; more variety of products and access to viewing them; availability and accessibility irrespective of time and location; less powerful salesmanship, since it is easy to say no to a computer; a universal appeal and uniform information (Harris and Dennis, 2011; Harris and Goode, 2010). These characteristics indicate that the Internet as a medium of communications and retail is available to a mass consumer base, which is in direct contradiction to the niche consumer base that luxury and premium products target. The second indication is the lack of physical contact with the goods and their sellers. Luxury and premium products are regarded as sensory in nature and this means that the human senses of sight, smell, touch and feel are considered imperative in selling luxury goods (Okonkwo, 2009). The above factors imply that, by definition, luxury and premium products are unsuitable to be placed and retailed on the Internet according to existing research.

The reality is that luxury and premium products can in fact be successfully positioned online (Okonkwo, 2009, 2010) and as a result several brands have successfully adopted e-commerce strategies and identified this channel as one of their fastest-growing distribution means (Intel, 2012, 2014). Indeed, the Internet is increasingly important to the luxury-fashion industry (Heine and Berghaus, 2014), which has shown signs of commitment towards advancement in e-commerce business and regaining its position as a truly innovative industry. A study by Intel (2014) reported a significant growth in e-commerce in the premium and luxury-brand sectors: more than half of the buying customers had

made their purchase online within the last eighteen months. Furthermore, global management-consulting firm McKinsey & Company projects that online transactions in luxury and premium categories are growing twice as fast as the sector as a whole (2014). Similarly, a recent report by financial services firm Exane BNP Paribas (2014) shows that digital is expected to drive, on average, 40% of projected sales growth from 2013 to 2020, as opportunities to open physical retail space diminish and consumers increasingly opt for the convenience of shopping online (Figure 2.2).

FIGURE 2.2 LUXURY GROWTH FROM 2013 TO 2020
(SOURCE: EXANE BNP PARIBAS, 2014)



Burberry was the first luxury-fashion brand to invest wholeheartedly in social media and also the first to live-stream a catwalk show in 2010, when digital was still new in the fashion sector (Phan, Thomas and Heine, 2011). The company's

early investments in social-media strategy helped to rejuvenate the brand, and positioned it firmly as a pioneer in digital fashion. While the impact of Burberry's digital innovation story (Phan, Thomas and Heine, 2011) is becoming out of date as a public-relations message, the British heritage brand remains the global leader in digital fashion among a market full of laggards according to the research report released by Exane BNP Paribas that graded the leading luxury and premium brands on their digital reach and customer experience. The study introduces a 'Digital Competitive Map' (2.3) that is broken into four categories and fourteen criteria, for a total of 66 parameters. The four categories are: depth and breadth of product offer ('e-commerce strategic reach'); ease of navigation and quality of website experience ('website experience'); delivery, service and return policies ('e-commerce experience'); and cross-channel integration ('cross-channel experience') (Exane BNP Paribas, 2014).

FIGURE 2.3 DIGITAL COMPETITIVE MAP
(SOURCE: EXANE BNP PARIBAS, 2014)



The literature suggests that the challenges of selling luxury and premium fashion online should no longer be considered prohibitive, since the rapid rate of Internet penetration and e-commerce in different global markets emphasises the existence of a prominent online consumer base (Okonkwo, 2009; Heine and Berghaus, 2014). Yet recent studies show that many brands continue to under-invest in their digital presence (Mintel, 2014). ‘Luxury companies did not have to develop online, as they could find easy growth elsewhere and many luxury executives grew accustomed to seeing the Internet as a place where you go for bargains’, argues Luca Solca, head of luxury-goods research at Exane BNP Paribas (Kansara, 2014). ‘In the ideal world, they would like consumers to come to their stores. The trouble with that is, consumers do not live in the ideal world, they live in the real world’, Solca notes. Similarly, Kansara (2014) quotes a CEO of a major high-end brand as saying: ‘This argument that we don’t need the Internet because consumers can come to our stores reminds me of the argument in the 1970s that we don’t need stores abroad, because consumers can come to Paris and buy our brand there. How wise was that? Not very wise.’

Studies suggest that companies that invest intelligently in digital will gain competitive advantage (Dayal, Landesberg and Zeisser, 2000; Heine and Berghaus, 2014; Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli, 2014). Similarly, recent industry reports note that investments in digital strategy manifest themselves in growth figures (Exane BNP Paribas, 2014; Mintel, 2014; McKinsey & Company, 2014). ‘We continue to expect above-average top-line growth at companies like Burberry and increasingly Richemont, on the back of digital engagement forays’, notes the report by Exane BNP Paribas (2014: 1). While Burberry is widely considered the industry leader in strategic e-commerce reach, with online sales across all product categories available in a wide range of countries and languages (Phan, Thomas and Heine, 2011), other luxury and premium fashion brands are catching up. Louis Vuitton, in particular, has made significant developments, redesigning its website in July 2014 (www.louisvuitton.com) in a move that has been interpreted as a

signal of greater digital ambitions. While Louis Vuitton stands out in the recent BNB report, other brands in the LVMH group (e.g. Céline, Fendi, Givenchy and Dior) still struggle on digital engagement (Figure 2.3). The study suggests that the gap reveals the lack of a consistent digital strategy across the LVMH group, in sharp contrast to Kering, which has benefited from the joint venture established with Yoox in August 2012 (Gucci develops its digital strategy autonomously, but Kering's smaller and mid-sized fashion brands, including Bottega Veneta, Saint Laurent and Balenciaga, all work within the joint venture). While most French brands were ranked roughly in the middle of the digital competitive map, several Italian companies, notably those not partnering with Yoox, lagged behind (Exane BNP Paribas, 2014).

In addition to the challenges brought by e-commerce, during the last two decades the fashion industry has found itself in a state of constant evolution and transformation (Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli, 2014). Globalisation, mergers and acquisitions and technological developments have drastically changed its retailing landscape (Doherty and Ellis-Chadwick, 2010). A recent example is the merger between the two leading e-commerce players Yoox and Net-A-Porter in March 2015, which is likely to significantly reshape the digital competitive map in the fashion industry. EDITD market data suggest that the merger makes clear, strategic sense for both parties, with the potential for Net-A-Porter to extend its currently limited brand assortment, and for Yoox to secure a luxury position with the broad span of Net-A-Porter's pricing. As such, the two companies combined have the potential to create the world's biggest luxury fashion store (EDITD, 2015). However, given the relatively small size of the luxury and premium fashion market online, the full effects of the merger will need to be measured.

While past research has explored the risks and opportunities related to luxury and premium brands going online (de Chernatony, 2001; Geerts and Veg-Sala, 2011; Kim and Ko, 2012), very little work has been done to decipher how fashion

brands deal with the transferring of brand values and attributes on the Internet (Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli, 2014). As the digital-native generations are quickly becoming the next generation of fashion consumers, the questions being raised are not related to whether fashion brands should go online and become digitally oriented, but to how to do it without damaging the brand identity and how to build sustainable digital strategies.

2.4.2 Fashion and mobile commerce

Along with e-commerce, mobile commerce is growing rapidly and changing marketing practices in the fashion industry. Consumers are increasingly accessing online content via a mobile rather than a fixed device, and mobile Internet acceptance is on the increase (Magrath and McCormick, 2013). Defined broadly, mobile commerce allows consumers to access online content via a hand-held device (Mahatankoon, 2007), potentially allowing them to perform online transactions ‘anytime and anywhere’ and is considered the next generation of e-commerce (Alfahl, Sanzogni and Houghton, 2012). Mobile commerce in the field of fashion marketing represents a new area for research development. In particular, Magrath and McCormick (2013) point out that due to differences in screen sizes, Internet speed issues and location usage, it cannot be assumed that the mobile consumer will have the same motivations, expectations and behaviours as the online consumer. Despite the importance of gaining understanding about the role of marketing in mobile commerce, academic research in the field of fashion marketing relating to mobile commerce has been scarce (Barnes, 2014). One aspect of mobile fashion marketing that has been explored is that of mobile content design. In the same way that website design was researched in depth because the retail environment of a website is different from that of an in-store experience (Siddiqui et al., 2003; McCormick and Livett, 2012; Ha and Lennon, 2010; Harris and Goode, 2010), the design of the commercial content for a mobile device also has to be considered

(Magrath and McCormick, 2013). Fashion marketers are looking to develop content specifically for the mobile environment.

The mobile application software ('mobile app' or 'app') is the channel of most interest, since mobile apps have become important sales and marketing channels in the fashion industry (Magrath and McCormick, 2013). In their research into mobile content design for fashion retailers, Magrath and McCormick (2013) developed a framework organising mobile marketing design elements into four categories: multimedia product viewing, informative content, promotional material and consumer-led interactions. While this categorisation provides a useful frame for the present mobile-commerce research, it is important that any classification or taxonomy is flexible, since new features and applications appear every day, replacing some of the existing elements.

Barnes (2014) notes that the links between fashion-marketing research and that of textiles science and technology have been difficult to identify. However, with the emergence of mobile devices as tools for fashion-marketing communication, and given their attractiveness to consumers, there should be new opportunities for the development of shared research interests. For example, as Barnes (2014) suggests, it would benefit both research agendas if textile scientists and fabric technologists were to work together with digital fashion marketers in order to explore how the mobile interface could be developed to improve garment descriptions.

The research into mobile content design still remains largely in its infancy and there are a number of interesting avenues for the research agenda to take in fashion-marketing terms. For example, one of the key problems for online fashion retail has been the difficulty of presenting the true look, feel, colour and texture of a garment (Siddiqui et al., 2003; Ha and Lennon, 2010). The problems remain the same for mobile commerce, yet the interactive nature of browsing on mobile devices, which are usually touchscreen, offers opportunity for development of

the interface to compensate for some of these issues. While the academic research is still catching up with the developments in mobile commerce, the concept is quickly becoming out-dated, as retailers are moving on towards an ‘omnichannel’ approach. This shift is discussed below.

2.4.3 Fashion and omnichannel

As commerce moved from ‘bricks and mortar’ stores to e-commerce, the concept of ‘multichannel’ was established to address the idea that retailers used a range of channels to market their goods, including physical stores, online stores and other channels such as catalogues, direct selling and, more recently, mobile commerce to reach their target market (Siddiqui et al., 2003; Rickman and Cosenza, 2007; Rowley, 2008; Marciniak and Bruce, 2004; Cho and Workman, 2011). The notion of multichannel suggests that each channel is almost a separate entity in its own right. However, as the number of channels has increased, each with its own limitations and benefits, consumers are increasingly using more than one channel simultaneously when it comes to making a purchase. Accordingly, research suggests that touch points have changed both in number and nature (Edelman, 2010: 64). For example, consumers may use certain channels for information searching and another channel for making the final purchase.

These developments have given rise to an interest, both in the industry and in academia, in the concept of omnichannel retailing, whereby all the channels are considered together in a more integrated way. Omnichannel retailing can be defined as a customer experience integrated across stores, websites, direct mail and catalogues, mobile platforms, social media, home shopping and gaming (Rigby, 2011: 65). Omnichannel retail is an integrated shopping experience (Aubrey and Judge, 2012) that blends the advantages of physical stores with the information-rich merits of online shopping and social media (Rigby, 2011).

Moreover, omnichannel is a reflection of the multiple way in which consumers can engage with a brand, or to put it the other way around, the variety of touch points that brands offer to consumers to engage with them (Aubrey and Judge, 2012). Omnichannel anticipates that customers may start in one channel and move to another as they progress to purchase decision. Whether the purchase experience starts online, on social media or via a catalogue, customers have a range of options as to how they may want to move through the consumer-decision journey (Edelman, 2010). Social media are now identified as part of the overall selling process and a central feature of omnichannel retail (Rigby, 2011), which has attracted significant interest in the industry and academia over recent years, both as a direct-selling tool and as a marketing communications tool. Social media can help companies understand more about their customers and help customers to make more informed decisions about their purchases (Huang and Benyoucef, 2012).

Despite widespread industry reporting on omnichannel as the success strategy for the future of retail, as well as some very early academic research on the topic, many retailers are finding it difficult to implement a successful omnichannel strategy (Exane BNP Paribas, 2014). Thus future fashion-marketing research in the area of omnichannel is likely to be highly valued by practitioners.

2.4.4 Fashion and social media

Coupled with the growing demand for a stronger digital presence, both online and on mobile devices, the advent of social media has fundamentally altered the way we look at fashion. As the designer Alexander Wang argues: 'The way that we shoot it, the way that we showcase it and the way that we make the clothes and design them has changed' (Schneier, 2014). Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have become an integral part of how fashion brands connect with consumers, providing substantial opportunities for innovative marketing commu-

nications (Kim and Ko, 2010, 2012; Chu, Kamal and Kim, 2013; Dhaoui, 2014; Kontu and Vecchi, 2014). In this context, the explosive growth of social media has changed the way fashion is marketed, reported, consumed and shared. It has given consumers much more control, information and power, posing fashion brands with a number of important dilemmas and challenges. The implications and impact of social media are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, which focuses on the evolving social-media environment. This section provides an overview of the existing academic research in fashion and social media.

The recent literature has raised the issues of the compatibility of fashion and the Internet, the suitability of fashion products to the virtual environment and strategic approaches to maximising a fashion brand's presence online, as discussed in previous sections (Heine, 2010; Phan, Thomas and Heine, 2011; Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli, 2014). Others have indicated that the Internet presents a 'dilemma' that fashion firms seek to overcome through avoiding e-commerce (Okonkwo, 2009), whereas still more have suggested that the Internet is purely a channel of communications for fashion brands (Heine and Berghaus, 2014). The interest in the use of social media in fashion marketing – especially in the marketing of luxury fashion brands – is rapidly growing. In particular, with the launch of the recent special issues on social media published by marketing journals, the body of research is rapidly developing. Most recently, the *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing* published a special issue on 'Social-media marketing and luxury brands' (Phan and Park, 2014), outlining the current research agenda in the field. This section introduces some of the diverse issues that have been studied in relation to the use of social media in fashion marketing.

Social media have rapidly risen in popularity as new marketing communications platforms that allow users to connect with one another and also engage with brands (Heine and Berghaus, 2014). Chu, Kamal and Kim (2013) note that at the same time, the online luxury market has experienced rapid expansion due to the

rising number of affluent online users aged between eighteen and thirty-five. Relying on an online survey of over 300 participants, Chu, Kamal and Kim (2013) examined young social-media users' beliefs, attitudes and behavioural responses to the branded content pushed on social media. Brand consciousness was found to have an impact on users' attitudes to social-media advertising, which in turn influences their behavioural responses to social-media advertising and consequent purchase intentions towards luxury products.

Furthermore, there has been some consideration of the strategic benefits of social media in fashion marketing. For example, Kim and Ko (2010, 2012) analyse the impact of social media on purchase intention, customer relationships and customer equity of luxury fashion brands. They examine the effects of the social-media activities of luxury fashion brands on customer equity and purchase intention through a structural equation model. The five perceived social-media marketing activities in the study are entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customisation and word-of-mouth. The authors show that their effects on value equity, relationship equity and brand equity are significantly positive. The findings by Kim and Ko (2012) can inform further studies in the field and have the potential to enable luxury brands to forecast the future purchasing behaviour of their customers more accurately and to provide guidance on managing their assets and marketing activities overall.

More recently, Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli (2014) have explored the complex concept of e-semiotics applied to luxury-brand communications, using content analysis and Peircean semiotics. Analysing the digital presence of ten luxury brands, the authors observe a shift from brand communication to product communication, and a shift from purchase experience and context to price. Going online would thus mean being more down-to-earth for luxury brands, while focusing less on emotions and experience. Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli (2014) argue that luxury brands have thus not succeeded in transferring the luxury-boutique

experience online, and have not managed to reconcile the rarity principle of luxury with the ‘mass’ principle of digital.

Dhaoui (2014) proposes an empirical study of the effectiveness of luxury-brand marketing and its impact on consumer engagement on Facebook. The study was carried out with over fifty luxury brands’ Facebook pages in order to evaluate their effectiveness in driving consumer engagement. The findings provide guidance for brand managers and marketing researchers on how to formulate and implement effective social-media strategies to leverage the luxury brand’s potential. Dhaoui (2014) notes that luxury brands have embraced the social-media era through marketing communications, pointing out the particular attributes of luxury such as high quality, rich pedigree, rarity, personality and placement, as well as using public relations, public figures and typically high pricing to drive consumer engagement. Moreover, Heine and Berghaus (2014) examine, through several case studies, the major digital luxury-brand-consumer touch points and make recommendations on how to tackle digital channels successfully. Research in this area is critical for both scholars and marketers in the sector, since studies show that an increasing number of fashion brands are investing in digital and social media without a clear strategy. To address this gap in knowledge, the present study aims to build an empirically grounded framework that enables a better understanding, explanation and description of the process of building a social-media strategy.

2.4.5 Fashion influencers

Along with new forms of commerce, one of the most disruptive outcomes of digital and social media in the fashion industry is the evolution in the fashion leaders and influencers (Atik and Firat, 2013). In an earlier section of this chapter, it was suggested that due to fashion products’ limited lifespan, fashion is intrinsically

linked with PLC and diffusion-of-innovation theory. If the PLC theory follows the pattern of a fashion trend, by linking the life cycle of a fashion trend to Rogers' (2003) classification of adopter categories, it is possible to gain an understanding of the types of consumers buying in to a trend and the stages at which they buy in. In terms of how this relates to social media in fashion marketing, Barnes (2014) argues that we are witnessing a 'fashion revolution'. The preliminary stage of the classification of adopters is the creation or design stage, in which a new style is invented and introduced to the consumer. Freathy (2003) notes that designers, celebrities and subcultural factors typically lead this phase and may therefore be classified as 'innovator' adopters. As those most interested in fashion look to the designers and celebrities, the fashion is adopted by leading consumers, often referred to as 'fashion leaders', 'fashion influencers' or 'fashion-conscious consumers'. They initiate progression of the fashion by being the first to adopt and exhibit a new style within their social group, a parallel to Rogers' 'early adopter', as discussed earlier. The literature suggests that as increasing numbers of consumers buy into a trend, there is an increase in adoption, giving the fashion social awareness, and then, as even more consumers buy in, so the fashion moves through its PLC.

Traditionally, the literature identifies the fashion leaders as editors and designers (Cashmore, 2006; Atik and Firat, 2013). Crewe (2013; cited in Barnes, 2014: 202) concurs:

The dissemination of designer fashion was choreographed by a handful of highly influential fashion editors such as Suzy Menkes (International Herald Tribune) and Anna Wintour (Vogue) who acted as global style authorities, were closely aligned to networks of fashion designers, stylists, photographers, and journalists, and were able to control the selection, circulation, and dissemination of fashion via their curation of international media publications and the lucrative advertising revenues that accrued to global fashion magazines and their reputational and authorial capital.

This elite group of influencers maintained tight control at the front end of the PLC and shaped the trickle-down of fashion trends. Along with editors, celebrities are found to be another important medium, inspiring dreams (Cashmore, 2006). They represent images of seduction for regular people to esteem and follow, thus encouraging fashion diffusion (Lipovetsky, 2002). Brand, media, celebrity images from the world of movies, television, music, video games and sports are profoundly interrelated and practically inseparable from consumers' self-images (Evans, 1989). By dressing the stars, producers perpetuate the appetite of consumers, offering them prospective ideal images of self.

However, social media have disrupted this stranglehold of control and the balance of power has changed. As Barnes (2014) argues, social media offers a 'shift in power and authority' from the trade papers, editors, designers and celebrities towards new fashion influencers: large and diverse consumer groups, many of whom had no status of authority or persuasion under the established hierarchical fashion system with its high barriers to entry and exclusionary practices. This shift has been driven through social media. In particular, three concepts explain it: the advent of fashion blogs, the emergence of user-generated content, and the rise of visual social media. Here, these will be briefly introduced, but discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

A blog (a shortened form of the term 'web log') is essentially a website that consists of a sequence of 'posts' or entries placed on the site by the author, containing thoughts, images, ideas, visuals, videos and other forms of information considered to be of interest or relevance by the author (or 'blogger') (Rocamora, 2011, 2012; Lea-Greenwood, 2013). Blogs can be interactive and bloggers normally attempt to develop groups of followers and encourage interactions with their followers (Kulmala, Mesiranta and Tuominen, 2013; Lea-Greenwood, 2013). According to Lea-Greenwood (2013), blogs have become the fashion commentary of the moment, and fashion blogging has become a hugely influential and important sector

of the fashion industry. Indeed, fashion bloggers have become so prominent that businesses send them products to review on their blogs; they contribute in the wider media such as television and magazines; they style celebrities and they secure front-row seats at the major fashion shows (Rocamora, 2011, 2012; Lea-Greenwood, 2013). The so-called 'superblogger' has become a key feature of the fashion industry, displacing the traditional power factions of the industry (such as print media, magazine editors and designers) since they now have substantial commercial influence. Moreover, these 'superbloggers' are able to make an effective and lucrative living from their blogs. For example, Garance Dore (www.garancedore.fr) (Lea-Greenwood, 2013) and Suzi Lau (<http://stylebubble.co.uk>) (Rocamora, 2011) are reported to be some of the top fashion bloggers, making full-time careers from blogging, and featuring extensively throughout the fashion media. In addition, the barriers to entry are low since anyone can start a fashion blog regardless of age or education.

Researchers have engaged with fashion blogs to discuss issues such as race (Pham, 2013), religion (Lewis, 2013), teenage-hood (Chittendon, 2010), femininity (Rocamora, 2011), body size (Connell, 2013), as well as global neoliberal capitalism (Luvaas, 2013), whilst also engaging with wider discussions on contemporary digital practices such as hypertextuality and remediation (Rocamora, 2012), new media and time (Rocamora, 2013), the Internet and democratisation (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008), digital entrepreneurship (Lewis, 2013), the new information economy (Pham, 2013), and self-digitalisation (Kretz, 2010). Fashion blogs are also credited with informing street trends, in other words, developing trends in their own right (Rocamora, 2011, 2012). The phenomenal success of fashion bloggers has been attributed to the speed at which they can report on the latest trend and fashion information. This relates to the earlier discussion of fast fashion (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006, 2010) and consumers' increasing desire for newness and the latest look or trend (Hines and Bruce, 2007). Fashion bloggers can reach their audience with the latest fashion insight via online and

social channels far more quickly than traditional communications can achieve via print media (Rocamora, 2011). They take part in the wider fast-fashion phenomenon by driving trends to which retailers may then react.

The second aspect representing a shift in power away from the ‘traditional’ influencers of the fashion industry is the rise of user-generated content (UGC) (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Typically, UGC is considered to be content generated by consumers in the form of product reviews and recommendations – for example, through Facebook (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Arguably a blog could be considered UGC, and there are many parallels – for example, a consumer recommending a product to friends via Facebook demonstrates many similarities to a blog. However, UGC tends to be written by consumers in a more ad hoc way than communications via blogs (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, 2011).

Finally, the shift towards visual social media has impacted the balance of power in terms of fashion influencers. The recent growth of visual social media, such as Instagram, Pinterest and Snapchat, has given consumers new tools to generate content and engage with brands (Arthur, 2015). Since catwalks are calibrated to be socially shared experiences, the professional photographers, editors and bloggers now represent only a fraction of those documenting the fashion weeks (Schneier, 2014). Nearly everyone in the audience, from the front row to the consumers at home, come with phone in hand and Instagram account primed. This is fashion in the age of social media, an era in which digital devices are changing the way clothes are presented and even the way they are designed, as noted by Wang above.

Considered together, fashion blogs, UGC and ‘Instagrammers’ have changed the traditional influencers in the fashion industry and demonstrate how social media are democratising fashion. There has been a shift in power from the trade papers and editors that once exclusively covered the runway shows to the individuals

and consumers, who engage with brands through a myriad of social media. As Eva Chen (quoted in Schneier, 2014), the editor-in-chief of *Lucky* notes, 'I see the shows on Instagram now'.

In terms of the research agenda for fashion marketing, the new 'model' of fashion-marketing communications is yet to be explored, for example, by incorporating the rise in importance of fashion blogs and the contraction of the fashion print-media sector (Rocamora, 2011; Bartlett, Cole and Rocamora, 2013). There is limited literature on fashion blogs, UGC and Instagrammers in the fashion sector, and moreover, the early literature that exists is already out of date because the formats and technologies continually innovate and change. Hence it is critical to include the use and impacts of fashion blogging, UGC and the shift towards visual social media in the research agenda for fashion marketing. These are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

2.5 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to define the concepts of fashion and fashion marketing, and understand the attributes that make fashion a unique and interesting context within which to explore the role of social media. Firstly, the term 'fashion' was defined and discussed. While fashion has emerged as an interdisciplinary field of scholarly research, it was concluded that for the purposes of this research, fashion is examined from the point of view of 'fashion business' rather than in the broader sociological context, and with emphasis on the fashion-clothing industry. The fashion sector was selected as a context for this research, since only a few studies on the impact of social media on the fashion industry have been conducted (see e.g. Kim and Ko, 2010, 2012; Chu, Kamal and Kim, 2013; Dhaoui, 2014). Additionally, the fashion industry was deemed the ideal subject for the study of

social media since it is by definition a very visual industry, which is consumer-driven and where establishing empathy with the final consumers is of paramount importance (Venturi, 2011).

Secondly, the nature of fashion marketing as a discrete area for academic research was outlined, exploring its emphasis on marketing communication and the different forms of fashion-driven marketing communications compared to marketing in general. A summary of key current research themes in fashion marketing was provided, and the digital fashion research was explored in more detail, including the areas of e-commerce, mobile commerce, omnichannel, social media and the new fashion influencers. Given the current literature and research output relating to digital fashion marketing, it was noted that there has been a fundamental shift in marketing practices in the fashion industry. In this context, the explosive growth of social media has been one of the main catalysts in the process. In a similar way to how value retailers have contributed to the democratisation of fashion in recent years, social media have brought democratisation in terms of shifting power to the consumers. Social media have given consumers much more control, information and power, posing fashion brands with a number of important dilemmas and challenges.

In addition, there has been a shift in power from the trade papers and editors that once exclusively covered the runway shows to the individuals who watch the shows through their mobile devices. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat have become an integral part of how fashion brands connect with consumers, providing substantial opportunities for innovative marketing communications (Kim and Ko, 2010, 2012; Chu, Kamal and Kim, 2013; Dhaoui, 2014; Kontu and Vecchi, 2014). The role and nature of social media as new channels for marketing communication will be explored in more detail in the next chapter, which focuses on the evolving social-media environment.

3 Social media

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the evolving social-media environment. The aim is to define social media and understand the role and nature of different social-media platforms. Firstly, Web 2.0 and social media are defined in the context of this research, and a brief overview of the technology-acceptance model is provided to explain how consumers adopt new technologies and how social-media platforms emerge. Secondly, the different social-media platforms and their application are explored. Thirdly, this chapter provides a summary of the main literature in this domain and presents the key themes and findings arising from the literature review. The evolving marketing practices and consumer-brand relationships on social media are discussed, and the principles of 'hierarchy-of-effects' models from the advertising field are considered as a way of categorising the objectives and use of social media in marketing communications. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the proposals of existing studies on the motivations, expected benefits and objectives related to the use of social media.

3.2 Web 2.0 and social media

Overall, due to their complex nature and structure, there are multiple ways to categorise and define media (Grossberg et al., 1998). The term has been described as encompassing press, broadcasting, cinema and technology-based new media (Scannell, 2002). The media can provide target audiences with information, tell

stories, monitor and critique those wielding power in society, and provide different views, which creates the opportunity for publicity (Grossberg et al., 1998; Scannell, 2002; Christians et al., 2009; Papathanassopoulos, 2011). The media also make a profit for their owners and meet the economic demands of different stakeholders such as marketers (Scannell, 2002; Christians et al., 2009).

As new channels of communication emerge through digitalisation, major changes are taking place in the global media. Consumers are no longer passive recipients of marketing messages (Trainor et al., 2014). They are taking an increasingly active role in co-creating everything from product design to promotional messages (Berthon et al., 2007). Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden (2011) note that the rise in interactive digital media has catapulted company and consumer contact from the traditional Web 1.0 model to the highly interactive Web 2.0 world, where consumers are dictating the nature, extent and context of the marketing-exchange process. Consumers no longer use digital media only to research products and services passively, but instead to engage with the companies as well as other consumers who may have valuable insights.

The origin of the term ‘Web 2.0’ is credited to the O’Reilly Media Web 2.0 Conference of 2004, during which Tim O’Reilly described the Web 2.0 phenomenon as business embracing the Web as a platform and using its strengths, for example, for global audiences (Graham, 2005). Later, O’Reilly (2007: 17) defined Web 2.0 as:

the network as platform, spanning all connections devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform; delivering software as a continually updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an architecture of participation and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experience.

Blank and Reisdorf (2012) suggest that O'Reilly's definition lacks clarity and has generated a growing confusion around the Web 2.0 concept. In their view, O'Reilly and his followers have approached Web 2.0 from the point of view of large organisations. This producer position does not allow a full understanding of the revolutionary power of Web 2.0 technologies. Blank and Reisdorf suggest that the real disruptive power lies on the user side. They argue that from a user point of view, Web 2.0 has two primary components that are closely related: the 'network effect' and the 'platform'. Combined, these enable new forms of user engagement, communication and information gathering. Blank and Reisdorf (2012: 539) define Web 2.0 as: 'Using the Internet to provide platforms through which network effects can emerge.' As such, Web 2.0 has introduced a new dimension to the Internet.

Similarly Constantinides and Fountain (2008: 232) take the point of view of the user and define Web 2.0 as:

a collection of open-source, interactive and user-controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes. Web 2.0 applications support the creation of informal users' networks, facilitating the flow of ideas and knowledge by allowing efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing of the informational content.

As such, Web 2.0 gives companies new opportunities for getting and staying in touch with the consumers, learning about their needs and opinions as well as interacting with them in a direct and personalised way.

More recently, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 61) defined Web 2.0 as the 'platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion'. This definition clearly highlights the cooperative nature

of Web 2.0 technologies and how these have naturally supported the diffusion of social media, as well as the production and dissemination of user-generated content (UGC). To an extent, Web 2.0 technologies are the platforms on which social media and UGC have flourished and developed to become a mass-market phenomenon.

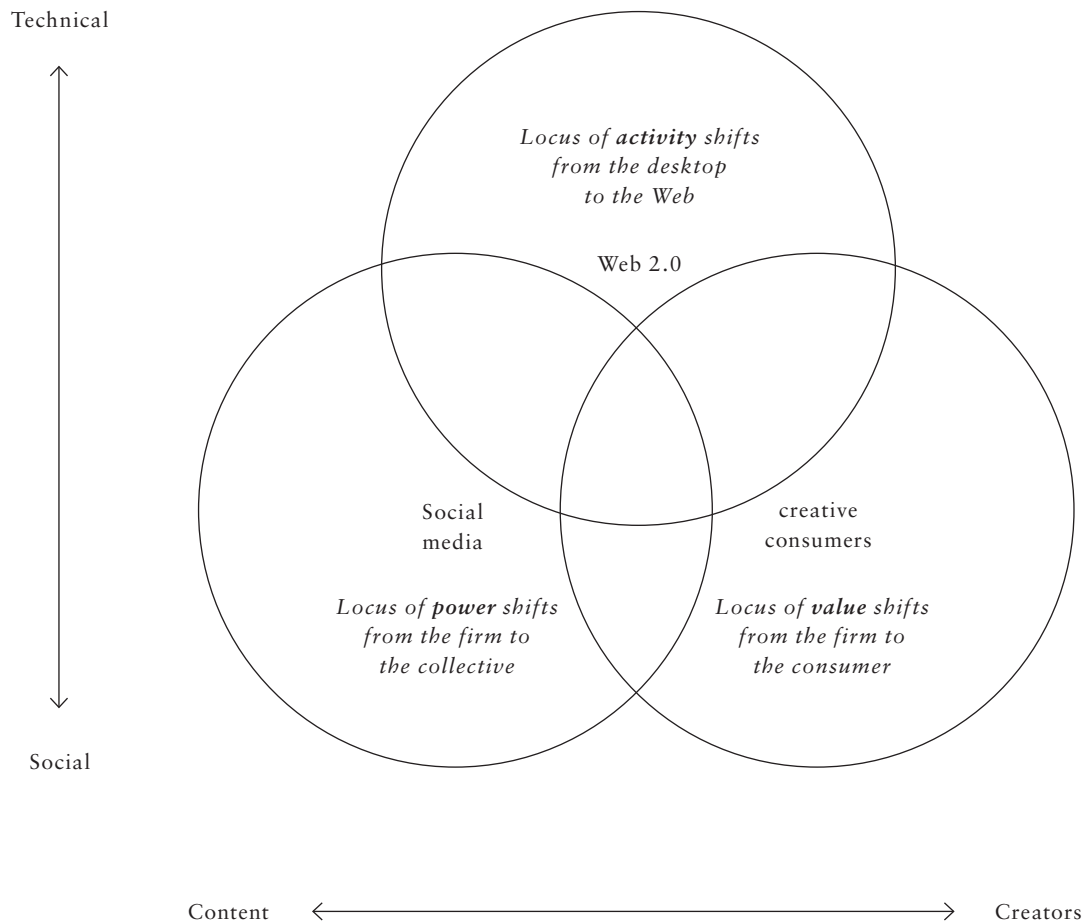
In the mid-2000s, the marketing challenges resulting from digitalisation seemed to have been met (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). Many firms had created a digital presence and were beginning to understand how to maintain and update websites. A number of firms were communicating through email, and many had even accepted the existence of negative customer comments on review sites like Amazon.com. What few suspected at that time was that the challenges of digitalisation were only beginning to disrupt marketing (Edelman, 2007; 2010; Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching, 2013). A distinct characteristic of this disruption was the spread of Web 2.0 in many forms, including social media. When Facebook opened to the general public in 2006, the power of social media began to influence consumers and businesses, and has continued to do so with unforeseeable speed (Caers et al., 2013). By 2013, the top three websites in terms of traffic were Facebook, Google and YouTube – either dedicated social-network sites or platforms that feature strong social-networking elements (Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching, 2013).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 61) define social media as, ‘a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content’. Instead of the term ‘social media’, Miel and Faris (2008: 3) use the concept of ‘participatory media’ to depict ‘media formats or entities where the participation or editorial contributions of people whose primary role in life or in relation to the specific media entity is something other than media producer’. These definitions explore two central concepts in the present study: the possibility to participate (Miel and

Faris, 2008) and to share user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) are considered fundamental characteristics of social media. In this context, sharing refers to the extent to which users exchange, distribute and receive content (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

‘Web 2.0’ and ‘social media’ are often used imprecisely and interchangeably, largely because they are closely related and indeed, interdependent. However, they have different meanings and different strategic implications. Berthon et al. (2012) provide an overview of Web 2.0, social media and consumers. Their way of defining the differences and similarities between the three concepts is illustrated in Figure 3.1, which uses two delineating dimensions of focus. The authors suggest that Web 2.0 can be thought of as the technical infrastructure that enables the social phenomenon of collective media and facilitates user-generated content. The latter are distinguished by the difference in focus: social media can be thought of as focusing on content, and consumer generation on the creators of that content. Berthon et al. (2012: 262) suggest that Web 2.0 enables the creation and distribution of the content that is social media.

FIGURE 3.1 WEB 2.0, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND CREATIVE CONSUMERS (BERTHON ET AL., 2012)



This research adopts Kaplan and Haenlein’s (2010, 2011) view whereby the term ‘social media’ is defined as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and sharing of user-generated content (UGC). Moreover, the focus of this definition is on the integration across the distinct social-media channels. These channels are discussed below.

3.3 Social-media channels

There currently exists a rich and diverse ecology of social-media sites, which vary in scope and functionality and need further differentiation (Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden, 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011). Despite the increasing interest in and usage of social media, the establishment of systematic categorisation schemes for different social-media applications is in its infancy. Furthermore, since new sites and applications appear every day, replacing some of the existing platforms, it is important that any classification or taxonomy is flexible and takes this on-going growth into account.

Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden (2011) note that it is not enough to incorporate social media as stand-alone elements of a marketing-communications plan. Indeed, several authors (e.g. Li and Bernoff, 2008; Corcoran, 2009; Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden, 2011) have developed systematic ways of conceptualising online social media as an 'ecosystem' of related elements involving both digital and traditional media whereby all elements work together towards a common goal, whether launching and promoting a new product or service, communicating a new company initiative, or engaging customers in a rich and interactive dialogue. In particular, Corcoran (2009) divides the ecosystem into three media types: owned media (controlled by the marketer; e.g. company website), paid media (bought by the marketer; e.g. sponsorship, advertising), and earned media (not controlled or bought by the marketer; e.g. word-of-mouth, viral). Additionally Li and Bernoff (2008) segment active participants in the ecosystem based on five different types of social behaviours: creators (e.g. publishing, maintaining, uploading); critics (e.g. commenting, rating); collectors (e.g. saving, sharing); joiners (e.g. connecting, uniting); and spectators (e.g. reading). While the platforms provide the transmission of messages, the spheres of influence now become the consumers who engage in conversations about products and services via the various platforms. Learning to weave through this ecosystem is a new but necessary skill in the constantly evolving digital environment.

One of the more established categorisations of social media is that provided by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010). In order to introduce their taxonomy, they rely on a set of theories within the field of media research (social presence and media richness) and social processes (self-presentation and self-disclosure) to present six different types of social media. These are collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (e.g. Twitter), content communities (e.g. YouTube), social-networking sites (e.g. Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life). Applications within these platforms include blogs, picture sharing, wall-postings, email, instant messaging, music sharing, crowdsourcing and others (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

For the purposes of this study, the analysis is restricted to three groups of Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) taxonomy: social-networking sites, blogs and microblogs, and content-sharing sites, which are extensively used by fashion companies and amongst consumers within the fashion industry (Arthur, 2013; Bautista, 2013; Schneier, 2014). Within these categories, the largest platforms are Facebook (social-networking sites), Twitter (blogs and microblogs) and Instagram (content-sharing sites). These are introduced below.

3.3.1 Social-networking sites

Social-networking sites are online communities that allow people to socialise and interact with each other (Dennis et al., 2010). These communities enable users to connect by creating personal-information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to gain access to those profiles, and sending comments and instant messages between each other (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The personal profiles include various types of information about the users, including photos, videos, audio files and blogs. As such, social networks emerge from the ability of users to represent themselves and their interests, and to activate engagement with other users.

Social-networking sites are highly popular and have made a significant impact on modes of social communication (Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012). To demonstrate the pervasiveness of social communication amongst adult populations one only needs to note that at the time of writing this research nearly two-thirds of American adults (65%) use social-networking sites (Pew Research Center, 2015b). Several researchers (e.g. Dennis et al., 2009, 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Harris and Dennis, 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012) suggest that these networks have, in fact, changed the social lives of many individuals, specifically among younger generations of Internet users. Acknowledging this potential, some companies are using social-networking sites to support the creation of brand communities (Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001).

One of the best examples of using social media to create a strong brand community in the context of fashion is Burberry's online project *The Art of the Trench*, which is a social networking site encouraging visitors to upload images of themselves wearing a Burberry trench coat (<http://artofthetrench.burberry.com>). The site has been extremely popular; only a week after its launch in November 2009 it had over 200,000 unique users and three million page views, and it continues to attract new users to date (Design Council, 2010). The project allows Burberry to crowdsource content and interact with a large brand community, not only reaching but also engaging millions of consumers through social networking. Another example is provided by Tiffany & Co, whose project *What Makes Love True* is based on a similar idea.

The introduction and rise of the social network site Facebook has been one of the most important social trends of the past decade (Caers et al., 2013). Although the site only opened to the public in 2006, Facebook reports already serving 1.55 billion monthly active users (MAUs) as of 30 September 2015 (Facebook, 2015). The number is equal to half of the estimated three billion people who use the Internet worldwide (Hope, 2015). Initially created by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 for the

purpose of staying in touch with his fellow students at Harvard University, Facebook is a free social-networking site that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues (Gummerus et al., 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Caers et al., 2013). The site includes public features such as profiles, pages, groups, events and marketplace (Harris and Dennis, 2011).

The network has grown rapidly since its foundation, and it has shaped the competitive landscape of social media through major acquisitions, such as the photo-sharing application Instagram in March 2012 (Rusli, 2012) or the messaging application WhatsApp in February 2014 (Gelles and Goel, 2014). Following rapid growth, Facebook made an Initial Public Offering (IPO) on the New York Stock Exchange in May 2012. The company was valued at \$104 billion, historically the biggest valuation of an American company at the time of its IPO (Raice, Das and Letzing, 2012). Furthermore, studies show that Facebook is the dominant player in the social-networking space, with the highest user rates compared to other social-media websites (Pew Research Center, 2014, 2015b). Approximately one out of five people in the world is an active member of Facebook at the time of writing this research (Facebook, 2015) even though the site is not accessible to those under thirteen years old, nor in China, the world's most populous country (Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching, 2013; Ng, 2014). Facebook also has the highest levels of engagement among its users: statistics show that 65% of Facebook users visit the site daily (Hope, 2015).

From a marketer's perspective, this generates a demand to locate their company or brand within Facebook to maintain or improve a competitive advantage (Harris and Dennis, 2011; Caers et al., 2013). There were already over fifty million Facebook pages for companies and brands in 2014 (Facebook, 2015). Facebook allows for branded messages to integrate into users' News Feeds and provides detailed data of users' demographics and geographics (Pew Research Center, 2014). As

such, Facebook is a destination where marketers can target specific consumer segments and generate high-impact engagement with their brand's message. Despite a hesitant start, fashion brands today are increasingly engaging with Facebook since it offers a unique platform for marketing communications through a variety of promotional functions and user involvement, which companies can build on their Facebook page. In particular, Facebook's local activations and campaigns are popular functions among fashion marketers.

A more recent example of social-networking sites is Google+, which is owned and operated by Google and was launched in 2011. Google reports that Google+ had 540 million monthly active users (MAUs) in 2014, but almost half do not visit the social network regularly (Google, 2014). Google+ may not be much of a competitor to Facebook as a social network, but it has strategic importance to Google because it allows the company to peer more broadly into people's digital lives, and to gather rich and strategic personal information (Miller, 2014). From a user's perspective, the biggest benefits are for business users because Google+ offers several unique tools for targeted marketing communications. Companies can target adverts based on assumptions about broad categories, such as geography, gender and age, or use Google+ Circles to publish personalised updates to certain customer groups. Brands can also share expertise, get customer feedback, launch new products and share other exclusive information through Google+ Hangouts, which are face-to-face multi-person video chats (Google, 2014; Miller, 2014).

Finally, another actively utilised social-networking platform is LinkedIn, an employment and professional networking site allowing users to build their business and professional contacts into an online network. At the time of writing this research, over 400 million registered users are on LinkedIn to exchange information, maintain contacts and to share ideas (LinkedIn.com). This 'registered users' figure is different from the number shared by other social networks like Facebook, Google+ and Twitter, who announce a 'monthly active user' statistic (MAUs), not

total registered accounts. From a consumer's perspective, LinkedIn is often used for different purposes from other social networks (Wagner, 2014). It is a platform where people build their professional networks, look for job opportunities and other information related to their careers. For brands and marketers, LinkedIn offers a place to advertise events, white papers and recruitment opportunities.

These different forms of social-networking sites, amongst others, are changing and growing rapidly (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Dennis et al., 2010; Harris and Dennis, 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011). As new sites appear every day and are replacing some of the existing platforms, it is important that any classification or framework is flexible and takes into account applications that may be forthcoming. Even the most often-cited categorisations, such as the one by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), consider past platforms such as MySpace but ignore current prominent platforms like Instagram, Pinterest and Snapchat. Moreover, many branded web destinations and corporate sites have similar characteristics to social networks (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Harris and Dennis, 2011). One of the best-known examples is Amazon.com, which, according to Weber (2007), has all the features of most social-networking sites. Therefore sites such as Amazon are important to consider in the development of a social-media framework.

3.3.2 *Blogs and microblogs*

In the context of fashion, blogs and microblogs have become increasingly important and influential in recent years, as discussed in the previous chapter. Strugatz (2012) notes that, 'it is not just the collections that people wait to see during the marathon of fashion weeks, but also the comments and feedback from bloggers who, in the eyes of many, have become as relevant as the shows that they blog about'. This section provides a brief overview of blogs and microblogs, and in particular Twitter.

The term ‘blog’ originates from the combination of two separate terms – ‘web’ and ‘log’ (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008). After a slow start in the late 1990s, these ‘weblogs’, which represent the earliest form of social media, have gained in popularity, since they are relatively easy to create and to maintain (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011). There are more than 20 billion blogs hosted on WordPress.com (<https://wordpress.com/activity>) and over 260 million on Tumblr (<https://www.tumblr.com/about>) at the time of writing this research, which points to their significance in today’s digitally connected world.

Blogs are special types of websites consisting of chronologically organised content on a multitude of subjects (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008), usually displaying date-stamped entries in reverse chronological order (Wright, 2006). They are the social-media equivalent of personal homepages and exist in a multitude of different variations, from personal diaries describing the author’s life, to summaries of all relevant information in one specific content area (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The authors, or bloggers, range from everyday people to professional writers and celebrities across a variety of industries and topics (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Each blog is usually managed by one person only, but provides the possibility for interaction with others (Wright, 2006; Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008). Research suggests that blogs and their interconnections have become important sources of public opinion (e.g. Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008). Marken (2005) refers to the blog as a ‘collective conversation’, since it is similar to a message board or Internet posting, yet it extends this definition, facilitating conversation by enabling users to ‘like’ entries, post comments and link to other blogs and sites of additional information.

Research by Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane (2008), Edelman (2010), Kietzmann et al. (2011) and Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin (2012) shows that consumers value a unique personalised message and therefore marketers seek opportunities to deliver messages in innovative ways. Hence, it is not surprising that blogs

have quickly become valuable components in the recent generation of marketing-communications strategies: they offer firms the ability to connect with customers in a unique and personalised manner where everything from brand promotions to new product ideas can be effectively communicated (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008). Consequently, most researchers and industry experts consider blogs an important part of a sound marketing-communications strategy today.

Viewed within the context of integrated marketing communications, blogging can be perceived as parallel to viral marketing because it uses social networks, user-generated content and interactivity to spread messages. The two forms share several advantages, from low cost to voluntary customer participation (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008). Dobeles, Toleman and Beverland (2005) describe several characteristics of a good viral-marketing campaign, including that it should be fun and intriguing, well targeted and originate from a credible source. In this context, blogging is similar to viral marketing yet it is more enduring and arguably more effective because, unlike viral marketing, which is generally unidirectional and has a limited life span, blogging is interactive, dynamic and has a longer term. Corporate blogs, for example, can continue ad infinitum, and blogging about a firm and its products and services can be an integral part of the long-term integrated marketing-communications strategy for a company (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008).

Similar to blogs, microblogging offers real-time updates, differing from a traditional blog in that its content is typically smaller in both actual and aggregate file size. Microblogs allow users to exchange small elements of content such as short sentences, individual images or videos (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008). Twitter has been driving microblogging development since its foundation in 2006. The site has rapidly gained worldwide popularity, with over 300 million monthly active users (MAUs) to date (<https://about.twitter.com/company>). Twitter allows users to send and read text-based posts known as 'tweets' that consist of 140

characters or less. These are mostly short status updates about what users are doing, their location, how they are feeling and links to other sites. Foursquare, a location-based platform, ties the real-time updates from Twitter into location-specific information by rewarding users for ‘checking in’ to real sites at any location worldwide, and for leaving their comments for others to view (www.foursquare.com).

Twitter is unique in relation to other platforms due to its 140-character restriction on messages. Users are drawn to the network as a place to access breaking news and other information quickly. Twitter’s use of hashtags and short links makes it easy for users to search what other people and brands are posting. Because users expect fresh real-time content, Twitter is an ideal channel for companies to communicate special events and time-sensitive promotions. Moreover, it allows brands to initiate conversations and encourage third-party endorsements, which make it a powerful tool for marketing (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011).

3.3.3 Content-sharing sites

The main objective of content-sharing sites is exchanging media content between users (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Content communities exist for a wide range of different media types, including photos (e.g. Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat and Tumblr), videos (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo and Vine), and even PowerPoint presentations (e.g. Slideshare) (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Users in these communities are not necessarily required to create personal profile pages; if they do, these pages usually only contain basic information, such as the date they joined the community and the number of photos or videos shared.

The largest content-sharing site is YouTube, a free distribution channel allowing users to upload, share and view videos. Over 100 hours of new video content is uploaded to YouTube every minute (YouTube, 2014), making it the second largest

search engine after Google. Kangas, Toivonen and Bäck (2007: 23) explain the technical background of the service: 'the videos are presented using Adobe Flash technology and can thus be embedded into any website'. This feature has made YouTube familiar with the users of different social-networking sites such as Facebook. Easy integration with existing sites and networks has made it possible for the company to become recognised quickly (Kangas, Toivonen and Bäck, 2008). In addition to being a platform for entertainment content, YouTube is an excellent resource for consumers who are searching for video-based product and instructional information. More than a billion unique users visit YouTube each month (YouTube, 2014). Another recent content-sharing site is YouNow, essentially a live version of YouTube, which it is heavily focused on enabling interactivity through a dedicated chat window (Arthur, 2015). It reportedly sees 100 million user sessions a month, with approximately 150,000 broadcasts daily (YouTube, 2014).

From a corporate viewpoint, content communities carry the risk of being used as platforms for sharing copyright-protected materials (Kietzmann et al., 2011). While major content communities implement policies to ban and remove such illegal content, it is difficult to police the uploading of popular videos, such as recent episodes of comedy shows, to YouTube only hours after they have aired on television. On the positive side, the high popularity of content communities makes them a very attractive contact channel for many firms (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008). The potential it offers for fashion companies is the creation of a YouTube channel for sharing branded content such as campaign videos or live-streamed catwalk shows.

Through the numerous social-media applications and technologies available, the rise of visual content-sharing sites in recent years has introduced further changes to the social-media landscape across industries (Pew Research Center, 2012, 2015a, 2015b). The explosive growth of the latest visual-content sites such as Instagram, Pinterest and Snapchat illustrates how visual content is becoming increasingly

important in social media – especially in an industry like luxury fashion that is heavily focused on aesthetics and visual representations (Workman and Caldwell, 2007). In the current social-media landscape, luxury fashion brands are experimenting with the power of visual content, using images and videos to build awareness and encourage consumer engagement (e.g. Wasserman, 2012; Arthur, 2013, 2015).

As part of this trend towards the visual, Pinterest is growing faster than any other website (Pew Research Center, 2012; Reuters, 2013), reaching 100 million users in September 2015 (www.pinterest.com). While Facebook still reigns supreme in the social-media landscape, engaging the majority of all users, studies show that consumers are pinning just as much as they are tweeting (Pew Research Center, 2012; Tan, 2015). Pinterest is a bookmarking site launched in 2009 allowing users to ‘pin’ sites and content and save it to topic-organised boards (www.pinterest.com). Users can upload, collect and share photos of their interests, hobbies and events. Women are the significant majority on the platform; as many as 85% of total Pinterest users are female. For marketers, Pinterest can serve as a destination for users to discover and examine a brand. It is a powerful platform to house aspects of a brand that may have been left offline, such as its inspiration and style.

Along with Pinterest, Instagram is extensively used by fashion brands and is widespread amongst consumers within the fashion industry (Wasserman, 2012; Arthur, 2013; Bautista, 2013; Schneier, 2014). Instagram is a photo-sharing application allowing users to take and retouch photos and share them either directly on Instagram or through a variety of other social-networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Foursquare). With 400 million monthly active users (MAUs) as of September 2015, and over eighty million pictures uploaded daily (<http://instagram.com/press>), Instagram is changing the fashion industry. As catwalks are calibrated to be socially shared experiences, the professional photographers now represent only a fraction of those documenting the fashion weeks (Schneier, 2014). Nearly every

show attendee, from the front row to the standing section, now arrives with phone in hand and Instagram account primed.

At any live event, restaurant, museum or general public space, the proliferation of mobile phones is overwhelming. It is not only the great number of them that catches the eye, but the way they are being used. The ‘selfie’ has become second nature, referring to a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media. Rachel Arthur, WGSN’s global senior editor, suggests that the term ‘humble brag’ has never been more relevant, with individuals showing off where they are and what they are experiencing across social media more than ever in order to elevate their own standing (Arthur, 2015).

While these communications were initially manifested in the form of faultless images retouched with an Instagram filter, what is beginning to take over in younger generations and the early-adopter set is a much more straightforward approach to documenting a moment in time. Along with Instagram, Snapchat is the growing platform within this space – at the time of writing this research it sees more than 800 million ‘snaps’ viewed per day, which is twelve times the number of images uploaded and shared on Instagram and two times that of Facebook (<https://edited.com>). Moreover, Snapchat is not only used by teenagers: some 70% of users are over the age of eighteen.

Similar to Snapchat, broadcasting applications Periscope and Meerkat, which enable users to live-stream directly from their smartphones, are also starting to gain popularity (Arthur, 2015). What is being seen on these platforms is a representation of a ‘raw aesthetic’. It is unedited, unscripted, of the moment and consequently more authentic. The worldwide director at J Walter Thompson Intelligence, Lucie Greene (quoted in Arthur, 2015) explains that this is part of a consumer shift in terms of what is deemed acceptable with visual language:

We're seeing intimate, real and even amateur-style photography becoming aspirational. And consumers, meanwhile, becoming active creators of content. They're even starting to see themselves increasingly as their own brands. What's interesting is that traditional entertainers and fashion brands are embracing this – they're moving from slick, glossy, synthesised content to more real-looking imagery.

This means a significant shift in marketing communication for fashion brands that have become used to creating high-quality content and are carefully controlling what goes out across social-media channels. While this polished aesthetic can work for marketers in a pre-produced sense, replicating it in the real-time arena for social media is more challenging. In the fashion industry particularly, this more organic form of content contradicts the increasingly strict controls in place around social-media output. For many brands, content is created months in advance, and large teams and significant creative budgets are needed to produce flawless social-media content. Adam Derry, founder of creative brand-development agency ADBD, refers to this as the 'corporatisation of social media', but for many large fashion companies it has been the only way to launch their digital strategies. Derry argues that this needs to shift: 'If content is clean, hyper-controlled and consistent across all platforms, then it's so yawn. Brands need to get to this raw, almost vulnerable place now in order to stay relevant' (Arthur, 2015).

Aside from the myriad of editors and bloggers using content-sharing sites, best-practice examples in the fashion context come from large luxury houses such as Valentino, which frequently showcase behind-the-scenes images from the show-room, offering sneak peeks of the collection, which is unexpected from a traditional and polished luxury brand. Similarly, Burberry used Snapchat at its fashion show in Los Angeles in April 2015 as a means of revealing different viewpoints from the event, and at London Fashion Week in September 2015 to reveal the catwalk looks the night before the show. Burberry was also one of the first fashion brands to use Periscope, the Twitter-owned competitor to Snapchat. Rather than

the high production quality seen on YouTube, Instagram and even Vine, the recent broadcasting applications rank access over quality. For fashion brands, there is also a far lower barrier to entry than traditional live-streaming, which involves significant budgets. At the time of writing this research, Periscope and Meerkat are already used by Red Bull, Starbucks, Spotify and CNN. The advantage of these broadcasting channels is in their short-lived nature: Snapchat posts can be seen for three to ten seconds or at most 24 hours; Periscope live streams are only accessible in the moment or at most for 24 hours afterwards. WGSN's Rachel Arthur suggests that this 'blink-and-you-miss-it' effect is an appealing factor for content strategists who are worried that a product is not quite as detail-oriented as it might have been.

If content becomes unedited and unscripted as discussed above, the next step could be integrating more interactive formats into marketing communications. The live-streaming apps, for instance, allow anyone to make a comment or ask questions, and at the time of writing this research, a number of media companies are already using them to conduct interviews with audiences. Similar interaction could be applicable for brands. This could create significant opportunities for instant-response campaigns, making the audience part of the story and going off-script. Adam Blazer (quoted in Arthur, 2015), co-founder and CEO of live-streaming app Livit, argues that the future lies in interaction:

In terms of content creation and distribution trends, that's where we're moving. There's convergence towards more dynamic interaction with users. There's novelty around watching live. Consumers are very excited when they know it's real-time, and that's even more the case when they can feel they're part of the process.

The aim of this section was to provide an overview of the social-media applications predominantly used in the fashion industry, and to evaluate their current and expected roles in marketing communications in the fashion industry.

In the empirical part of this research, the analysis is restricted to three groups of Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) taxonomy as previously discussed: social-networking sites, blogs and microblogs, and contentsharing sites, which are extensively used by fashion companies and amongst consumers within the fashion industry. Furthermore, the largest platform in each group is analysed in more detail, namely Facebook (social-networking sites), Twitter (blogs and microblogs) and Instagram (content-sharing sites).

3.3.4 Studying technology acceptance

Recent research shows that the marketing budgets directed towards social media are constantly growing, suggesting that companies are increasingly interested in establishing a presence in social media, interacting with consumers and leveraging their voices for a greater marketing impact (e.g. Edelman, 2010; Lipsman et al., 2012; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). This shift towards social media can be explained by several factors (Gillin, 2007; Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008; Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012):

- Declining response rates. Consumers increasingly ignore conventional online marketing such as banners and e-mail advertisements due to disinterest and spam.
- Technology developments. The developing IT infrastructures, new digital tools, and an increasing online population contribute to social-media attractiveness.
- Demographic shifts. Consumers, especially younger generations, have moved online and the use of traditional media channels has declined.
- Customer preference. Trust is important on the Internet and people trust their friends and other Internet users more than firms or organisations.

– Low cost. A viral social-media campaign can produce many more engaged customers than a print or TV campaign, at a much lower cost.

Considering these trends and the substantial marketing potential offered by social media, there is a strong case for the need for companies to learn how consumers adopt new technologies and how social-media platforms emerge. Here the ‘Technology Acceptance Model’ (TAM) (Davis, 1989), derived from the ‘Theory of Reasoned Action’ (TRA) (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), has underpinned research into organisational acceptance of technology, and more recently provided the framework for understanding consumer acceptance of technology-based products and services, such as social media. Although the present study takes a company perspective, it is essential to understand user behaviour in implementing social-media strategy. While the TAM has limited application for the present study, it is introduced here as a model that has been frequently used in the field to understand technology acceptance; as such, it might provide insights into the benefits that companies are seeking from social media.

Technology acceptance has become a central issue in information-systems research since the TAM was first advocated by Davis in 1989. In over twenty years, the TAM has been tested, re-examined, refined and expanded in order to reflect the range of technological developments. As noted above, the TAM was adapted from the TRA (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), which proposed that peoples’ actual behaviour in specific situations was driven by behavioural intentions, which, in turn were driven by their attitude towards behaviour and subjective norms (including other peoples’ opinions, and the influence of superiors and peers). Attitude towards behaviour was driven by people’s beliefs and evaluations, whereas subjective norms were driven by normative beliefs and motivations to comply. Virtually all of the reported research has adopted a quantitative modelling approach to measure the effects of users’ beliefs (originally, ‘perceived usefulness’ and ‘perceived ease of use’ of the technology) on their attitudes towards technology, their intention to

use the technology, and actual usage of the technology. The focus has mainly been on technology-acceptance in organisations. Thus the determinant ‘perceived usefulness’ was defined in terms of a belief about how the technology would enhance job performance, and ‘perceived ease of use’ was defined in terms of a belief about how much the use would be free of mental effort (Lu et al., 2003).

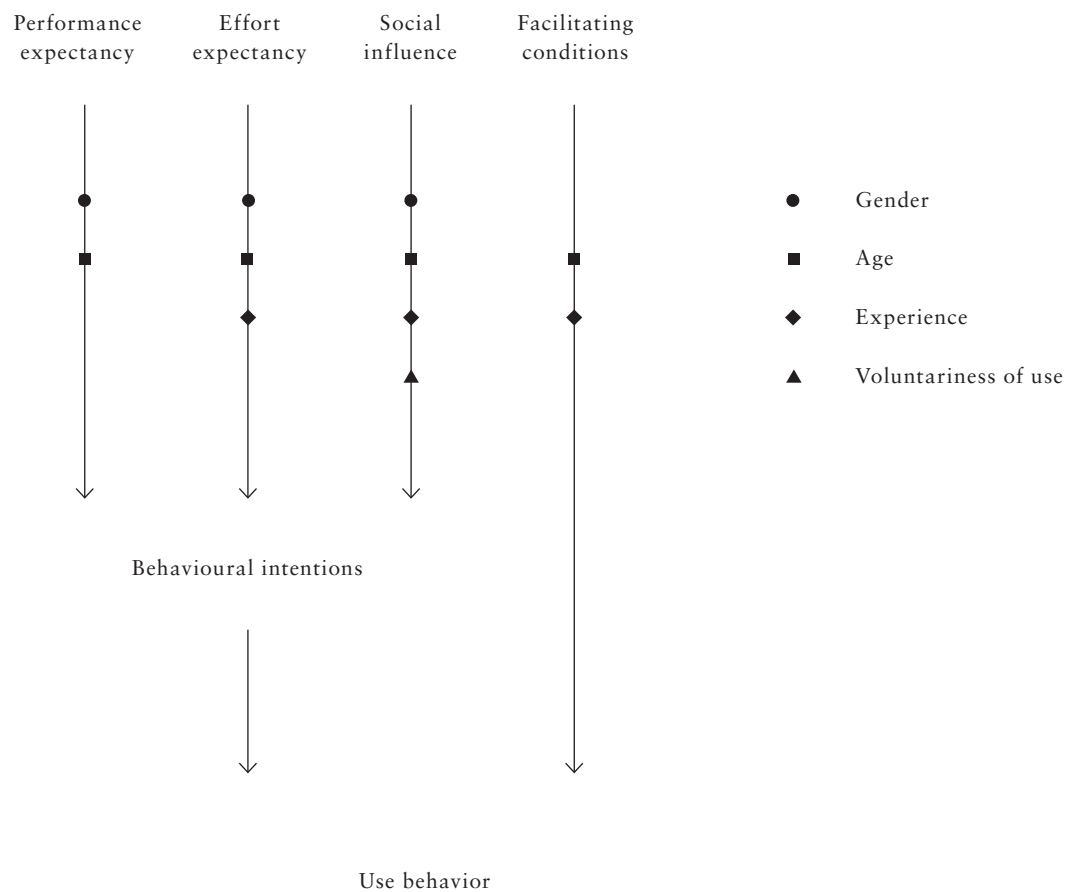
The TAM has received much academic attention; comprehensive summaries of the literature on the TAM and its adaptations can be found in, for example, Legris, Ingham and Colletette (2003), Lu et al. (2003), Han (2003), and Baron, Patterson and Harris (2006). It has gained support for both its explanatory and predictive properties. For example, Legris, Ingham and Colletette (2003: 202) conclude that TAM has proved to be a useful theoretical model in helping to understand and explain user behaviour in implementing digital technology. As Lu et al. (2003: 207) state: ‘Throughout the years, TAM has received extensive empirical support through validations, applications and replications for its power to predict use of information systems.’

It has not, however, been the only model used to attempt to explain and predict technology acceptance. Venkatesh et al. (2003) reviewed the literature on eight IT acceptance research models (TRA; TAM; motivational model; theory of planned behaviour; model combining TAM and theory of planned behaviour; model of PC utilisation; innovation diffusion theory; and social cognitive theory). By integrating elements across the eight models, they developed and empirically validated a revised version of the TAM that they called the ‘unified theory of acceptance and use of technology’ (UTAUT) (Figure 3.2). As with TAM, UTAUT is claimed to aid explanation and prediction of technology acceptance in organisations, providing: ‘a useful tool for managers needing to assess the likelihood of success for new technology introductions and helping them understand the drivers of acceptance’ (Venkatesh et al., 2003: 425–426). Hence it is worth exploring while researching the application and role of social media in marketing communications.

The features of the UTAUT model in Figure 3.2 demonstrate the adaptations, made over time, to the original TAM:

FIGURE 3.2 UTAUT MODEL

(SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM VENKATESH ET AL., 2003)



Since the mid-1980s, understanding of marketplaces for technology products and services has been guided by TAM-based models and methods, originating from information-systems research that has focused on technology acceptance within organisations (Legris, Ingham and Collette, 2003; Lu et al., 2003, Han, 2003). Proponents of such methods have acknowledged that TAM-based studies may have reached their limit in explaining technology acceptance in organisational settings. They have urged for novel approaches towards extending understanding. Baron, Patterson and Harris (2006) suggest that marketers have adapted TAMs for consumer markets, such as the market for online shopping, but it is unlikely that they can provide any greater explanation in consumer markets characterised by a seemingly more variable set of potential users of a technological product or service.

Extensive summaries of the TAM and its adaptations (as shown, for example, in UTAUT model in Figure 3.2), have concluded that the models can be applied to explain, understand and predict user behaviour with regard to information systems and technology. They have also been advocated as appropriate for consumers' technology acceptance. While being frequently used in the field, the TAM and its adaptations have limited applications within the context of this study, which is less concerned with technology's acceptance and more concerned with how companies are using it. However, the TAM and its adaptations can help to understand what benefits companies are looking for when they adopt new technologies. In this study, adopting the view of Legris, Ingham and Collette (2003), TAM was introduced as a theoretical frame in helping to understand and explore the expected benefits and motivations relating to companies' use of social media.

3.4 Research in social media

Interest in the use of social media in marketing is growing. In particular, with the launch of the recent special issues on social media in various marketing journals, the body of research is rapidly developing (e.g. Journal of Interactive Marketing’s special issue on ‘Social Media and Marketing’ in 2013 and Journal of Global Fashion Management’s special issue on ‘Social Media Marketing and Luxury Brands’ in 2014). Table 3.1 summarises the main literature in this domain and identifies the different aspects that have been studied in relation to social media.

TABLE 3.1 SUMMARY OF STUDIES ON THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

THEME	AUTHOR	CONTRIBUTION
Web 2.0 and social media	Constantinides, Lorenzo and Gómez (2008)	Provides an overview of Web 2.0 and social media, and identifies its importance as a strategic marketing tool.
	Cummins et al. (2014)	Reviews the consumer-behavior and social-network-theory literature related to the online and e-commerce context. Despite an explosion of social-media papers, more conceptual research is needed to better frame empirical investigations going forward.
	Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden (2011)	Offers a systematic way of understanding and conceptualising social media as an ecosystem of related elements involving both digital and traditional media.
	Hoffman and Novak (2012)	Provides, in the form of an editorial article, an overview of the current research agenda in social media.

	Kaplan and Haenlein (2010)	Provides a classification of social media: collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social-networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds.
	Kietzmann, et al. (2011)	Presents a framework that defines social media according to seven functional building blocks: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and group.
	Rapp et al. (2013)	Proposes a conceptual framework that offers new insights into the contagion effects of social-media use across business suppliers, retailers and consumers.
	Weinberg, et al. (2013)	Explores the role of a collaborative community as a key characteristic of social business and introduces the concept of expressive individuality.
Marketing practices on social media	Berthon, et al. (2012)	Provides five axioms to help managers understand social media and its implications for international marketing strategy.
	Dalla Pozza (2014)	Investigates customers' motivations and the decision-making process when choosing a channel in a social multichannel environment and proposes a conceptual framework of multichannel customer behaviour.
	Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin (2012)	Identifies the key functions, touch points and goals of social-media activities and provides insight into how managers can harness social media to shape consumer decision-making in predictable ways.
	Edelman (2010)	Introduces the new 'consumer-decision journey' and argues that traditional marketing strategies must be redesigned to accord with how brand relationships have changed.
	Effing and Spil (2016)	Constructs a definition for 'social-media strategy' and proposes a framework for evaluating social-media strategies, in particular their comprehensiveness and stages of maturity.
	Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching (2013)	Addresses, in the form of an editorial article, the key implications of the paradigm shift that social media have brought to marketing.

	Hodis, Sriramachandramurthy and Sashittal (2015)	Proposes a framework for segmenting Facebook users and provides practitioners with guidelines for content creation and consumer engagement on Facebook.
	Hutter, et al. (2013)	Analyses the influence of brands' social-media activities and participants' social-media involvement in the purchase-decision process of consumers.
	Kaplan and Haenlein (2011)	Provides insight into the relationship between social media and viral marketing, and illustrates the six steps executives should take in order to master social-media marketing.
	Kumar and Mirchandani (2012)	Addresses the lack of robust methodologies to measure the impact of social media and provides tangible metrics to measure the effectiveness of social-media-marketing spending and maximise the ROI of social-media campaigns.
	Kumar and Sundaram (2012)	Provides managerial insight into social-media marketing and developing concrete ROI measurements.
	Peters, et al. (2013)	Proposes a framework that covers the major elements of social media and suggests guidelines for designing appropriate social-media metrics and constructing a sensible social-media dashboard.
	Smith, Fischer and Yongjian (2012)	Proposes a general framework for comparing brand-related UGC on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube, and highlights how social-media channels and marketing strategies may influence consumer-produced brand communications.
Consumer-brand relationships on social media	Almubarak, Pervan and Johnson (2017)	Develops a conceptual understanding of the importance of brand intimacy in the context of social-media-based brand communities and offers propositions for future research.
	Chen, Fay and Qang (2011)	Examines relationships between consumer posting behaviour and marketing variables (product, price and quality) based on automobile-model data.

Chen et al. (2015)	Building on the consumer-brand relationship framework, the research examines global marketers' branding strategies and consumer engagement in social media.
Claffey and Brady (2014)	Develops and tests a model of consumer engagement in a virtual customer environment (VCE). Highlights the need for firms to carefully design and implement VCEs that support positive interaction experiences, motivate consumers to be value co-creators, and facilitate the creation of relational values.
Gensler, et al. (2013)	Introduces a framework of social media's impact on brand management and argues that consumers are becoming pivotal authors of brand stories due to new dynamic social networks.
Hamilton, Kaltcheva and Rohm (2016)	Examines the effects of social media on brand-consumer interactions and identifies conditions under which interaction satisfaction and interaction immersion create value for brands.
Heller Baird and Parasnis (2011)	Explores the shift from social media to social CRM and provides recommendations for companies to reinvent their customer relationship.
Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie (2014)	Explores the 'consumer-brand engagement' (CBE) concept by developing and validating a CBE scale in specific social-media settings. Managerial adoption of the proposed scale is expected to contribute to the development of enhanced consumer insight.
Labrecque et al. (2013)	Investigates the evolution of consumer power and its impact on consumer behaviour. Introduces the concept of 'community-based power' and argues that consumers can seize the initiative.
Malthouse, et al. (2013)	Suggests that the rise of social media is challenging the traditional notion of customer-relationship management and proposes a new framework, the 'Social CRM House'.
Mills and Plangger (2015)	Explores the role of social media for online service brands and proposes a prescriptive managerial process for their customer-relationship-management strategies on social media.

	Popp et al. (2016)	Develops an integrative framework of key drivers of consumer-brand relationships in Facebook brand pages including different targets of identification and perceived relationship investment.
	Trainor (2012)	Presents a conceptual framework extending the traditional view of CRM by incorporating social media, and suggests how this can lead to greater firm performance.
	Trainor, et al. (2014)	Examines how social-media-technology usage and customer-centric management systems contribute to customer-relationship management.
	Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014)	Discusses how social media can affect customer-brand relationships. Provides preliminary evidence on how brands use social-media channels and the expected benefits.
	VanMeter, Grisaffe, and Chonko (2015)	Proposes that attachment to social media is a distinct, measurable phenomenon that helps to explain various activities on social-media platforms, including C2C advocacy and C2B supportive communication behaviours.
Commerce on social media	Harris and Dennis (2011)	Provides an exploratory investigation into the emerging interactions between young consumers and consumer products or services on social networks. The findings suggest that recommendations from friends are influential in changing online shopping behaviour and that trust is positively associated with intention to purchase.
	Liang, et al. (2011–2012)	Summarise, in the form of an editorial article, the state of research on social commerce and note that there is no standard definition of the phenomenon in question.
	Yadav, et al. (2013)	Addresses the lack of clarity in the literature regarding the meaning and domain of social commerce and offers a definition. Develops a contingency framework for assessing the marketing potential of social commerce.
	Zhou, Zhang and Zimmermann (2012)	Provides an overview of social-commerce research and practice in light of the wide attention it has drawn in the industry. The authors propose a research framework with an integrated view of social commerce that consists of four key components: business, technology, people and information.

Luxury and social media	Chu, Kamal and Kim (2013)	Examines young social-media users' beliefs, attitudes and behavioural responses towards social-media advertising. Brand consciousness is found to have an impact on users' attitudes and consequent purchase intentions towards luxury products.
	Dhaoui (2014)	Explores the effectiveness of luxury-brand marketing and its impact on consumer engagement on Facebook. Provides guidance on how to formulate and implement effective social-media marketing strategies to leverage a luxury brand's potential.
	Heine and Berghaus (2014)	Examines the major digital luxury-brand-consumer touch points and makes recommendations on how to tackle digital channels successfully.
	Henninger, Alevizou and Oates (2017)	Analyses the practical applicability of integrated marketing communications to micro-organisations operating in the UK's fashion industry, focusing on the use of online platforms.
	Kim and Ko (2010)	Examines the impact of luxury fashion brands' social-media marketing on customer relationships and purchase intention. Findings indicate that social media are significantly effective in luxury-brand marketing.
	Kim and Ko (2012)	Examines the effects of the social-media marketing activities of luxury fashion brands on customer equity and purchase intention through a structural equation model.
	Kontu and Vecchi (2014)	Explores the use of social-media marketing in the luxury fashion industry. The findings suggest that luxury fashion companies, despite being slow to adopt digital strategies, can today offer valuable lessons to firms in other sectors too.
	Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli (2014)	Examines the concept of e-semiotics applied to luxury-brand communications, using content analysis and Perceian semiotics. Observes a shift from brand communication to product communication, and from purchase experience and context to price.

Ng (2014)	Summarises the development of social-media platforms in China and explores how luxury brands use social media to connect with Chinese consumers, analysing the case of Coach.
Okonkwo (2009)	Examines the core and scope of luxury as a business discipline, particularly in the dimension of branding within the digital context. Investigates luxury as a current management science and identifies its key drivers and their scope of integration within the Internet environment.
Phan, Thomas and Heine (2011)	Explores social media and luxury-brand management through the case of Burberry. The findings suggest that luxury fashion brands such as Burberry can avoid the dilution of their brand equity through the mass accessibility offered by social media.

The literature about social media's impact on marketing appears to be evolving, but lacks a systematic identification of the key challenges related to developing strategies to communicate with consumers in this new environment. Cummins et al. (2014) conclude that although there has been an explosion of social-media literature in the form of whitepapers, blogs, popular press publications and within the academic field, there is little doubt that research investigating the creation and sharing of information is still in its infancy. Moreover, the strategic aspect of social media needs more attention. Overall, more conceptual research is required in order to better frame empirical investigations going forward.

Table 3.1 outlines the themes and topics that have been explored in the current social-media literature. The first group, research on 'Web 2.0 and social media' consists of papers that provide an overview of Web 2.0 technologies and the evolving social-media environment. These were discussed at the beginning of the chapter (sections 3.2 and 3.3). The last group, 'luxury and social media' consists of studies that explore the applications of social media in the luxury fashion sector specifically. These were introduced in Chapter 2.

Along with these two themes, the main literature in this domain focuses on the evolving marketing practices and consumer-brand relationships on social media. These are discussed next. The discussion is divided into four areas where social media has introduced change: changes to marketing practices (3.4.1), changes to consumer-brand relationships (3.4.2), organisational changes (3.4.3), and new types of content (3.4.4). The notion of ‘social commerce’ is introduced at the end of this chapter together with brands’ motivations for using social media (section 3.6).

3.4.1 Changes to marketing practices

The changing role of information and communication technologies in marketing poses a substantial challenge to both marketing academics and practitioners (Brady, Fellenz and Brookes, 2008). Dramatic developments in digital and social media are revolutionising marketing communications, and researchers suggest that social media have fundamentally altered marketing’s ecosystem of influence (Edelman, 2010; Kotler, 2011; Kumar and Sundaram, 2012; Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012; Gensler et al., 2013; Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching, 2013). Berthon et al. (2012: 262) argue that Web 2.0 technologies have generated three fundamental changes: a shift in focus of activity from the desktop to the web, a shift in the focus of value production from the firm to the consumer, and a shift in focus of power from the firm to the consumer. A deep understanding of this change is critical since it can substantially affect the performance of firms.

Firms communicate with their customers through various media. In the past, marketing and brand managers relied on a passive one-to-many communication model such as advertising to pass their brand messages on to current and potential customers, segmented or not, through marketing efforts that allow only limited forms of feedback from the customer (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). While consumers have always appropriated and modified the firm-generated brand stories

to create their own versions, their voices were not strong and could be ignored by brand managers if they chose to do so (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; 2012; Chen, Fay and Qang, 2011). For several years, a revolution has been developing that is dramatically altering this traditional view of marketing communication (Berthon et al., 2012; Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012; Gensler et al., 2013; Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching, 2013). The foundations of marketing practices online have radically altered since Hoffman and Novak's (1996) original article outlining how organisations should interact with consumers. Furthermore, Edelman (2010) suggests that few business functions have been as profoundly disrupted by digitisation as marketing.

Adopting a wider perspective, Kotler (2011) acknowledges that by looking ahead, the emergence of a whole new marketing environment will affect the science and practice of marketing in the coming years. Marketers accordingly will have to recognise such forces as globalisation, cultural differences, brand proliferation, retail concentration, recession, environmental issues, the Internet, and notably, social media. Major pressure for changing marketing practices may come from consumers themselves. According to Kotler (2011), consumers are the ultimate 'power brokers'. Marketers have viewed consumers as choosing among brands on the basis of functional ('Marketing 1.0') and emotional ('Marketing 2.0') criteria. Within this context, word-of-mouth is becoming a growing force in shaping consumer decisions, with consumers constantly emailing, blogging and tweeting both positive and negative comments about a company or a product (Kumar, Petersen and Leone, 2007; Kozinets et al., 2010). As Kotler aptly observes (2011: 133–134), firms are increasingly swimming in a highly transparent fishbowl.

Despite the recent changes, some authors in the field argue that the principles of marketing have changed very little as a result of social media (Chen, 2001; Clauser, 2001; de Chernatony, 2001; Rubenstein and Griffiths, 2001; Rubenstein, 2002). One possible theoretical trajectory is to view social media simply as one

channel amongst many, and seek to understand the relationships as well as the different roles of the distinct channels in a multi-channel environment, in particular the contribution of each channel to brand relationships (Rowley, 2009). In the new multichannel environment, marketing communication, service and relationship building can all be delivered simultaneously.

Research suggests that adopting social media in marketing communications requires merging them with the existing channels and systems (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008; Edelman, 2010; Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012). However, as companies develop social-media strategies in the new environment, the distinct platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are too often treated as stand-alone elements rather than as part of an integrated marketing-communications strategy (Kietzmann et al., 2011). In a recent research paper Henninger et al. (2017) analyse the practical applicability of integrated marketing communications to micro-organisations operating in the UK's fashion industry, focusing specifically on the use of online platforms. Their findings show that companies today have a limited understanding of intergrated marketing comminications in the new social-media environment. Although the companies have introduced various new channels, including social media, there is a disconnect between reaching the audience, understanding their needs and linking these aspects. External factors influence the use of various communication channels, leading to further fragmentation of sent messages. More research is needed to better understand how social media can be integrated with the existing channels. Indeed, communicating with customers in the new digital environment involves using a variety of marketing-communication tools, both old and new, and targeting them in an integrated manner to ensure that the message remains focused, differentiated and relevant. In this research, the focus is not on selecting one or the other, but on integration across the distinct social-media channels.

Overall, social media have introduced new tactics and new thinking to marketing

practices (e.g. Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, 2011; Kotler, 2011; Berthon et al., 2012; Kumar and Mirchandani, 2012; Kumar and Sundaram, 2012; Gensler et al., 2013). In particular, two metaphors have gained attention in the field: the ‘consumer-decision journey’ (Edelman, 2010; Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012) and the ‘pinball metaphor’ (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching, 2013). These are introduced below.

Traditionally, marketing’s primary goal has been to reach consumers at the moments, or ‘touch points’, that influence their purchasing behaviour (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008). Before the digital revolution, the general conception among marketers was that consumers started with a wide selection of brands in mind and narrowed their choices step by step to arrive at a final selection and subsequently make purchase decisions (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1996). Companies typically used paid-media and push marketing at a few specific touch points along the decision-making process to increase awareness and ultimately encourage purchase (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011). Today, this linear ‘funnel metaphor’ fails to capture the shifting nature of consumer engagement; research by Edelman (2010) and Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin (2012) shows that rather than systematically narrowing their choices, consumers add and subtract brands from a group under consideration during an extended evaluation stage.

Edelman (2010) proposes an alternative model, the ‘consumer-decision journey’, for understanding how consumers interact with brands during purchase decisions in the social-media environment. He defines social media as unique components encountered during the consumer’s winding journey with multiple feedback loops (Edelman, 2010). After a purchase, consumers enter into an open-ended relationship with the brand, evaluating a shifting range of options and sharing their experiences online. Social media are prominent marketing channels that can reach consumers at every step of this journey, from the beginning when they are assess-

ing brands and products, to the period after the purchase, because their experience influences the brands and their advocacy inspires other consumers (Edelman, 2010; Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008).

Despite the suggested changes in the decision-making journey, consumers still want a clear brand promise and brand offerings that they value (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). Hence, the basic role of marketing remains unchanged. As suggested by Edelman (2010: 64), ‘what has changed is when – at what touch points – they are most open to influence, and how you can interact with them at those points’. In the past, companies invested extensive resources into marketing communications through traditional paid media (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). Today it is evident that touch points have evolved and traditional marketing methods no longer reach consumers in an optimal way. As a result, marketing strategies and budgets require a major revision and realignment with customers’ purchase behaviour and engagement patterns.

Another way to model the changes that social media have introduced is through the ‘pinball metaphor’. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2010) suggest that traditional marketing takes a linear and one-directional ‘bowling approach’, where a firm uses its marketing instruments (the ball) to reach and influence consumers (the pins) within mass media (the bowling alley) that function as mediators for marketing content and must be carefully attended to because they can influence the effectiveness of marketing actions. A social-media environment, however, resembles the chaotic and interactive game of pinball (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching, 2013) in which the marketing instruments (the balls) are used to reach consumers (the various targets on the machine: bumpers, kickers, and slingshots). In addition to enabling a new way of thinking, the pinball metaphor also sheds light on how value-creation processes and structures have to adapt to the new marketing environment if firms want to be perceived positively by active and highly networked consumers.

Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching (2013) point out that the implications of the shift from bowling to pinball are far-reaching, not only for marketing managers and companies, but also for the marketing discipline itself. The authors further argue that to keep in touch with the new social-media environment, scholars in every area of the marketing discipline need to understand the implications and consequences of the shift. As revealed in the literature review, the key implications include the changing nature of consumer-brand relationships, the necessary organisational adaptations, new types of content, new tactics for customer-relationship management and the invention of 'social commerce'. The remainder of this chapter discusses these changes in more detail.

3.4.2 Changes to consumer-brand relationships

Scholars suggests that social media such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter provide completely new ways for brands and consumers to interact, and have thus become important platforms for brands seeking to create customer value (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013; Rohm, Kaltcheva and Milne 2013; Labrecque, 2014). Research has shown that a brand's use of social media can result in positive outcomes such as enhanced response to brand communications (VanMeter, Grisaffe and Chonko, 2015), increased brand attachment (Gensler et al., 2013), more favourable attitudes toward the brand (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011) and its products (Wang, Yu and Wei, 2012), greater loyalty and willingness to communicate with the brand (Labrecque, 2014), and an increase in customer visit frequency and profitability (Rishika et al., 2013). More recently, Hamilton et al. (2016) have examined the effects of consumer-brand interactions on social media according to three types of customer value: customer lifetime value, customer influencer value and customer knowledge value. By examining the differential effects of consumer satisfaction and immersion in social-media brand interactions, the authors suggest that whereas interaction satisfaction positively influences both customer lifetime

value and customer influencer value, interaction immersion impacts customer influencer value and customer knowledge value. In another recent study, VanMeter, Grisaffe and Chonko (2015) examine social media as a new attachment phenomenon, positing likely predictive links to marketing-related social-media behaviours. Their results are particularly valuable in demonstrating that attachment to social media is a distinct, measurable phenomenon that helps to explain various activities on social-media platforms, including customer-to-customer (C2C) advocacy and customer-to-business (C2B) supportive communication behaviours.

Researching this emerging environment, Gensler et al. (2013) note that the dynamic, ubiquitous and often real-time interaction enabled by social media has significantly changed the landscape for brand management. Key features of this new environment are: a shift from the firm to consumers as pivotal authors of stories in the branding process; a high level of interactivity manifested in social networks of consumers and brands; and a multitude of channels and brand stories that cannot be easily coordinated (Gensler et al., 2013: 253). To organise a fragmented body of literature and identify important unsolved research questions, Gensler et al. (2013) introduce a framework of social media's impact on brand management. They argue that consumers are becoming pivotal authors of brand stories due to new dynamic networks of consumers and brands formed through social media and the easy sharing of brand experiences in such networks. To succeed in the new environment, firms increasingly need to pay attention to consumer-generated brand stories.

Similarly Kuksov, Shachar and Wang (2013) suggest that with the advent of social media, brand managers have lost their pivotal role as authors of their brands' stories. Instead, consumers, who are now empowered to share their brand stories easily and widely through social media, have gained a more important voice, which brand managers can no longer afford to ignore – even firms that decide not to actively participate in social media themselves, as Céline or Tom Ford have

famously done in the luxury fashion sector. Gensler et al. (2013) note that this emphasis on the consumer can lead to a loss of control, but that firms need to accept this, as well as the mistakes that might ensue from it. Consumer-generated brand stories interpret past or anticipated brand experiences and can be positive (e.g. a homage to a brand) but also negative (e.g. consumer complaints). While consumer-generated brand stories can appear in various formats both offline and online, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2010) found that those told through social media are much more impactful than the stories spread through traditional channels because they are digital, visible, ubiquitous, easily shared, available in real-time and dynamic.

Given that more and more brands aim to integrate social media with their marketing communications, there is urgent need to specifically delineate how branding strategies are transformed and carried out in interactive channels to facilitate consumer-brand relationships. With an exploratory attempt at analysing branded content on social media, Chen et al. (2015) examine branding strategies and consumer engagement in social media. Results show that brand personification strategies are prevalently employed on brands' Facebook pages in both graphic and textual content. In particular, textual content is effective in inducing consumer engagement (i.e., likes, shares and comments). While brand personification strategies are not new in brands' social-media marketing, the authors identify the value of these particular messages in moulding brands into active relationship partners. The results highlight the effectiveness of brand personification strategies in shaping consumers' universal mechanism, 'anthropomorphism', underlying their engagement in consumer-brand relationships. A linguistic analysis further suggests that highly engaged consumers exhibit anthropomorphic responses when they interact with brands; they treat brands as humanlike social agents and show positive emotions toward them. Taken together, the results provide empirical evidence that consumer-brand relationships are realised through brand personification strategies on social media that provoke anthropomorphism.

Social media offer significant scope for consumer engagement and brand building. A recent study by Popp et al. (2016) adds to the extant literature by developing an integrative framework of key drivers of consumer-brand relationships in Facebook brand pages, including different targets of identification and perceived relationship investment. Their empirical study confirms that consumer identification with the Facebook brand pages, identification with other users, and satisfaction with the Facebook brand page significantly influence loyalty towards the page. The perceived level of a brand's investment in the relationship with the consumer both directly influences loyalty and moderates key relationships. Overall, the results provide managerial guidance to strengthen the Facebook brand page and consumer-brand relationships by devoting resources and implementing suitable tactics. The findings highlight that a large portion of business success may be beyond managers' direct control, and is dependent on non-paying customers who use the Facebook brand page, thus influencing holistic brand meaning.

Thus it can be seen that an emerging view in the marketing literature suggests that consumers should be regarded as important participants in the creation of value, and firms are increasingly realising the importance of collaboration and 'co-creation' (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) with their customers. In particular, the on-going research on the service-dominant logic of marketing (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Arnould, 2006; Grönroos 2006a; Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Vargo, Maglio and Akaka, 2008) emphasises the consumer role in the co-creation of value. It is argued that, in the process of value co-creation, consumers (as well as firms and organisations) act as resource integrators (Arnould, Price and Malshe, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2004), and that value is centred on the experiences of consumers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). In this context, consumers and co-consumers, viewed as operant resources, are able to contribute to value creation by integrating physical, social and cultural resources (Arnould, Price and Malshe, 2006). This collaboration with customers can span several business processes from marketing to new-product development.

Moreover, the critical role of digital and social media has been highlighted in this process of value co-creation. As Arnould, Price and Malshe (2006: 94) observe: 'enhanced by computer-mediated communication, consumer groups have a greater voice in the co-creation of value than in the more atomistic situations that prevailed in the recent past'. In this context, social media have allowed marketers to harness the power of consumers as active agents in the marketing process and in co-creating value. Consumers are adopting increasingly active roles in co-creating marketing content with companies and their respective brands (Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden, 2011). In turn, they are looking to develop social-media marketing programmes and campaigns to reach the increasingly active consumers.

The literature recognises the importance of stories and storytelling for brands (Brown, Kozinets and Sherry, 2003; Escalas, 2004; Woodside, Sood and Miller, 2008). These stories are not only created by the companies, but consumers are increasingly becoming pivotal authors of brand stories in the new social-media environment. As noted by Gensler et al. (2013) and cited above, firms need to pay attention to consumer-generated brand stories in order to succeed in the new environment. In the past, the story content, production and distribution were dominated by the brand owner (Brown, Kozinets and Sherry, 2003), but this has changed due to the emergence of social media that enable the user-generated brand content discussed in the previous sections (Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012). Social media include discussion forums, blogs, social platforms and video-, photo- and news-sharing sites that provide 'networks', 'relations' and 'interactions' – the three ingredients central to co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Thus it is inevitable that the social media, with their opportunities for networks, relations and interactions between brands and consumers, result in co-creation (Deighton and Kornfeld, 2009). When brands and consumers co-create brand stories, owners do not have complete control of their brands (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010) because consumer-generated brand stories can spread as rapidly as those created by companies (Muñiz and Schau, 2007).

Related to the co-creation theme in the context of social media is the notion of ‘consumer empowerment’. Consumers today connect with brands in fundamentally new ways, often through media channels that are beyond the organisation’s control (Edelman, 2010). While the Internet has changed the way consumers engage with brands, it is also transforming the economics and methodologies of marketing communications, making obsolete many of the traditional strategies and structures (Kotler, 2011; Berthon et al., 2012; Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012). Research suggests that with the rise of social media, marketing communication has been democratised, and the power has shifted from those in marketing to the individuals and communities that create and consume content on social media and redistribute it across a variety of channels (Edelman, 2010; Berthon et al., 2012; Gensler et al., 2013; Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching, 2013; Labrecque et al., 2013).

Today, communication about brands happens with or without permission from the firms in question. This shift in power from marketers to consumers is addressed in ‘consumer-empowerment theory’ (Wathieu et al., 2002; Pires, Stanton and Rita, 2006). Arguing that the increasing use of digital technologies is shifting market power from suppliers to consumers, the ensuing consumer empowerment is presented as an unintended consequence of marketing (Pires, Stanton and Rita, 2006). Consumer-empowerment theory provides an insightful perspective on consumer perceptions of control and conditions, which determine the experience of empowerment.

Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching (2013) suggest that there are two major differences reflecting the change in consumer power that have been associated with the rise of social media: the increased active participation and the strong level of networked interconnectedness. As a result, consumers have gained much more power than they had in the traditional environment, which shapes their behaviour in the market place. Labrecque et al. (2013) provide an

in-depth investigation into the evolution of consumer power and its impact on consumer behaviour. They suggest that the empowered consumers no longer passively receive messages, but actively participate via social media by sharing brand and product experiences with their friends via status updates or even filmed reviews. Such consumer actions are immediate and often visible to a large community of consumers; they can change the intensity and even meaning of the original message. Moreover, Labrecque et al. (2013) introduce the concept of ‘community-based power’ and argue that consumers can seize the initiative.

In the context of fashion, this shift in power has resulted in the emergence of new fashion influencers (Barnes, 2014) and profoundly disrupted the industry, as discussed in the previous chapter. There has been a shift in power from the trade papers and editors that once exclusively covered the runway shows to the individuals and consumers who engage with brands, and with each other, through a myriad of social media. Hence it is particularly important to study the role of social media and the new communication practices in the fashion industry. There is limited academic research in this area, and the present study aims to address this gap in knowledge.

3.4.3 Organisational changes

Social media can be utilised by a single individual, such as a social-media manager, but are mostly embedded within an array of organisational activities (Peters et al., 2013). Although it is clear that social media are powerful and ubiquitous (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011) many firms have not yet allocated substantial budgets for learning how to use them effectively in marketing, and nor has academic research shed much light on the organisational adaptations required for success in the social-media environment.

Social media, by their nature, enable broad communication and collaboration (Li and Bernoff, 2008). They can facilitate organisations to tap into the collective intelligence, creativity and passion of employees, of customers and of partners for practically every important business decision (Bradley and McDonald, 2011) and they help improve organisational productivity throughout the value chain (Chui et al., 2012). Social-media applications are transforming the ways in which companies carry out many processes, such as product development, marketing, sales, customer service, staffing and change management.

Rapp et al. (2013) provide initial insight into this complex issue and demonstrate how social media increasingly touch every part of the business. They propose a contagion effect of social media use across business suppliers, retailers and consumers. After developing and validating social-media usage measures at three levels – supplier, retailer and customer – the authors test social-media contagion effects and their ultimate impact on multiple performance measures. The conceptual framework and empirical results offer new information on the contagion effects of social-media usage across the channel of distribution as well as important social influence mechanisms that enhance these effects. Consistent with the predictions, social media use positively contributes to brand performance, retailer performance and consumer-retailer loyalty. Also, the effect of supplier social media usage on retailer social media usage and in turn on customer social-media usage is moderated by brand reputation and service ambidexterity. With the ever-increasing growth and adoption of social-media applications and similar technologies, this research provides a framework to promote usage by supply-channel partners that ultimately influences performance-related outcomes.

Although the number of companies using collaborative technologies is increasing, a recent survey by Gartner (2013) found that 90% of collaborative-technology initiatives fail because they follow a worst-practice approach of ‘provide and pray’ (i.e., provide a social technology and pray that something good comes of it).

The most common barrier to success is the lack of a compelling purpose for using a collaboration tool. At the present time, there are many more questions than answers with respect to the best ways in which an enterprise should integrate, or adapt to, the relatively new phenomenon of social media.

Two recent studies shed initial light on this far-reaching and complex matter. Weinberg et al. (2013) focus on the concept of 'social business' and offer arguments for transforming organisations into such social businesses, stressing the benefits achieved when firms substitute silo-type structures with more cross-silo collaboration, and when employees are enabled to display expressive individuality. The authors illustrate their ideas by referring to Dell's transformation towards a social business, which included the 'social-media accreditation' of a large number of employees and the development and execution of new metrics (Weinberg et al., 2013). Similarly, Malthouse et al. (2013) examine the role of organisational elements for mastering the challenges that social media bring, stressing the need for an empowered culture and skilled employees, among other things. Those wide-ranging organisational implications of social media can guide firms that outsource their social-media activities to agencies along their way to becoming strong independent social-media players, and allocating resources to engage effectively with social media (Malthouse et al., 2013).

Although both academics and practitioners are learning more about the organisational processes and adaptations required for success in the social-media environment, consensus is yet to form on how responsibility for social media should be allocated within organisations, how social-media activities should be funded and managed, and what broader changes with regard to structures, processes, leadership, training and culture are needed to harness the potential of this transformative force (Weinberg et al., 2013). Organisations are calling out for guidance in developing an approach and a set of coordinated activities that will lead them down a path to becoming 'social'. Through case studies and key-informant interviews,

the present study explores managerial perspectives on organising social media and provides examples and guidelines on how this can be done in the context of the fashion industry. More research in this area is needed to help managers make sense of the social-media ecology and to better understand the organisational adaptations required for success in the social-media environment.

3.4.4 New types of content

Recent research raises the issue of organising content in social media. In particular, the early studies categorise social-media content and relate the different types to managerial outcomes (Kozinets et al., 2010; Berger and Milkman, 2012; De Vries, Gensler and Leeﬂang, 2012; Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson, 2012; Smith, Fischer and Yongjian, 2012; Van Noort, Voorveld and von Reijmersdal, 2012; Peters et al., 2013).

De Vries, Gensler and Leeﬂang (2012) analyse how created content drives social-media action. They characterise content along the dimensions of ‘vividness’, ‘interactivity’, ‘information’, ‘entertainment’, ‘position’ and ‘valence’. ‘Vividness’ reflects the extent to which a brand post stimulates the different senses that can be achieved by the inclusion of dynamic animations or pictures. In line with the trend towards visual social media discussed earlier (Arthur, 2013; Bautista, 2013; Schneier, 2014), images – and in particular moving images – are likely to drive more action on social media. The second dimension, ‘interactivity’, is characterised by two-way communication between companies and customers, as well as between customers themselves, as noted by e.g. Hoffman and Novak (1996), cited above. Content differs in the degree of interactivity; a brand post with only text is not at all interactive, while a link to a website is more interactive since users can click on the link. Since the objective of brand posts is to motivate brand fans to react (i.e. liking and commenting), higher degrees of interactivity will generate

more likes and comments. Moreover, the search for ‘information’ and ‘entertainment’ explains why consumers engage with brands’ activity on social media. If a post contains information about the brand or product, or is entertaining, the consumer’s motivations to participate or engage with the brand are met, which leads to more positive attitudes toward the posted content, thus resulting in higher popularity. ‘Position’ refers to the position of a post in a social-media feed. Posts are organised in the feed with the most recent ones on top and older ones farther down in the feed. Advertising research shows that the higher the position of an ad on a website, the more attention will be paid to it (De Vries, Gensler and Leeflang, 2012). Similarly on social media, the posts appearing on the top receive the most attention. Finally, ‘valence’ refers to users’ positive, neutral or negative comments on brand posts.

The results of the analysis by De Vries, Gensler and Leeflang (2012) show that the five dimensions of characteristics asymmetrically influence the number of likes and comments. The authors provide a number of managerial implications based on their findings. Firstly, they suggest that managers who operate brand pages can be guided by the findings with regards to deciding which characteristics or content to place at brand posts. For example, when managers aim to enhance the number of likes, they can place a highly vivid or a medium-interactive brand post such as a video or a contest. Also, the longer a brand post remains at the top of the feed the greater the number of likes. Moreover, results indicate that users are influenced by each other: the share of positive comments on a brand post enhances its attractiveness, which may in turn lead to an increasing number of likes. Managers who specifically want to enhance the number of comments should post a highly interactive content, such as a question. Moreover, the longer the post remains at the top of the brand page, the greater the number of comments. Finally, compared to neutral comments, both positive and negative comments have increase the number of comments. Probably positive and negative comments enhance a general interest in the brand post, which leads to more commenting. For managers, this is an

important finding because it indicates that negative comments are not necessarily bad. Brand fans may feel part of the community because they engage in a vivid discussion with both positive and negative arguments.

Van Noort, Voorveld and von Reijmersdal (2012) also highlight the importance of interactive content on diverse cognitive, affective and behavioural outcomes. Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson (2012) extend these findings to YouTube videos. They find that entertainment and educational character drive the popularity and the ratings of videos. Berger and Milkman (2012) investigate which characteristics cause online content to go viral. Unlike other scholars, they argue that content is more likely to spread when it reflects anxiety, anger or awe, but even more so when it is practically useful or surprising. Accordingly, Berger and Milkman (2012) suggest that the valence of content alone is not sufficient to explain its viral spin.

Kozinets et al. (2010) categorise content in the context of online word-of-mouth. They identify four different approaches to social-media communication strategies. These mirror different narrative styles, resulting in different qualities of content: 'evaluation', 'explanation', 'endorsement' and 'embracing'. Each is influenced by character narrative, communications forum, communal norms and the nature of the marketing promotion. 'Evaluation' and 'explanation' narratives are congruent with communally oriented communicators who are part of caring and sharing communities. Alternatively, 'embracing' or 'endorsement' narratives fit with an individualist communicator participating in a community favourable to the marketplace. Kozinets et al. (2010) suggest that managers need to attune the form of promotion itself to the characteristics of the WOM environment. 'Hard-sell' offers that are straight-forward and product-focused lend themselves to narrative strategies of explanation and evaluation, while embracing and endorsing narratives are congruent with 'soft-sell', long-term brand-building campaigns. Each of these qualitative styles alters original marketing messages in a very distinct but

systematic way, depending on the forum, the communal norms and the nature of the original marketing message. In this research, the hard-sell offer refers to a product post, and a soft-sell message refers to brand-building and storytelling.

More recently, Peters et al. (2013) have argued that content may have three sufficiently distinct aspects. These are (1) ‘content quality’, subsuming content characteristics (e.g., interactivity, vividness), content domain (e.g., education, entertainment, information), and narrative styles; (2) ‘content valence’, subsuming emotions (e.g., anger, anxiety, joy) and tonality (e.g., positive, negative); and (3) ‘content volume’, subsuming counts and volumes. Taken together, more informative metrics on content often require additional goal-oriented data collection or advanced computational procedures.

While the recent social-media literature discusses the various types of content in social media (Peters et al., 2013), the relationships between the distinct social-media platforms and the types of content have not been studied. As highlighted by Yadav et al. (2013), the issues related to platform-specific differences are noted but not discussed in detail. Smith, Fischer and Yongjian (2012) provide some early evidence in this important area by studying the differences in brand-related user-generated content between Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Based on a content analysis of 600 UGC posts for two fashion retail brands (Lululemon and American Apparel), the authors propose a general framework for comparing brand-related UGC on different platforms, and highlight how social-media channels and marketing strategies may influence consumer-produced brand communications.

Given the substantial variation in content and functionality that exists across platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest, more research is needed on the role played by inter-platform differences. Specifically, to gain more definitive insights about the effects of product and platform characteristics, field experiments and empirical evidence are needed, which might be conducted in co-

operation with companies, and ideally also the major social-networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter. This research addresses this gap in knowledge by researching three case studies of fashion companies in the real-life context. The aim is to develop close relationships with the case companies and key informants and provide in-depth insights into how they have developed social-media strategy and how content is tailored according to the nature of the different platforms.

3.4.5 Gap in knowledge: Strategic use of social media

Despite the growing importance of social media amongst both practitioners and academics, the literature review reveals a gap in knowledge in developing a conceptual understanding of the strategic use of social media from the managerial perspective. Although there has been an explosion of social-media literature in the form of whitepapers, blogs, popular press publications and within the academic field, there is little doubt that conceptual research is needed to better frame empirical investigations going forward and that there is a literature gap regarding social-media strategy.

Despite this evident gap in knowledge, the literature review suggests that the strategic aspect of social media is a rapidly growing field of interest. The early research in this topical area consists of articles primarily focused on the identification of specific social-media-related strategies – not strategies for social media specifically. These articles focus on strategic decisions made by companies to improve their online presence. Some of these articles are general in nature, focusing on topics like the changing character of cyber-marketing strategies (Ranchhod, 2004), management of social interactions on e-commerce platforms (Qu et al., 2013), and developing strategies for customer-relationship management on social media (Heller Baird and Parasnis, 2011; Trainor, 2012; Malthouse et al., 2013; Trainor et al., 2014). While these studies offer results that have implications for

online marketing, other articles consider more specific strategic topics. For example, researchers have looked at the collection of online data to determine the value of customers (Chen et al., 2011), as discussed earlier in this chapter. Other articles have investigated the strategies associated with online shopping and social media (Harris and Dennis, 2011; Yadav et al., 2013; Zhou, Zhang and Zimmermann, 2012). Overall, more research concerning the use of online analytics and the design and management of e-commerce platforms is needed.

Furthermore, the literature review indicates a lack of effective frameworks for developing, analysing and comparing social-media strategies. Some early classification frameworks exist to categorise social-media platforms and practices (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden, 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011) and some articles provide us with pointers for specific social-media strategies (Kumar and Sundaram, 2012; Peters et. al., 2013), as discussed earlier in this chapter. More recently, Effing and Spil (2016) propose a framework for evaluating social-media strategies, in particular the stages of maturity of existing strategies. The authors propose a framework consisting of seven key elements grouped into the three levels of maturity of a social-media strategy: 'initiation', 'diffusion' and 'maturity'. Initiation level includes the elements of 'target audience' and 'channel choice', while diffusion level includes 'goals', 'resources' and 'policies'. Maturity stage adds the elements of 'monitoring' and 'content activities'. Out of the nine organisations studied by Effing and Spil (2016), only three were at the maturity level. Although the academic literature notes the importance of 'monitoring', the findings of Effing and Spil (2016) show that there is need for more attention in practice.

Overall, the literature review revealed increasing attention to the strategic aspects of social media, but showed that there is a lack of standard methods for evaluating professional social-media practices and underlying strategies. The current insights mainly rely on untested theories and only a few exploratory case studies have

been conducted to date. Researchers have only just started to give their attention to the subject of ‘social-media strategy’ as such. Effing and Spil (2016) conclude that the studies conducted so far were too exploratory to establish theory. To address this gap, this study aims to build an empirically grounded framework that enables an understanding, explanation and description of the process of designing a social-media strategy.

Although the literature in this domain is not well developed, the analysis of existing work in the field led to the identification of initial patterns regarding the importance of certain elements of social-media strategy development. Based on the findings of the review, a list of initial factors of social-media strategy was derived. These key elements are *motivations*, *channel strategy* and the types of *content*. Each of these factors will be further described in Chapter 4, which introduces a preliminary framework for the study. The preliminary framework is constructed by evaluating the initial factors deriving from the literature review and used as a comparative lens for the case studies. In the empirical part of the research, how these preliminary factors are deployed by the case studies will be explored.

Before elaborating further upon the findings from the literature review, it is necessary to construct a definition of social-media strategy. To do that it is important to explore a few definitions of the underlying terms. First, social media is defined as ‘a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content’ (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 61), as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Second, this research is contextualised in the domain of strategic marketing, which according to Varadarajan (2010: 126) encompasses the ‘study of organizational, inter-organizational and environmental phenomena concerned with (1) the behavior of organizations in the marketplace in their interactions with consumers, customers, competitors and other external constituencies, in the context of the creation, communication and delivery of products that offer

value to customers in exchanges with organizations, and (2) the general management responsibilities associated with the boundary spanning role of the marketing function in organizations.’ Varadarajan (2010) further proposes a definition for marketing strategy. At the broadest level, ‘marketing strategy can be defined as an organization’s ‘integrated pattern of decisions that specify its crucial choices concerning products, markets, marketing activities and marketing resources in the creation, communication and/or delivery of products that offer value to customers in exchanges with the organization and thereby enables the organization to achieve specific objectives’ (Varadarajan, 2010: 126). Social media use, however, is considered an explicit part of a firm’s strategic decision making, based on digital resources, more specifically a group of Internet-based applications as highlighted above by Kaplan and Hanlein (2010). It is therefore deemed useful to explore the more recent, although less established, definitions of ‘digital business strategy’ too.

Bharadwaj, El Sawy, Pavlou and Venkatraman (2013: 472) define digital business strategy as ‘an organisational strategy formulated and executed by leveraging digital resources to create differential value’. The definition of ‘information strategy’ as suggested by e.g. Henfridsson and Lind (2014) does not differ greatly: ‘a process of goal-directed activity intended to realize a strategy for using information systems in an organization’. Moreover, due to the lack of standard definitions and methods for evaluating professional social-media practices and underlying strategies, Effing and Spil (2016: 2) recently developed a definition for ‘social-media strategy’ specifically. They stress the importance of goals and objectives of social-media practices and describe strategy formulation in a social-media context as:

a goal-directed planning process for creating user-generated content, driven by a group of Internet applications, to create a unique and valuable competitive position.

For the purposes of this research, the recent definition by Effing and Spil (2016) is adopted. The focus is on the ‘goal-oriented planning process’ that is at the heart of the definition. In order to be of value, social media should have a clear purpose. In the context of this research, the goal-directed planning process starts from companies’ motivations for using social media. Before elaborating further on the motivations, the concept of ‘hierarchy of effects’ is considered as a way of exploring the objectives and motivations for using social media.

3.5 Hierarchy-of-effects models

The concept of ‘hierarchy of effects’ has been advocated in advertising for over a hundred years (Howard and Barry, 1990; Barry, 2002). Although the model was primarily developed around advertising, research suggests that most objectives in marketing communications are built on one or another hierarchy-of-effects model (Moriarty, 1983). While the literature review identified a lack of theoretical frameworks in researching social media from the company perspective, the hierarchy-of-effects models are considered as a potential way of exploring the objectives and use of social media in marketing communications. These are reviewed below.

Because the hierarchy-of-effects notion has been around for a century, and continues to be a major guideline for advertising practice and research, its value to marketing communication is continually questioned (Moriarty, 1983; Howard and Barry, 1990; Barry, 2002). The term ‘hierarchy’ refers to a graded or ranked series (Barry, 2002). The hierarchy model as initially presented implied that sales prospects could only be sold once the salesman got the prospect’s ‘attention’, ‘interest’ and ‘desire’. The great problem of salesmanship is thus to master this fact, so that the customer, realising that his best interests are being served, is persuaded to make a purchase.

The original framework in the field is termed AIDA, which stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. The model originated with Elmo St Lewis, who created the AID mode (Attention–Interest–Desire) in the late 1800s and added the final step to form AIDA (Attention–Interest–Desire–Action) in the early 1900s (Strong, 1925). St Lewis theorised that sales people, in order to be successful, had to attract attention (cognition), maintain interest and create desire (affect), and consequently ‘get action’ (conation). Sheldon (1911) included ‘permanent satisfaction’ as a fifth step, forming a modified model named AIDAS. This step was an early treatment of the later recognised importance of post-purchase activities.

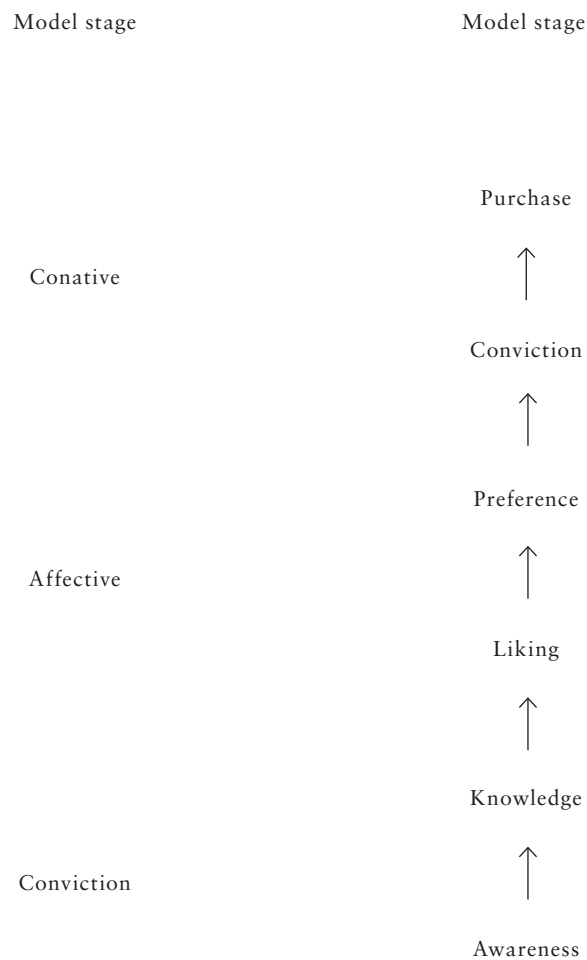
The basic stages of the AIDA model were advocated by a majority of advertising scholars and practitioners for over 100 years after its publication. The traditional hierarchy was directly or indirectly supported by many scholars, including Scott (1903, 1908), Hall (1915), Adams (1916), Eastman (1916), Ramsay (1921), Kitson (1921), Osborn (1922), Starch (1923), Jenkins (1935), Bedell (1940), and Devoe (1956). These early writers played a key role in shaping the minds of advertising and selling practitioners and researchers. While the authors of many of these early models merely changed the nomenclature of their predecessors or added or deleted stages, and while there was no empirical validation of any kind, the way to a development of effective marketing communications was clearly thought to be the route of cognition, affect and conation, and only in that order.

Indeed, the advocates of the traditional hierarchy framework claim that audiences of advertising and other marketing communications respond to those messages in a very ordered way: cognitively (thinking) first, affectively (feeling) second, and conatively (doing) third. The most often-cited hierarchy model was posited by Lavidge and Steiner (1961) and is presented in Figure 3.3. In Lavidge and Steiner’s view, advertising was an investment in a long-term process that moved consumers over time through a variety of stair-step stages, beginning with product ‘unawareness’ and moving ultimately to actual purchase. Their view of the stages

of the advertising hierarchy is implicitly a causal one. However, by recognising that advertising is essentially a long-term process, the model suggests that a causal influence between stages must occur only in the long run, although it may not be found in the short run. The argument that a favourable response at one step is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for a favourable response at the next step, is central to the idea of advertising hierarchy-of-effects models to this day (Preston, 1982).

FIGURE 3.3 HIERARCHY-OF-EFFECTS MODEL

(SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM LAVIDGE AND STEINER, 1961)



Further evidence that the cognition–affect–conation ordering process was popular came in the form of Rogers’ (2003) adoption model, which was discussed in the previous chapter in the context of fashion cycles. Rogers proposed that consumers followed a hierarchical process of awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption in the new product-adoption process. This model was further expanded upon by Robertson (1971) when he proposed an awareness, comprehension, attitude, legitimisation, trial and adoption hierarchy.

One of the more established versions of hierarchy of effects models is DAGMAR (Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results), which shows stages in the effect of advertising on a consumer, for example awareness, comprehension, conviction and action (Colley, 1961). Moreover Anderson, Barry and Johnson (1975) relied on the hierarchy theories of Lavidge and Steiner (1961) and Colley’s (1961) DAGMAR model in developing their ROA (Return on Advertising) model. In that model, they attempted to distinguish between sales effects and communicative effects of advertising campaigns, while noting that it is difficult for advertisers to distinguish between sales and communication effects in the planning process. Although these models were primarily developed around advertising, there is potential for exploring the objectives for social-media strategy, and in particular, for developing methods and practices for measuring its effectiveness.

While there is little disagreement among researchers regarding the importance of the three stages of the hierarchy, there has been significant disagreement regarding the order of the three stages (Barry, 2002). This has been the area of the most intense criticism and debate concerning the hierarchy of effects. In their review and critique of the advertising hierarchy, Barry and Howard (1990) considered five alternative orders for the hierarchy. In addition to the traditional cognition–affect–conation model, they investigate the following additional five models:

- cognition–conation–affect
- affect–conation–cognition
- conation–affect–cognition
- conation–cognition–affect
- affect–cognition–conation

Researching these further, Barry and Howard (1990) dismiss the conation–affect–cognition and the conation–cognition–affect models because of the lack of likelihood that advertising first affects behaviour without any prior cognition or affect, no matter how little. The researchers present the criticisms of the remaining four model sequences and state: ‘On a theoretical (or empirical) level it appears that there are no clear grounds to dismiss any of the four (remaining) models noted above. On a practical level, the value of the debate is unclear’ (Barry and Howard, 1990: 9).

Weilbacher (2001) takes part in the debate, suggesting that advertising causes a hierarchy of effects and further implies that it is advertising alone that is responsible for the hierarchy. Barry (2002) disagrees, arguing that there is no literature to support either of these two suppositions. He contends that even from the time of the earliest hierarchy model (AID and not AIDA), no proponent has ever suggested that advertising causes cognition, affect and conation. What the model says, and has said for a century, is that sales, advertising and other marketing communications combined have some affect on the behaviour of prospects and customers. According to Barry (2002), few academics or practitioners believe that advertising actually causes behaviour without the aid of other marketing-mix and communications-mix variables.

Although it is true that most hierarchy research focuses on advertising, no research has suggested that it is relevant only for advertising and not for other marketing-communications tactics. In fact, the goal of all marketing communications is persuasion (to pay attention and learn; to change or solidify attitudes; to do

something that will ultimately lead to purchase). Barry (2002) suggests that all marketers send information to customers and prospects in the hope of persuading them to do something. In most cases, consumers have to process (carefully or not) that information, value that information (positively or negatively), and then behave (or not) in some fashion.

In spite of the criticisms of Weilbacher (2001), Barry (2002) and others, the hierarchy of effects remains important to both the practitioner and academic communities. The hierarchy framework has its limitations just like any other model that has been developed to explain dimensions of business or human behaviour, but it is appealing because it is simple, intuitive and very logical. It makes sense to posit that before people consume most goods and services, they have some information about these goods and services and form some attitude, no matter how weak that attitude or how quickly it is formed. And it makes intuitive sense to say that all prior experiences impact on how the information is processed and how the attitudes are formed.

Barry (2002) suggests that four steps are needed in order to better understand marketing communications: (1) encourage and engage in practitioner and academic collaboration; (2) test different temporal sequences of the hierarchy model; (3) devise significantly better alternatives to the hierarchy if we continue to dislike what the model does or does not tell us about how advertising works; and (4) keep the hierarchy model as a managerial guideline. Adopting this view, the hierarchy of effects, while originally developed around advertising, is deemed a useful framework for the present study, which aims to develop conceptual understanding in the role of social media in marketing communications, and managerial guidelines to building a social-media strategy. In particular, the hierarchy models are deemed useful in researching the role of motivations in this process. The steps in the hierarchy framework are considered as a way of exploring the objectives and motivations for using social media. These are investigated below.

3.6 Brands' motivations for using social media

Despite the numerous social-media channels and technologies available, many brands mismanage the opportunities created by the increased consumer engagement with social media (Porter et al., 2011; Berthon et al., 2012; Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012; Claffey and Brady, 2014). Although academics have begun to invest considerable effort in understanding why consumers use social media (e.g. Dwyer, 2007; Cheung, Lee and Rabjohn, 2008; Dennis et al., 2009; Mollen and Wilson, 2010; Blank and Reisdorf, 2012; Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Chu and Kim, 2011; Chu, Kamal and Kim, 2013; Dalla Pozza, 2014; Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014), much less research exists on the motivations of companies.

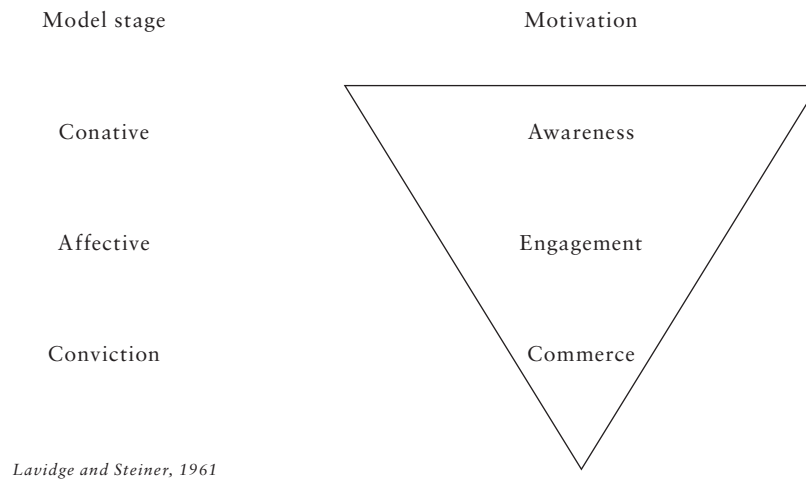
Early studies of online communities have tried to explain why firms may be interested in social media. Kozinets (2002) proposes two motives for this interest in online brand communities: (1) word-of-mouth (WOM) and (2) market research. Indeed, the emergence of internet-based media has facilitated the development of 'electronic word-of-mouth' (eWOM) (Chu and Kim, 2011), which occurs on various online channels, such as blogs, forums, virtual communities and social networks (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Dwyer, 2007; Kumar, Petersen and Leone, 2007; Chen, Fay and Qang, 2011). In particular, social media provides ideal tools for eWOM, since users freely create and spread brand-related information to their friends and followers across platforms. Second, because social media provide new opportunities for consumer interaction, they also open up new possibilities for marketing research to get close to consumers and collect information about their preferences, desires and needs (Kozinets, 2002). For example, Facebook offers very detailed analytics that allow marketers to gain insight into consumer demographics, preferences and online behaviour.

In 2008, Constantinides, Lorenzo and Gómez provided one of the first appraisals of the strategic issues around social media and particularly its position in relation

to marketing-communications strategy. The authors proposed two main strategies: using the social media in a passive way (as a channel of listening to the voice of the customer) or as an active marketing communications tool. Three motives were further identified for the active strategy: (1) engaging social media as public-relations and direct-marketing tools; (2) engaging social-media personalities for customer influence; and (3) engaging social media for personalising the customer's online experience. While the three categories presented by Constantinides, Lorenzo and Gómez (2008) are still partly relevant, the social-media environment has developed greatly since 2008. For example, corporate blogs, which were at the centre of the above strategies by Constantinides and colleagues, have lost some of their importance, while visual social media such as Instagram and Snapchat have become influential channels for marketing communications. As the field has emerged, the methodologies, theories and their application have evolved considerably, and a new categorisation is needed to explore firms' motivations in the empirical part of this research.

Replicating the three-step structure of the traditional cognition–affect–conation model (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961), propositions of consequent studies on the motivations, expected benefits and objectives related to the use of social media are grouped in three major categories: awareness (cognition), engagement (affect) and commerce (conation) as illustrated in Figure 3.4. These are discussed below.

FIGURE 3.4 HIERARCHY OF MOTIVATIONS



3.6.1 Awareness

Research shows that one of the basic motivations for companies to get involved in social media is to increase brand awareness (Hutter et al., 2013). Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) note that since a large number of consumers are already engaging with social media, a firm's presence on those networks can help millions of people become familiar with the brand and the product, thus creating brand awareness.

A long stream of marketing research highlights the importance of brand awareness in consumer decision-making (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1996). Firstly, it is important that consumers think about a brand when making a purchase decision within the product category of the brand. Raising brand awareness increases the likelihood that a brand will be a part of the consideration set – the basket of brands – that

are weighed up when making a purchase decision (Baker et al., 1986). Secondly, brand awareness can influence decisions about brands in the consideration set. Studies show that consumers tend to prefer and purchase familiar and well-known brands (e.g. Roselius, 1971; Jacoby, Szybillo and Busato-Schach, 1977). Third, brand awareness influences the formation and strength of the associations making up brand image. A necessary condition for consumers to create associations with the brand is the presence of the brand in their minds. The strength of the presence, or mental node, dictates how easily different kinds of information can become attached to the brand (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2007; Hutter et al., 2013).

Research suggests that traditional tools such as radio, TV and print media have become less effective methods to reach audiences because customers are increasingly spending their time on digital and social media (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008; Edelman, 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011). Accordingly, a brand's presence on those digital channels offers a significant opportunity to build awareness. Moreover, social media provide an opportunity to raise brand awareness at a lower cost than traditional channels such as TV or print campaigns. In the empirical part of this research, the various ways to create brand awareness are explored in detail through three case studies.

A recent study by Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) found that building brand awareness and creating positive word-of-mouth are among the most important objectives for using social media. The study relied on qualitative data from personal interviews with 14 marketing managers responsible for the social-media activity of their company. More than half stated that through social media, customers have a great opportunity to become familiar with the brand. The various competitions, free gifts, and most importantly the viral effect of the messages disseminated among social-media users, makes a brand very quickly known and discussed among a wide number of users. As Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014: 335) note, 'through a well-operated fan page, it is possible to make the world

talk about you'. Social media provide tools such as Facebook's 'like' and 'share' buttons, Twitter 're-tweets' or Instagram's 'like' and 'regram' functions to encourage customers to spread the word and make the content travel. Moreover, social media provide an unparalleled platform for consumers to publicise their personal evaluations of purchased products and thus facilitate word-of-mouth communication (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Dwyer, 2007; Kumar, Petersen and Leone, 2007; Chen, Fay and Qang, 2011). Edelman (2010: 68) notes that up to 90% of marketing spend still go to advertising and retail promotions, yet the single most powerful impetus to buy is often someone else's advocacy.

While an established body of marketing literature highlights the importance of social media in creating and increasing brand awareness and facilitating word-of-mouth communication (Kumar, Petersen and Leone, 2007; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010), it is also worth considering the concept of *brand intimacy* in the context of social media. For marketers, brand intimacy is important for strengthening resistance to negative information, and enhancing positive word-of-mouth, loyalty intentions, purchase intentions and brand passion, as well as developing effective marketing strategies (Almubarak, Pervan and Johnson, 2017). Yet, the nature of brand intimacy in the context of social media remains unclear.

Literature suggests that consumers' engagement in social-media platforms involves a high rate of self-disclosure (Kozinets, 2002). In a recent study, Almubarak, Pervan and Johnson (2017) explore the relationship between self-disclosure and brand intimacy in the context of social-media-based brand communities. The authors investigate whether reciprocal factual and emotional self-disclosure can lead to brand intimacy in such a community; whether brand intimacy generates valued marketing outcomes, including attitudes, intentions and behaviours; and what external and internal factors motivate and enable reciprocal factual and emotional disclosures on social-media platforms. Almubarak et al. (2017) suggest that these disclosures vary in intimacy and goals, but there is a strong link between

self-disclosure and brand intimacy. Moreover, Almubarak et al. (2017) note that digital technology such as social media facilitate an interdependency between private and public life. The authors conclude that this leads to an expanded circle of intimacy, to the point of sharing one's inner life – feelings, experiences and thoughts – with other users, and intimacy hence turns into 'extimacy'. Extimacy is the public intimacy that takes place via online networking.

A review of the relevant literature suggests that one of the basic motivations for companies to get involved in social media is to increase brand awareness (Hutter et al., 2013; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). Companies today recognise that social media are instrumental in building and increasing brand awareness (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Hence in this research, increasing brand awareness is considered one of the basic motivations for companies to create a presence in social media. The role of brand awareness as a key motivation is further explored in the case studies.

3.6.2 *Engagement*

Along with awareness, another common objective for social-media strategy is engagement, which involves enhancing consumer involvement and growing the community of fans and followers on social-media platforms (Brodie et al., 2013; Malthouse et al., 2013; Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014). While engagement has received considerable attention across a number of academic disciplines, including social psychology and organisational behaviour, the concept has emerged in the marketing literature only relatively recently (Brodie et al., 2013). 'Consumer engagement', 'customer engagement', 'customer brand engagement', 'brand engagement' or simply 'engagement', are among the various terms given to what is essentially the same concept. Moreover, as Claffey and Brady (2014: 327) note, a diversity of interpretations of the engagement concept exists, particularly when

used to elaborate on the nature and dynamics characterising the relationship between the customer and the firm.

Mollen and Wilson (2010: 5) propose a definition of brand engagement specifically fitting the online context as ‘the cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other computermediated entities designed to communicate brand value’. More recently, Brodie et al. (2013: 107) studied consumer engagement in a virtual-brand community and highlighted it as ‘an interactive, experiential process, based on individuals’ engagement with specific objects (e.g. brands, organizations), and or other brand community members’. Their findings provide support for the work of Brodie et al. (2011) addressing the interactive, experiential nature of the engagement concept, and distinguish consumer engagement from other relational concepts, including involvement and participation. In particular, Brodie et al. (2013) highlight consumer engagement as a context-dependent, psychological state with specific levels of intensity.

Along with the broader online environment, attention has been devoted to fostering the concept of consumer engagement in a social-media context too (Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014). Practitioners and researchers from social science, management and marketing disciplines have all attempted to understand the scope of consumer engagement in the context of social media, as well as the broader context of business relationships and branding (Brodie et al., 2013). A review of the related literature reveals a multidimensional conceptualisation of consumer engagement. For example, Hollebeek (2011: 6) addresses the multidimensional nature of consumer engagement and considers it as ‘the level of a customer’s motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in brand interactions’. These dimensions are adopted in the previously cited research by Brodie et al. (2013: 107), who consider consumer engagement as a multi-dimensional concept with cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects.

Although the term ‘consumer engagement’ has been variously described in the marketing literature, few attempts have been made to systematically conceptualise this notion (Brodie et al., 2013). Claffey and Brady (2014: 327–328) provide a synthesis of current definitions of consumer engagement, particularly in a virtual environment, and identify three consistent themes that emerge from the literature. First, consumer engagement is proposed as a mental state of readiness that is associated with satisfying experiential value as well as instrumental value (Mollen and Wilson, 2010). Accordingly, consumer engagement results from both intrinsic and extrinsic motives (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Second, the consumer’s mental state of readiness is accompanied by active and sustained processing of information and knowledge exchanges (Brodie et al., 2011). In the virtual environment, these knowledge exchanges can be in the form of customer-to-customer (C2C) interactions (Libai et al., 2010; Verhoef, Reinartz and Krafft, 2010), customer-to-firm (C2F) interactions (Brodie et al., 2011) or interactions between other constituents in the marketplace (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Third, consumer engagement is described as an emotional response or affective state relating to the engagement experience (Brodie et al., 2011), which, it is suggested, play an important role in longer-term associations or affective commitment (Bowden, 2009; Mollen and Wilson, 2010). Consequences of consumer engagement can have a positive or negative valence, which may relate to loyalty, satisfaction (Bowden, 2009), emotional bonds, trust and commitment (Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek, Beatty and Morgan, 2012).

Claffey and Brady (2014) develop and test a model of consumer engagement in a virtual customer environment. Their empirical work implies the need for firms to carefully design and implement virtual customer environments that support positive interaction experiences, motivate consumers to be value co-creators, and facilitate the creation of relational values. Claffey and Brady (2014) suggest that firms must invest in infrastructure designed to allow customers to connect on more than just a transactional level. This highlights the importance of firms utilising engagement platforms to cultivate connections among members of the community, since

consumers are gratified by having their contributions to the community respected by others and also desire a sense of attachment to the community. Moreover, the findings of Claffey and Brady (2014) stress the importance of C2C relationships for increasing consumer engagement. The authors demonstrate how C2C interactions can enhance the engagement experience and the resulting participation in value co-creation. In particular, their findings suggest that consumers derive greater levels of positive emotion when engaging with other members in the virtual community than with the firm, which significantly influences their participation in value-creating activities. This finding also suggests that as relationships strengthen among members of the community, participants invest more, perceive that they receive more from the engagement experience, and continue to reinvest on any number of affective, cognitive or behavioural levels.

Mills and Plangger (2015) explore the role of social media for online service brands and propose a prescriptive managerial process for their customer-relationship management strategies on social media. The authors note that most research discussing social media for online services position it as an extension of offline customer-service activities and secondary in marketing importance to branded websites. This research, however, explores the role of social media for online service brands as a set of online communication channels that enable the development and nurturing of brand–consumer relationships and trust, particularly relevant for high-involvement services dealing with private consumer information (Mills and Plangger, 2015). Social media are further treated as a strategic means of mitigating consumer perceptions of risk of high-involvement online services, particularly those transitioning from offline to online environments. To conclude, a prescriptive managerial process for the development, management and measurement of online service brand and customer-relationship management strategies on social media is proposed.

Research shows that firms are increasingly using social media as tools to develop

and maintain durable relationships with customers (Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014). Moreover, recent studies indicate that using social media as channels for customer engagement is challenging the traditional notion of customer-relationship management (CRM) (Malthouse et al., 2013). More and more often, companies are investing in resources that integrate social-media data into their existing customer databases and customer-relationship-management (CRM) systems to develop new capabilities that foster stronger relationships with customers (Trainor, 2012). Research suggests that this merger of existing CRM systems with social-media technology has given way to a new approach to CRM that incorporates a more collaborative and network-focused approach to managing customer relationships (Greenberg, 2009; Trainor, 2012; Malthouse et al., 2013).

Reflecting this new way of developing and maintaining customer relationships, the term 'social CRM' has recently emerged into marketing parlance to represent a broad set of tools and activities enabled by social media (Greenberg, 2009). Marketing scholars have defined social CRM as the integration of customer-facing activities, including processes, systems and technologies, with emergent social-media applications to engage customers in collaborative conversations and enhance customer relationships (Greenberg, 2009; Trainor, 2012; Malthouse et al., 2013). Organisations are recognising the potential of social CRM and have made considerable investments in social CRM technology over the past few years. Trainor (2012) notes that despite the increased usage of social-media applications, sales and marketing research has yet to advance a framework that builds on the rich body of CRM literature to explain how social CRM technologies influence firm performance.

Malthouse et al. (2013) argue that social media are challenging the traditional notion of CRM, and propose a framework, the 'social CRM house', that combines foundational elements of general management (namely, strategies, people, information and metrics) with combinations of engagement and CRM processes.

Social media allow relationships to be managed on the level of the individual consumer, which is particularly important for companies that have not previously had direct relationships with customers but have only managed anonymous customer segments. Engaging consumers in such personal interactions is challenging, since there are large numbers of brands and companies striving for consumers' limited time, attention and emotional resources. In addition, with the rise of social media, the customer is no longer limited to a passive role in his or her relationship with a company (Trainor, 2012). Further to having more information, customers can easily express and distribute their opinions to large audiences, and companies are finding it increasingly difficult to manage the messages that they receive about their products and services (e.g. Gensler et al., 2013; Labrecque et al., 2013).

Trainor et al. (2014) examine how social-media usage and customer-centric management systems contribute to a firm-level capability of social CRM. Drawing from the literature in marketing, information systems and strategic management, they provide a conceptualisation and measurement of social CRM capability. Additionally, Trainor et al. (2014) examine how social CRM capability is influenced by both customer-centric management systems and social-media technologies. These two resources are found to have an interactive effect on the formation of a firm-level capability that is shown to relate positively to customer relationship performance. Heller Baird and Parasnis (2011) note that a CRM strategy, enabled by various processes and technologies, is designed to manage customer relationships as a means for extracting the greatest value from customers over the lifetime of the relationship. These strategies typically concentrate on the operational responses required to manage the customer. With social media, though, companies are no longer in control of the relationship (Trainor, 2012). Instead, customers and their highly influential virtual networks are now driving the conversation, which can outplay a company's marketing, sales and service efforts with their unprecedented immediacy and reach.

Despite the growing body of literature, consumer engagement remains an emergent rather than mature theme in academic literature (van Doorn et al., 2010; Claffey and Brady, 2014). Whilst a number of marketing scholars have studied the concept (Hollebeek, 2011; Brodie et al., 2011; 2013; Malthouse et al., 2013; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014; Claffey and Brady, 2014; Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014), there is a gap between the potential of the technologies that are available to build engagement with the customer in the social-media context, and the efficacy with which they are currently being used. Research suggests that social media are appropriate channels through which to develop and maintain consumer engagement (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014), but marketers arguably need better strategies to reach the new, technology-savvy customers who are more demanding and vocal than ever. Although these challenges are not new to marketers, the speed at which this change is occurring is forcing companies to evaluate these alternatives much faster than before (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008). Ideally this new approach involves a customised marketing-communication strategy that engages the customer, builds customer trust and loyalty and leverages the social media by optimising its potential for community building among customers (Trainor, 2012). Loyalty marketing strategies, including communication and two-way dialogue, rewards, effective customer service and service-recovery mechanisms, loyalty schemes and online brand communities, are an important aspect of building engagement.

3.6.3 *Commerce*

Whereas the role of social media in creating brand awareness and engagement is recognised in the literature, there is little evidence as to whether social media can also help companies market and sell their products (Yadav et al., 2013). Although the platforms and technologies have developed considerably, many companies struggle to use social media to influence sales. Such efforts are generally associated

with the term ‘social commerce’ by scholars (e.g. Harris and Dennis, 2011; Zhou, Zhang and Zimmermann, 2012; Yadav et al., 2013). This section introduces some of the existing research in the field.

The increased popularity of social media such as Facebook and Twitter has created a new delivery platform in e-commerce that is commonly called ‘social commerce’ (e.g. Liang et al., 2011–2012). Despite the growing interest in the concept in both academia and industry, a clear meaning of the term ‘social commerce’ has yet to be developed. In their editorial to a special issue on social commerce of the *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, Liang et al. (2011–2012) summarised the state of research on social commerce and noted that ‘there is no standard definition’ of the phenomenon in question.

More recently, Yadav et al. (2013: 312) have defined social commerce as ‘exchange-related activities that occur in, or are influenced by, an individual’s social network in computer-mediated social environments’ and stress its different facets: marketing activities designed to stimulate transactions and other activities intended to influence consumers’ purchase decisions, but which are directed at other stages of the decision-making process’ (Yadav et al., 2013: 312). Two concepts arise from their proposed definition: transaction-focused social commerce and information-focused social commerce.

Transaction-focused social commerce involves the direct use of social networks in selling products (Yadav et al., 2013). In other words, transforming a social-media platform into a digital shopping centre. Attempts by firms to sell products via Facebook have been mostly unsuccessful (e.g. Nordstrom, Warner Bros.), but Yadav et al. (2013) suggest that these failures might be the result of contextual factors rather than general ineptness. Recent innovations by Facebook such as the ‘Gifts’ option (Facebook, 2015) indicate that a potential for success exists if transaction-focused social commerce is done competently. Information-focused social

commerce, on the other hand, includes the product evaluation by the potential buyer's friends, as is implemented by Amazon, for example. Initial research (e.g. Harris and Dennis, 2011) has shown that such social effects influence key success metrics such as customer retention. Yadav et al. (2013) argue that fully understanding the effect of information-focused social commerce would benefit from isolating the effects of social word-of-mouth from other kinds of word-of-mouth such as standard, anonymous Amazon reviews. The authors note that teasing apart social from other word-of-mouth effects would be valuable, particularly if the mobile component of social information were considered.

One of the main advantages of relying on social commerce is that consumers can access richer information, not only due to the fact that this information can be of higher quality or more trustworthy (e.g. other users' opinions from a virtual community), but because the information can be easily processed (e.g. using different applications for comparing prices or product features) and edited (Edelman, 2010; Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012). Information accessibility, availability, quality and comparability are clearly reinforced (Zhou, Zhang and Zimmermann, 2012; Yadav et al., 2013). For example, customers can access reviews and comments about a brand or a product regardless of time and place. Consequently, Harris and Dennis (2011) suggest that social media can reduce the risks and uncertainty of shopping online. At the same time, brands have additional tools and resources in place for delivering a better shopping experience, increasing customisation and enhancing consumer experience on the web (Brodie et al., 2013). The shopping experience is improved both by richer stimuli and by different tools that allow a more enjoyable and easier interaction (Dennis et al., 2009, 2010; Doherty and Ellis-Chadwick, 2010). The main advantage is the new interactive and social dimension. This interaction both with the brands and with other consumers can enhance consumer confidence and trust (Harris and Dennis, 2011) and improve customer service (Chen, Fay and Qang, 2011).

Harris and Dennis (2011) suggest that one area that requires exploration is the development of online loyalty, which is dependent upon consumer trust. Trust is arguably even more important in the virtual world than it is offline because there is no personal interaction (Harris and Goode, 2010; Harris and Dennis, 2011). Therefore, the bond of trust in the depersonalised setting of the Internet is very fragile. Studying the interactions between young consumers' behaviour on social networks, Harris and Dennis (2011) found trust in the form of recommendations from users' friends to be influential in changing online behaviour. However, Heller Baird and Parasnis (2011) found that consumers are divided on this issue. Only 38% believe social-media interactions with a business will have a favourable influence on their loyalty to that company, 28% are neutral, and as many as a third (33%) say their social-media interactions will not make them feel more loyal to that business.

Research suggests that brand loyalty and trust in the digital age bring new challenges: consumers today are promiscuous in their brand relationships (Edelman, 2010; Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012). They connect with a multitude of brands, often through new channels that are beyond the companies' control or even knowledge. A Global Fashion Survey by the Business of Fashion (BoF) and McKinsey & Company released in November 2017 states that 'with information and the ease of comparison at their fingertips consumers are becoming less brand loyal: among millennials, two-thirds say they are willing to switch brands for a discount of 30 percent or more' (BoF-McKinsey, 2017: 17). But while customers are very price sensitive, they also base more of their purchasing decisions on whether a company's practices and mission align with their values. The BoF-McKinsey report (2017: 17) concludes that this is a 'generation that has higher expectations on what a company should be able to deliver: convenience, quality, values orientation, newness – and price'. Consumers evaluate a wide selection of brands, often expanding the pool before narrowing it. After a purchase, they may remain aggressively engaged, publicly promoting or criticising the products they have bought, collaborating on the brand's development, and challenging and shaping their meaning.

While the body of literature on social media is growing, most of that research has focused on consumer behaviour in social-networking sites like Facebook (Harris and Dennis, 2011) or on the implications of online word-of-mouth (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Dwyer, 2007; Kumar, Petersen and Leone, 2007; Chen, Fay and Qang, 2011). There has been much less research examining how social-media applications and networks might promote the creation of economic value (Yadav et al., 2013). Overall, a large part of managerial attempts to stimulate transactions within social networks have failed, leading some industry observers to conclude that transactions within social networks will not work at all (Zhou, Zhang and Zimmermann, 2012).

Although companies and researchers are beginning to recognise the benefits of social commerce, there is a lack of understanding about how to do it effectively, and especially, how to measure the impact. Spending on social media continues to soar, but measuring its impact remains a challenge for most companies. When a recent CMO Survey (2015) asked marketers how they show the impact of social media on their business, only 15% stated that they had been able to prove the impact quantitatively. Sponsored by the American Marketing Association, Duke University's Fuqua School of Business and McKinsey, the CMO Survey collects and disseminates the opinions of top marketers in order to predict the future of markets, track marketing excellence and improve the value of marketing in firms and in society (www.cmosurvey.org). The low percentage of companies successfully measuring the impact of social media is not really surprising given that it is a recent innovation that companies are trying to understand quickly and direct to the most profitable ends.

Additionally, the CMO Survey (2015) asked marketing leaders to report on the metrics they are using to track and analyse their social-media activities. The most common metric was 'hits', 'visits' or 'page views', which represents awareness but is not diagnostic of purchase. The metrics that show the largest increases over time

are ‘engagement metrics’, such as number of friends or followers (+88%), net promoter score (+71%), buzz indicators (+54%), product or service ratings (+71%), and other types of text analysis such as sentiment analysis or keyword analysis on Twitter or anywhere that customers post text about companies (+77%). Although firms reported an increase in abandoned shopping carts, in general the study observed fewer companies using actual purchase activities or financial outcomes, such as profits or revenues, as metrics to evaluate their social-media programmes. The metrics and methods for measuring social media are explored in more detail in the empirical part of this research.

Although knowledge of social commerce is growing, more research is needed to understand how social media impact on sales. In particular, Yadav et al. (2013) suggest that a ‘social transaction’ metric that quantifies the sales increase or decrease that can be attributed to the social network environment would be useful in this context. Yadav et al. (2013) note that such studies might be hard to realise in labs, since social commerce requires that we account for the dynamics of the social ties essential for communities. Thus the ecological validity of lab studies in such contexts may be questionable.

Overall, more field experiments in close collaboration with companies are needed to gain better insights into the effects of product and platform characteristics, and into current social-commerce practices overall. The empirical part of this research provides evidence from the field through three case studies. These have been built in close collaboration with the companies and key informants in order to gain in-depth insights.

3.7 Conclusions

The dramatic growth of social media has impacted on marketing practices and models in ways in which managers, but also marketing scholars, have only begun to understand (Kotler, 2011; Berthon et al., 2012; Kumar and Mirchandani, 2012; Kumar and Sundaram, 2012; Gensler et al., 2013; Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching, 2013). The existing research shows that firms are increasingly using social media as tools to develop and maintain durable relationships with customers, for word-of-mouth marketing (Kozinets et al., 2010), for community-based customer support (Greenberg, 2009) and for co-creation (Labreque et al., 2013). Yet many firms are unable or reluctant to develop sustainable social-media strategies because they fear the risk of destroying value for themselves and their customers due to the challenges associated with providing an engaging environment (Porter et al., 2011; Porter, Devaraj and Sun, 2013). One reason for this ineffectiveness is a failure to understand the potential of social media as strategic marketing-communications tools. Despite the growing importance of social media amongst both practitioners and academics, there is a gap in the literature in developing a conceptual understanding of the strategic use of social media from the managerial perspective. While scholars have explored why consumers engage with social media, much less research exists from the marketers' perspective on how to develop sustainable social-media strategies and allocate resources to efficiently engage with social media.

This chapter has provided an overview of the evolving social-media environment and discussed its implications and impact on marketing communication. First, 'social media' was defined in the context of this research and the role and nature of different social-media platforms was discussed. Additionally, the technology-acceptance model, originating from information-systems research, was explored as a way to understand how consumers adopt new technologies and how social-media platforms emerge. After reviewing the evolving social-media landscape, the main

literature in social-media marketing was discussed and a summary of key themes and findings arising from the literature review were presented. In particular, the propositions of existing studies on the motivations, expected benefits and objectives related to the use of social media were discussed. While the existing literature pays little attention to defining more refined and comprehensive ways of comparing and evaluating social-media strategies, the principles of hierarchy-of-effects models originating from the advertising field were considered as a way of categorising the objectives and use of social media in marketing communications. Social media were deemed useful ways of building brand awareness, fostering consumer engagement and affecting commerce, as illustrated in Figure 3.4. In particular it emerged from the literature review that with the increased consumer engagement across the distinct platforms, social media provide immense potential for innovative marketing communication (Kotler et al., 2012).

Overall, the literature review revealed increasing attention to the strategic aspect of social media, but showed that there is a lack of standard methods for evaluating professional social-media practices and underlying strategies. Moreover, the early research in this topical area consists of articles primarily focused on the identification of specific social-media-related strategies – not strategies for social media specifically. To address this gap, this study aims to build an empirically grounded framework that enables an understanding, explanation and description of the process of designing a social-media strategy. The next chapter presents the preliminary conceptualisations and key research questions, before moving on to the empirical part of this research.

4 Preliminary conceptualisations

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the key research questions and draws together the constituent factors to be included in the preliminary framework for describing the process of building a social-media strategy. The aim is to establish the foundations for developing an empirically grounded framework.

4.2 Key research questions

It emerged from the literature review that the recent developments in digital and social media have altered the way in which brands communicate with consumers in order to market and sell their products (Kotler, 2011; Berthon et al., 2012; Kumar and Sundaram, 2012; Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012; Gensler et al., 2013). Social media have given consumers more control of content development and opened up direct channels for collaboration. Moreover, the rise of visual social-media platforms has made this dialogue more appealing, inviting millions of new consumers to engage with branded content. Advances in social media coupled with the changing role of traditional marketing tools are causing marketers to seek new opportunities; the desire is that marketing messages should not only capture consumers' attention, but also engage them with the company (Edelman, 2010). Social media are potentially effective channels to achieve this aim, yet careful management and integration are required, not only across the different platforms, but also with the brands' overall marketing strategy.

The literature review revealed increasing attention to the strategic aspect of social media, but showed that there is a lack of standard methods for evaluating professional social-media practices and underlying strategies. The current insights mainly rely on untested theories and only a few exploratory case studies have been conducted to date. Researchers have just started giving their attention to the subject of ‘social media strategy’ as such, highlighting a gap in our knowledge, which this study seeks to address. Although the literature in this domain is not yet well developed, the analysis of existing work in the field led to the identification of some initial patterns in the literature to address the research questions.

The initial set of research questions was presented in the Introduction (Table 1.1) together with the aim and objectives of this research. The first two research questions focused on motivations: ‘Why do brands engage with social media?’ and ‘What are the factors that affect the brands’ motivations?’ The literature review gave some initial insight into brands’ motivations to engage with social media. In particular, the propositions of existing studies on the motivations, expected benefits and objectives related to the use of social media were discussed from the company perspective. While the existing literature pays little attention to defining more refined and comprehensive ways of comparing and evaluating social-media strategies, the principles of hierarchy-of-effects models originating from the advertising field were considered as a way of categorising the objectives and use of social media in marketing communications. Although the existing work shed some initial light on the brands’ motivations to use social media, more empirical evidence is needed to explore these further. In particular, the factors affecting motivations remain unclear. These will be explored in more detail in the empirical part of this research.

In addition to the motivations, the initial set of research questions looked at the evolving social-media environment, in particular: ‘What is the role and nature of the different social-media platforms?’ This was addressed in the literature review.

Web 2.0 and social media were defined in the context of this research, and a brief overview of the technology-acceptance model was provided to explain how consumers adopt new technologies and how social-media platforms emerge. Moreover, the different social-media platforms and their application were explored. Although the literature review provided important insights into the different social-media platforms, more empirical research is needed to understand their role and nature. Given the substantial variation in content and functionality that exists across platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, more research is needed on the role played by inter-platform differences and how content is tailored according to the nature of the different platforms. This will be addressed in the empirical part of this research.

The final research question in the initial set (Table 1.1) relates to the overall aim of this research to build a conceptual framework: ‘What are the key factors constituting a social-media strategy?’ Although the literature in this domain is not well developed, the analysis of existing work in the field led to the identification of some initial patterns in the literature regarding the importance of certain elements of social-media strategy development. Given the findings of the review, three initial factors of social-media strategy were derived, namely motivations, *channel strategy* and *content*. These are discussed in the next section.

In addition to the initial set of research questions presented in Table 1.1, two additional questions emerged from the literature review: ‘How do brands create and structure content on different platforms?’ and ‘What organisational adaptations are needed to build a social-media strategy?’ These are explored in the empirical part of the research. The complete set of research questions is summarised in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 summarises the key research questions guiding the process.

TABLE 4.1 SUMMARY OF KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RESEARCH QUESTION	KEY REFERENCES
Why do brands engage with social media?	Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014
What are the factors that affect the brands' motivations?	Yadav et al., 2013
What is the role and nature of different social-media platforms?	Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010
How do brands create and structure content on different platforms?	De Vries et al., 2012; Peters et al., 2013
What organisational adaptations are needed to build social-media strategy?	Weinberg et al., 2013; Malthouse et al., 2013
What are the key factors constituting a social-media strategy?	Effing and Spil, 2016

4.3 Preliminary framework

A preliminary framework can be used to understand and describe a phenomenon, and in some elementary sense it can be employed to explain development (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2002). In this research, the preliminary framework is developed from the literature review, and provides a lens to guide the data collection and analysis. In particular, the preliminary framework was constructed by evaluating initial constitutive factors of social-media strategy from the existing literature and it is used to inform the data collection and analysis. Thus in this research, prior theory provides a focus for the data-collection phase in the form of research issues that conclude the literature review, as suggested by Perry (1998: 790–791). Furthermore, the review of existing literature resulted in an initial theoretical framework modelled with boxes and arrows, developed from the literature review. That is, the literature review chapter is the same as that of a conventional thesis (e.g. Perry, 1998), charting the body of knowledge and identifying gaps, but the gaps are not expressed as precise, testable, closed yes/no propositions or hypotheses.

Instead they are presented as general, broad, open research issues (Yin, 1994: 21) that will be used as section headings to structure the data analysis and concluding chapters of the thesis.

As discussed above, the review of the existing literature in this domain provided initial factors that could be of important value for describing the process of building a social-media strategy. These preliminary factors are motivations, channel strategy and content. Each of these factors is discussed below. An overview of the preliminary factors and the references used are presented in Table 4.2 and discussed in more detail below. The core contributions of the referenced studies were summarised in Table 3.1 in the previous chapter and discussed in detail across the literature review. In the empirical part of the research, the question of how these preliminary factors are deployed by the case studies will be explored.

TABLE 4.2 PRELIMINARY FACTORS

PRELIMINARY FACTOR	RESEARCH QUESTION	DESCRIPTION	KEY REFERENCES
Motivations	<p>Why do brands engage with social media?</p> <p>What are the factors that affect the brands' motivations?</p>	<p>Propositions of existing studies on the motivations, expected benefits and objectives related to the use of social media that serve as a starting point in the process of building a social-media strategy</p>	<p>Kozinets, 2002; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014</p>
Content	<p>How do brands create and structure content on social media?</p>	<p>The types of content the brand publishes on social media, such as a product post, a press feature or a campaign image</p>	<p>Kozinets et al., 2010; Berger and Milkman, 2012; De Vries et al., 2012; Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson, 2012; Van Noort et al., 2012; DiStaso and McKorkindale, 2013; Peters et al., 2013; Barnes, 2014; Effing and Spil, 2016</p>
Channel strategy	<p>What is the role and nature of the different social-media platforms?</p>	<p>The selected social-media channels and their respective roles in the social-media strategy</p>	<p>Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden, 2011; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011; Kiezmman et al., 2011; Yadav et al., 2013; Dalla Pozza, 2014)</p>

4.3.1 Motivations

The motivations arising from the literature review serve as a starting point in developing a conceptual framework for describing the process of building a social-media strategy. These were explored further in order to answer the first two research questions: ‘Why do brands engage with social media?’ and ‘What are the factors that affect the brands’ motivations?’ (see Table 4.1). First, replicating the three-step structure of the traditional cognition–affect–conation model (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961) commonly used in advertising research, the propositions of existing studies on the motivations related to the use of social media were grouped into three major categories: awareness (cognition), engagement (affect) and commerce (conation), as illustrated in Figure 3.4 in the previous chapter. The existing literature on the three categories can be summarised as follows (Table 4.3):

Awareness. Existing research suggested that social media can establish and raise brand awareness (e.g. Edelman, 2010; Hutter et al., 2013; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram allow firms to reach out to millions of people who cannot be reached through traditional print media. Since a large number of consumers are already engaging with social media, a brand’s presence on those networks can help consumers become familiar with the brand and the product, thus creating brand awareness. While the existing literature notes the role of social media in increasing brand awareness, more empirical evidence is needed to study and verify this effect.

Engagement. The existing literature proposes that social media allow brands to develop and enhance engagement with existing customers and grow a community of fans and followers (e.g. Hollebeek, 2011; Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Malt-house et al., 2013; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014; Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014). Indeed, social media have brought fundamental changes in the ease of contact, volume, speed and nature of these interactions (Edelman, 2010; Kaplan

and Haenlein, 2010; Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012), increasing the ability of firms to engage customers in a rich and interactive dialogue. Although the recent literature acknowledges the connection of social media and engagement, more empirical evidence is needed to understand their relationship.

Commerce. The review of the existing literature shows that social media can help companies to market and sell their products (e.g. Liang et al., 2011–2012; Harris and Dennis, 2011; Zhou, Zhang and Zimmermann, 2012; Yadav et al., 2013). Having people visit a brand’s page on social media is likely to create traffic to the company website and consequently generate more online sales. Despite the growing interest in the concept in both academia and industry, a clear meaning of the term ‘social commerce’ has yet to be developed (Liang et al., 2011–2012) and more empirical research is needed to explore this emerging concept.

Table 4.3 summarises the key motivations and references used.

TABLE 4.3 MOTIVATIONS

MOTIVATIONS	KEY REFERENCES
Awareness	Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012; Hutter et al., 2013; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014
Engagement	Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014; Hollebeck, Glynn and Brodie, 2014
Commerce	Liang et al., 2011–2012; Zhou, Zhang and Zimmermann, 2012; Yadav et al., 2013

Although the literature review provided some initial insight into brands’ motiva-

tions to engage with social media, more empirical evidence is needed to explore these further. In particular, the factors affecting motivations remain unclear. These will be explored in more detail in the empirical part of this research.

4.3.2 Content

An important research question emerged from the literature review regarding how brands create and structure content on social media. Although the literature in this domain is not well developed, the recent work raises the issue of organising content in social media. In particular, the early studies categorise social-media content and relate the different types of content to managerial outcomes (Kozinets et al., 2010; Berger and Milkman, 2012; De Vries, Gensler and Leeflang, 2012; Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson, 2012; Van Noort, Voorveld and von Reijmersdal, 2012; Peters et al., 2013). In this research, particularly in the conceptual framework, the notion of ‘content’ refers to the types of content the brand publishes on social media, such as product post, press feature or campaign image.

Research suggests that a ‘content activities plan’ may help companies in structuring content on social media by indicating in which time frame and in what order content, campaigns, projects and monitoring occur (Effing and Spil, 2016). Furthermore, Barnes (2014) notes that it is important to make a schedule of content posts, based on a pre-defined time frame, to secure frequent contributions to various social-media channels. The schedule should also provide companies with an indication as to appropriate and authentic content and tone of voice (DiStaso and McKorkindale, 2013). Although the existing literature addresses the question of organising content in social media, more empirical evidence is needed to address this question. In the empirical part of this research, the emergent research question of how do brands create and structure content on social media will be explored. In addition, it remains unclear how motivations affect the types of content

brands publish on social. The relationship between content and motivations will be explored in the empirical part of this research.

4.3.3 Channel strategy

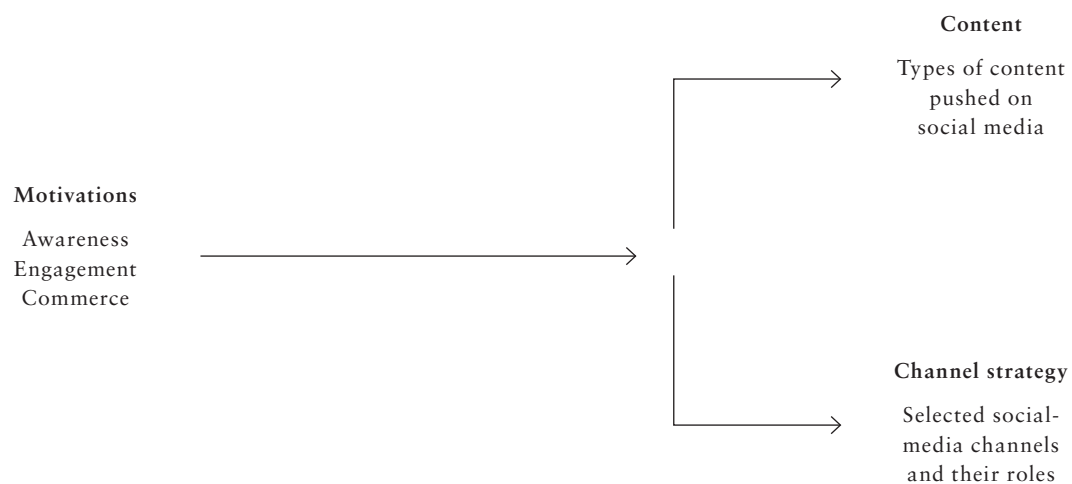
The notion of ‘channel strategy’ relates to the research question on the role and nature of the different social-media platforms. Effing and Spil (2016) conclude that the choice of the channel largely determines the effectiveness and even the appropriateness of communication through a certain social-media channel. This is based on a finding that the affordances and limitations are set by the technological infrastructure. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) provide a matrix of various social-media channels with different characteristics and capabilities in terms of media richness and self-disclosure. Furthermore, research suggests that different target groups have to be addressed by different social-media channels (Yadav et al., 2013; Dalla Pozza, 2014; Effing and Spil, 2016). In this research, channel strategy refers to the selected social-media channels and their respective roles in the social-media strategy.

Moreover, the literature review revealed that the relationships between channel strategy and content need further investigation. While the recent research discusses the various types of content in social media (Peters et al., 2013), the relationships between the distinct social-media platforms and the types of content have not been studied. As highlighted by Yadav et al. (2013), the issues related to platform-specific differences are noted but not discussed in detail. Given the substantial variation in content and functionality that exists across platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest, more research is needed on the role played by inter-platform differences. Specifically, to gain more definitive insights into the effects of platform characteristics, field experiments and empirical evidence are needed, which might be conducted in cooperation with companies, and

ideally also with the major social-networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. This research addresses the gap in knowledge by studying three case studies of fashion companies in the real-life context. The aim was to develop close relationships with the case companies and key informants and provide in-depth insights into how they have developed social-media strategy and how content is tailored according to the nature of the different platforms.

To sum up, the review of the existing literature provided initial factors that could be of important value for describing the process of building a social-media strategy. These preliminary factors are: motivations, channel strategy and content. Moreover, the literature review resulted in an initial theoretical framework consisting of these three factors, and modelled with boxes and arrows developed from the literature review. At this preliminary stage, it was assumed that the process for building a social-media strategy starts from motivations, which in turn affect choices of content and channel strategy, as illustrated in Figure 4.1.

FIGURE 4.1 PRELIMINARY FRAMEWORK



With the help of these initial factors, the process of building a social-media strategy will be explored in the empirical part of this research. In particular, the preliminary framework and its factors provide a lens to guide the data collection and will be used as section headings to structure the data analysis and concluding chapters of the thesis.

In addition to the initial framework and initial set of research questions (see Table 1.1), two emergent questions arose from the literature review, as discussed above: ‘How do brands create and structure content on different platforms?’ and ‘What organisational adaptations are needed to build a social-media strategy?’ The literature review raises these issues, but does not provide sufficient clarity as to how they might influence the social-media strategy. These are explored in the empirical part of the research.

The delivery of the empirical research is explained in the next chapter.

5 Methodology

5.1 Introduction

The rapid growth of social media has been one of the most disrupting developments in the digital landscape over the last ten years (Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching, 2013). Researchers in all social-science disciplines are exploring the potential for conducting research in new digital spaces (e.g. Harris and Dennis, 2011; Hutter et al., 2013; Dhaoui, 2014). Social-media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram have the potential to provide tools, platforms and substantive topics for research. A rapidly changing area of social media demands methodological adaptability and the use of these platforms for research requires reflection on existing research paradigms, methodological approaches and ethical issues (National Center for Research Methods, 2013).

In this chapter, the central focus is on the empirical research design. Presented first is a discussion of the research approach and a description of an appropriate research strategy. Subsequently, the research design is presented, outlining the delivery of the empirical research. This is accomplished with the help of the case-study method (Yin, 2009; Stake, 1995). Following a discussion of the case-study design and arguments for multiple case studies, the next section concentrates on describing the case selection. The chapter concludes by providing a description of the data collection, analysis and assessment tools for evaluating the study. Threats to reliability and validity are assessed, and the ethical considerations and risk assessment are presented.

5.2 Research approach

There are many ways to position a study and explain the approach taken (see e.g. Guba, 1978; Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Denzin, 1989; Guba and Lincoln, 1994, 2005; Silverman, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Bryman and Bell, 2011; Creswell, 2014). These are often referred to as metatheoretical considerations. In the context of this research, metatheory is understood as a way to evaluate theories.

The meaning of science and what is known as scientifically conducted research depends on both the discipline and the academic background of the researcher (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, 2005). As Easton (1995) points out, researchers must state their underlying assumptions and values since these impose restrictions and influence the research strategy. Particularly in qualitative research – where the tools of enquiry are often the researchers' own observations, experiences and conversations – it is important that researchers are clear about their own beliefs and assumptions, particularly beliefs about what knowledge is, what is knowable, and how we can go about gaining knowledge.

These underlying assumptions are often referred to as a paradigm, defined as the 'basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 105). While researchers might implicitly work from a paradigm, it is also important to understand critically, make choices about, and be able to communicate one's worldview to others. Thus, in this paper, how the study was conducted and the issues that influenced the research process are described in detail.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) break down paradigms into three aspects: ontological, epistemological and methodological dimensions of research. These are related to assumptions about ontology and epistemology, which form the basis for the methods selection (Creswell, 2014). Defined broadly, ontology is an assumption

about the nature of reality, and epistemology can be defined as the relationship between the researcher and the reality or how this reality is captured or known (Carson et al., 2001). The presence of a basic system of ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions with which researchers approach their research is widely accepted in qualitative research (e.g. Guba and Lincoln, 1994, Easton, 1995; Creswell, 2014; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2010).

First, many paradigms have an ontology, an assumption about the nature of reality as described above. For example, is there a 'real' objective world out there, or is reality constructed through human relationships? Ontological assumptions cover the very essence of the phenomenon under investigation (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; 2005). The basic ontological question is whether the reality being investigated is external to the individual or whether it is the product of individual consciousness (Bell and Thorpe, 2013), or in Burrell and Morgan's (1979) words, whether knowledge can be acquired directly by observing or through personal experience, for example. This assumption states that reality is given or is the product of one's mind.

The second group of assumptions explores the grounding of this knowledge. In other words, each paradigm has an epistemology, a set of assumptions about the relationship between the 'knower' and the 'known' (Bell and Thorpe, 2013). Here, the discussion is limited to how knowledge can be acquired according to different epistemological assumptions. What constitutes valid knowledge and how can we obtain it? For example, does the knower need to be 'objective' and affect the outcome as little as possible, or actively co-construct knowledge with others? A particular researcher's take on knowing is defined as the 'epistemological stance'.

Furthermore, it needs to be stated that ontology and epistemology overlap and are often difficult to divide. Some researchers use the term 'epistemology' when referring to both together (Bell and Thorpe, 2013). Interlinked with these two

issues are assumptions concerning human nature (Creswell, 2014). Indeed, we can believe that the relationship between human beings and the environment is predetermined. The opposing view, favoured here, is that human beings are free to create their own environment.

Finally, each paradigm contains some assumptions about methods, though none are restricted simply to one way of gathering and analysing data. This third interrelated layer, methodology, is derived from the ontological and epistemological assumptions. In short, methodology, whether idiographic or nomothetic, must be aligned with the previous sets of assumptions in order to yield scientifically reliable and valid results. The term ‘idiographic’ (sometimes spelt ‘ideographic’) relates to the unique/individualistic approach in science and is usually contrasted with the term ‘nomothetic’, which refers to general scientific laws (Denzin, 1989; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). In simple terms, ‘idiographic’ refers to the specific case and ‘nomothetic’ refers to the general perspective. Figure 5.1 presents the metatheoretical orientation of this study.

FIGURE 5.1 METATHEORETICAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

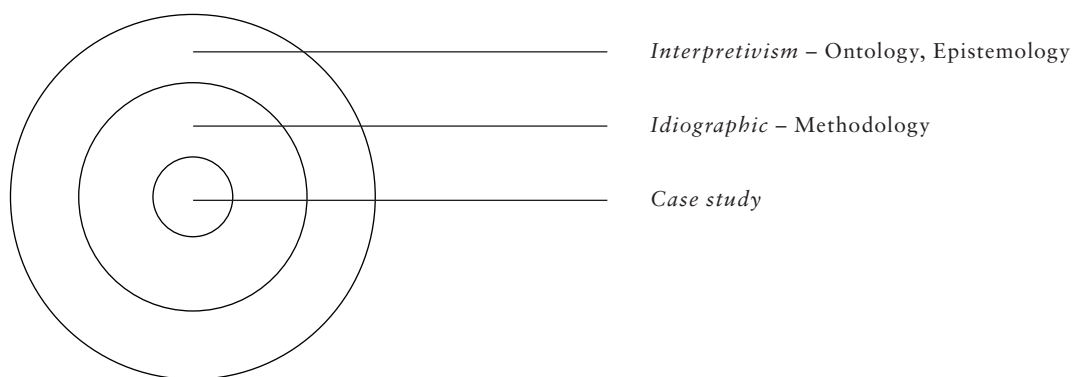


Figure 5.1 depicts the aspects of the scientific approach, i.e. metatheoretical orientation: it shows the different aspects of metatheory and how they are related to and define each other. It demonstrates that the interlinked nature of the elements is important to recognise when considering the employed methodology, not only in this study but in all research. It should be noted that the methodological orientation has shifted during the study, but mostly in a retrospective manner; the author has identified issues that have an impact on the perception of methodological orientation.

This study adopts interpretivism as a philosophical position. The position of interpretivism in relation to ontology and epistemology is that interpretivists believe that reality is multiple and relative (Bell and Thorpe, 2013). Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that these multiple realities also depend on other systems for meanings, which make them even more difficult to interpret in terms of fixed realities. The knowledge acquired in this discipline is socially constructed rather than objectively determined and perceived (Carson et al., 2001). Indeed, as Bell and Thorpe (2013: 47) note, researchers should be aware that others use terms like ‘social constructivism’ to refer to broadly the same thing.

A group of management researchers who go under the label of ‘interpretivists’, or sometimes ‘social constructionists’, claim that the study of social systems is not amenable to exploration using methods and standards traditionally associated with the natural sciences. For interpretive research, management can only be understood from the point of view of the people who are directly involved in it (Bell and Thorpe, 2013: 47). This fundamental principle is derived from German sociologist Max Weber’s theory of knowledge in the social sciences. Weber developed these ideas at the beginning of the twentieth century, prompted by an intellectual clash between natural science and social science as to whether the latter could be considered to be using scientific methods to produce legitimate knowledge, a phenomenon known as the ‘methodenstreit’ (see Burger, 1987). We-

ber sought to distinguish between the methods of the natural and social sciences in order to enable the knowledge claims of the latter to be considered legitimate. He argued that the demonstration of law-like regularities was not possible in the social sciences. He also claimed that facts never speak for themselves, but must be interpreted. Therefore, no science, social or otherwise, can be fundamentally neutral, either in its methods or the language used to describe the subject being studied. Weber's ideas were based on the notion that the study of human social action was fundamentally different from the objects and events studied by natural science because people are guided by values (Bell and Thorpe, 2013). The task of social science is to study how people understand their world, a concept that he labelled *verstehen* and saw as a basic element of human conduct. The focus is on understanding the everyday lifeworlds that individuals inhabit, which they use to make sense of phenomena and construct a meaningful reality.

In this research, interpretivism is employed as the ontological and epistemological position because it advocates the necessity to understand the differences between humans in their role as social actors (Buchanan and Bryman, 2009). This means that the main point of the research is not the attempt to discover general laws, but to describe and understand the standpoints of individuals and how they perceive the impact on and role of social media as a part of marketing communications in the fashion industry. Furthermore, an interpretive paradigm was chosen because it allows the researcher to address questions about how and why something is happening, as well as what happens in a wider context and what is likely to happen (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2014). It is thus suited to studying the role of social media in an organisation's marketing-communications strategy, which may lead to an understanding of the ways in which the intentions of management become derailed for completely unforeseen reasons, which are not apparent even to those involved in the strategy (Gummesson, 2003; Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2009). The focus is on the details of a situation, the reality behind these details, and the subjective meanings motivating actions. Klein and Myers (1999)

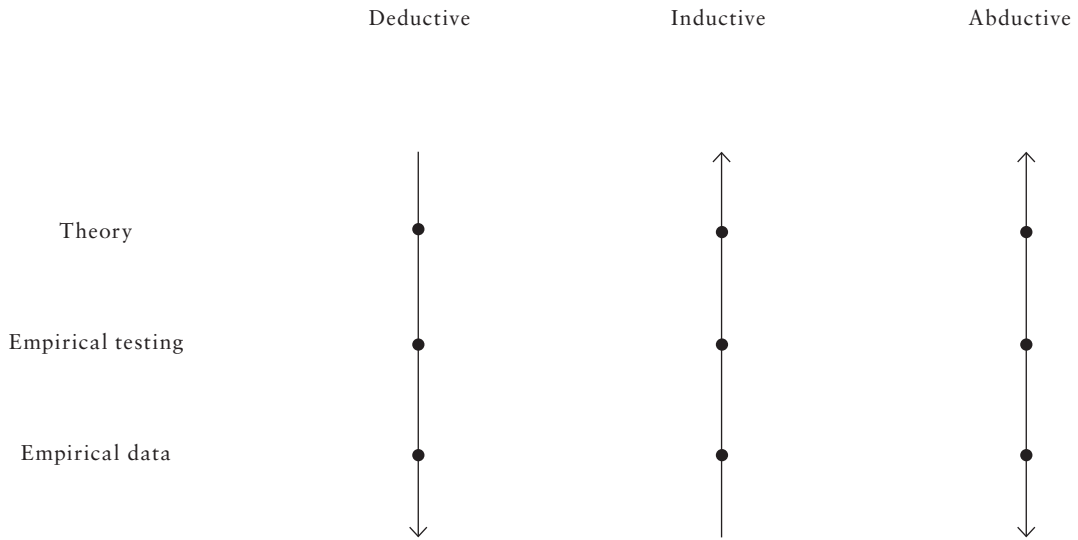
consider that the interpretive approach plays a crucial role in information-systems research. The emergence of interpretivism in information-systems research was also noted by Walsham (1995), who saw interpretivism gaining ground against a predominantly positivist research tradition in information systems.

The third element needed in order to compile an orientation is the assumption regarding methodology. On the basis of previous statements on idiographic and nomothetic approaches, the chosen methodology for this research is an idiographic (Denzin, 1989) one, namely case-study research. Interpretivists suggest that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to generate nomothetic knowledge in relation to complex domains of human activity like management, because they are so dependent on human actions (Bell and Thorpe, 2013). In this research, the idiographic approach was deemed particularly suitable considering the co-creating opportunities of social media. The case-study research design is elaborated further in Section 4.4.

The next step is to choose a logical reasoning method, which is proposed as one aspect of the metatheoretical dimensions. Perry (1998) calls the logical reasoning method ‘theories developing approaches’, and the chosen reasoning method should support the employed research orientation and strategy. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2014) argue that knowledge in different research traditions helps to adapt research design to cater for constraints such as limited access to data or a lack of prior knowledge of the subject. There are three generally distinguished logical reasoning methods: induction, deduction and abduction (Hanson, 1958; Chalmers, 1999: 54; Buchanan and Bryman, 2009; Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2014) and these are illustrated in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 depicts the logical reasoning methods that are available for research-

FIGURE 5.2 LOGICAL REASONING METHODS



ers to use in marketing and other disciplines. It shows the relationships between logical reasoning methods, employed theory and the context of reasoning. The arrows in Figure 5.2 represent the possible reasoning paths between the theory and the empirical material. Reasoning methods are dependent on the chosen meta-theoretical dimensions of the study. The above selected research method was the idiographic approach (Bell and Thorpe, 2013). This excludes the use of deductive reasoning that seeks to find generalisations or laws.

To criticise laws and law-like generalisations, Chalmers (1999: 215) comments: ‘most if not all of the generalities taken to be laws within science fail to qualify’. This is especially the case in marketing. Still, in deductive reasoning a researcher has a prior proven theory that is verified in another form and/or research area. Repeated studies in another geographical area, for example, involve deductive reasoning. This study concerns an emerging area that has been little researched to

date, and the researcher is not in a position to frame a hypothesis because there is insufficient understanding of the topic to do this. Therefore, the author is left with inductive and abductive reasoning methods (see e.g. Hanson, 1958; Dubois and Gadde, 2002; Buchanan and Bryman, 2009).

The abductive reasoning method involves moving back and forth between empirical discovery and theory in order to build up a theory that matches reality (Gummesson, 2003). Abductive reasoning uses existing theories together with empirical material to come up with new concepts (Gummesson, 2000; Dubois and Gadde, 2002). The reasoning logic takes inspiration from existing literature and theories to amplify the guiding principles or the pattern. But the view of the empirical world is different due to our chosen frames of references, and therefore alternative possibilities and explanations exist. Since this study concerns an emerging area that has been little researched to date, there is insufficient existing literature to employ an abductive-reasoning method. The abductive approach is often used to 'frame the problem' and it rarely occurs in scientific approaches or business-studies methodology.

In this study, the guiding principle has been the idea that social media enable enhanced interactions between companies and consumers that disrupt marketing communications, and that they constitute a novel and important topic to be studied. Since the aim is to develop an empirically grounded framework for the design of social-media strategy and explore the emergence of new models for fashion-marketing communications in the digital age, the study adopts an inductive approach whereby the theory follows the data (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In other words, inductive reasoning begins in the empirical world – the discovery of something empirical, which is followed by an attempt to synthesise a theory. In contrast to a deductive approach, the theory is not explicit in the design of the research, but data are collected to formulate theory as a result of data analysis. Scholars suggest that induction is useful in understanding why something is hap-

pening, rather than describing what is happening (Buchanan and Bryman, 2009). Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2014) argue that knowledge in different research traditions helps to adapt research design to cater for constraints such as limited access to data or a lack of prior knowledge of the subject. The arguments presented above favour the inductive-reasoning logic, and this study employs the inductive approach as the chosen logical reasoning method.

Scholars argue that research using an inductive approach is likely to be particularly concerned with the context in which events take place (Buchanan and Bryman, 2009; Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2011). Therefore a study of a small sample of subjects might be more appropriate than a large number, as with the deductive approach. Moreover, research adopting an inductive approach is more likely to work with qualitative data and to use a variety of methods to collect these data in order to establish different views of phenomena (Creswell, 2014). These considerations informed the selection of data-collection techniques and research design discussed in the remainder of the chapter.

The last element needed, consciously or unconsciously, when conducting research is the acknowledgement of the axiological viewpoint. In short, this means the values, goals and beliefs held personally by the researcher (Easton, 1995). Illustration of the axiological view is difficult, but despite that, an attempt is made to describe issues that have influenced the formation of research orientation. Personal motivation for this research is two-fold. The first is academically oriented, since establishing the right concepts and definitions is very important. The author is keen to understand and describe the role of social media in marketing communications through useful and meaningful concepts developed for that purpose. This axiological viewpoint was shaped during the research process by the comments of colleagues as well as the key informants, especially those from the #FashMash network (see sections 5.4 and 5.5).

The second motivation is a more managerially or empirically oriented one, since the author is truly motivated to help students as well as companies to fully understand and utilise the benefits and potential of social media to enhance interactions between companies and consumers. From a managerial point of view, this research is important because an increasing amount of commerce is being conducted through established social-media platforms. This means that as part of marketing communications, social media are an interesting phenomenon to research, and developing a guiding logic for managing social media is of vital importance. A common frame of reference is needed when discussing and understanding social media from a managerial perspective. This type of guiding logic is provided in the form of a conceptual framework for the design of social-media strategy (Figure 8.4) and issues related to it are discussed based on empirical evidence. Managerial insights are discussed in detail in Chapter 9 (Conclusions) under ‘Managerial contributions of the study’.

This section has reviewed the concept of the scientific approach and illustrated the assumptions underlying the selection process of the methods and theories for this dissertation. The research strategy is presented below.

5.3 Research strategy

The purpose of this section is to present the research strategy of the study and highlight the procedure of supporting and refining theoretical findings. But first, the research strategy is described in greater detail.

Research strategy can be defined in many ways; Weick (1984) proposes that it is ‘a way of going about one’s research, embodying a particular style and employing different methods’. Research design and strategy are similar concepts. Research

design, according to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1991), includes data collection and methods of analysis, but also involves the overall configuration of the study. In this dissertation, research strategy is defined similarly to Weick's 'way of going about one's research', while the research design is an explanation of the actual delivery of the empirical research that is presented in the subsequent sections of this chapter. Furthermore, it can be seen that before the research strategy and research design can be articulated, the metatheoretical orientation has to be made visible. This was provided in the previous section. The research strategy aligned with the metatheoretical orientation of the study is presented in Figure 5.3.

FIGURE 5.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY

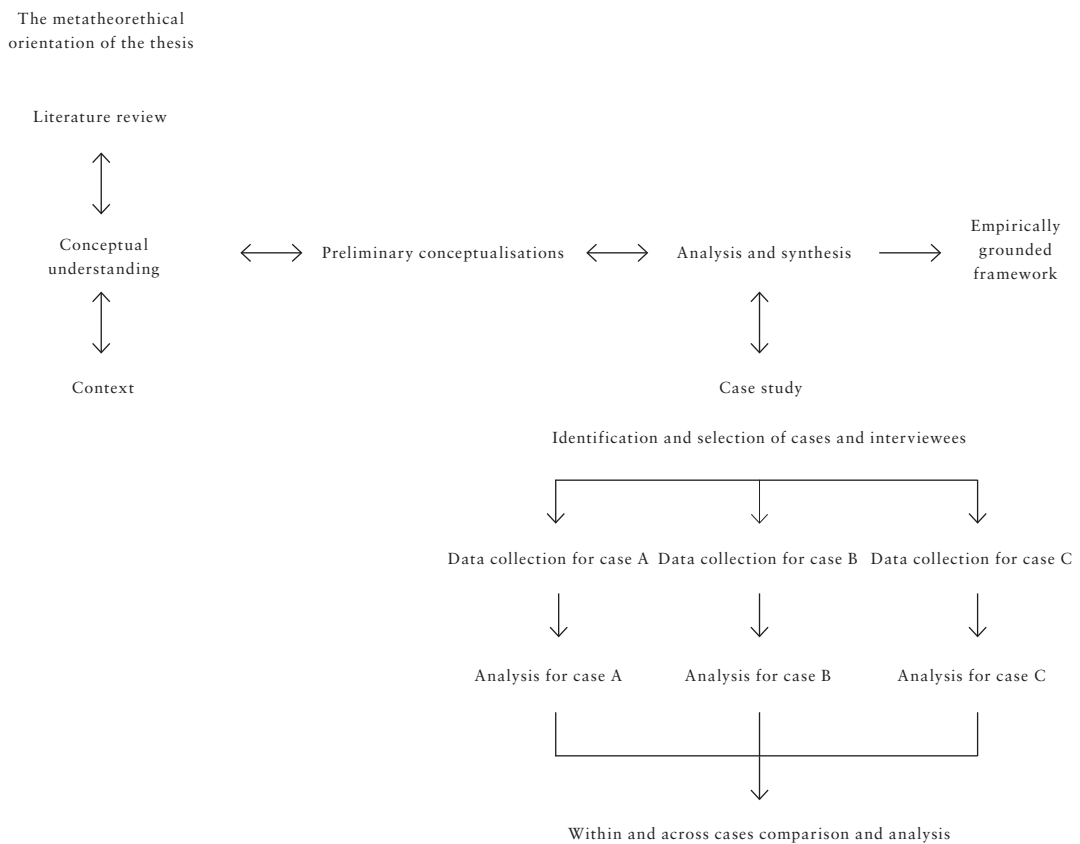


Figure 5.3 illustrates the research strategy used and how it is aligned with the metatheoretical orientation of the study. It can be seen that the metatheoretical orientation influences both the theoretical and empirical understanding.

The literature reviews were conducted in two broad areas. Firstly, they were conducted in fashion-marketing, fashion-management and digital-fashion literature in order to define fashion marketing in the context of this research and provide a summary of the current research in the field. Secondly, they investigated social-media literature. The aim was to critically assess the scholarly literature currently existing in the area and identify the key issues that have been studied in relation to social media and marketing communications. Motivations for engaging with social media were investigated from the company perspective and the key elements of social-media activities were explored, drawing from theoretical considerations and supported with references from the recent literature on social media. The reviews and their findings were presented in Chapters 2 and 3. These two phases made it possible to understand and integrate different aspects from each of the areas. The literature reviews enabled the creation of the conceptual understanding, which led to the preliminary conceptualisations and key research questions presented in Chapter 4.

As can be seen from Figure 5.3, there is systematic interplay between the analysis and synthesis phase of the preliminary conceptualisations and the evolving case studies. According to Dubois and Gadde (2002), immediate attention is needed if contradictory evidence is found, i.e. material from cases disagreeing with the view provided by the framework. Following this, the preliminary model is compared and adjusted to the empirical material so that it forms an empirically grounded framework, i.e. the outcome of this dissertation, which is presented in Chapter 8 (Figure 8.4).

5.4 Case-study design

Research design and strategy are guided by the basic purpose of improving the understanding of the role of social media as a part of marketing communications in the fashion industry. In order to investigate this, case-study design, and more precisely, cross-sectional study were deemed necessary. A cross-sectional time horizon refers to the study of a particular phenomenon at a particular time, as opposed to a longitudinal study, which investigates a phenomenon over a long period of time (Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2009). Cross-sectional studies are useful for seeking to describe the incidence of a phenomenon or to explain how factors are related in different organisations. Although cross-sectional studies often employ a survey strategy (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2014), they may also use qualitative methods. Moreover, Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis (2009) note that many case studies are based on interviews conducted over a short period of time. These considerations informed the choice of time horizon.

The case study is an empirical examination and an investigation into the contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are blurred, and multiple sources of substantiation are needed (Pettigrew, 1989; Yin, 2009). Since the main purpose of this dissertation is to understand the role of social media in marketing communications by managing dense and multiple sources of data, a case study is an appropriate method (Yin, 2009; Easton, 1995; Stake, 1995: 39). There are many reasons for using the case-study approach and these will be elaborated on.

First, it is important to note the metatheoretical assumptions of this dissertation (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The reality is multiple and relative (i.e. interpretivism), and knowledge is socially constructed rather than objectively determined and perceived (Carson et al., 2001), leading to an idiographic approach, case-study research. For interpretive research, management can only be understood from the

point of view of the people who are directly involved in it (Bell and Thorpe, 2013).

Secondly, the temporal dimension of the study is complex. Given that the research concerns the rapidly changing arena of social media, a cross-sectional case-study approach was deemed the most appropriate to investigate the role of social media in marketing at a particular time. Because the field is emerging, the methodologies, theories and their applications are likely to evolve considerably.

Finally, the study aims to develop an empirically grounded framework for the design of social-media strategy. Therefore, the case-study approach is appropriate since the purpose is to gain insights, observe and construct explanations for the phenomena that occur in the management field. Case studies are the preferred method when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are posed, the investigator has little control over events, and the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a ‘real-life context’ (Yin, 2009). Moreover, case-study strategy was adopted because it is ideally suited to creating managerially relevant knowledge (Gibbert and Ruigrok, 2010) and considered particularly useful in the critical, early phases of a new management theory, when key variables and their relationships are being explored, and where themes and categories have yet to be empirically isolated (Eisenhardt, 1991).

A plethora of case-study designs is available to a researcher (e.g. Yin, 2008, 2009). From these, a *comparative case study* with the purpose of developing concepts based on these comparisons was chosen. Finally, the case study provides a deeper understanding and a solid contextual sense, and can provoke theory building.

5.4.1 Definition of the case study

It is important to define ‘case’, which is the empirical analysis unit, since the term and the ideas linked to case analysis are not well defined (Yin, 2009). In this dis-

sertation a case is a firm that adopts social media in its marketing communications and designs social-media activities. This study focuses on three cases that illustrate relevant aspects of the role of social media in marketing communications in the same industrial context, namely, the fashion industry. Each of the three cases consists only of the particular company and its organisational processes relating to the design of social-media activities, while indirect or direct connections to third parties were not considered per se.

5.4.2 Multiple case-study design

According to Yin (2009), the methodological framework is the same in both single and multiple case studies. In this study, multiple cases are employed to illustrate the role of social media in marketing communications. Although the effectiveness of adopting a single case study is acknowledged, multiple case studies provide a stronger basis for theory-building (Dyer and Wilkins, 1991). In particular, Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007: 27) suggest that multiple cases can create more robust, generalisable and testable theories because the propositions are more deeply grounded in varied empirical evidence. Multiple cases also enable comparison, as well as allowing broader exploration of research questions and theoretical elaboration than single-case research (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

In this dissertation, three cross-sectional case studies are used to illustrate the differences between the three companies' approach to social media. Of course, more case studies could have provided more information about the phenomenon and this is acknowledged as a limitation. Future quantitative studies will yield more generalisable results.

Moreover, multiple cases have been selected due to the fact that because of the exploratory nature of the study, the author does not have a well-formulated theo-

ry to be verified with a single case (Yin, 2009). Easton (1995) has argued that by using multiple cases we lose the depth of the study, but in this research this danger is avoided through rigorous data collection using multiple sources of evidence, analysing across and within the cases, as well as through detailed reporting.

Parallel to this, Yin (2009) has warned about external conditions that may interfere with replication and cross-analysis of the empirical material. However, in this study the aim is not to replicate, but rather to show, with the help of multiple cases, how the role of social media is evolving within the fashion industry and not across industries.

In addition, the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling (Yin, 2009) since it provides the reader with strong evidence that is contextually solid. Each of the cases has a special role in attempting to answer the research questions. The first case, Matthew Williamson, traces the development of a social-media strategy and shows how the company moved from being a digital late-comer to becoming one of the leading innovators in the digital fashion space. The second case, Hunter, shows the instrumental role that social media can play in repositioning the brand and communicating a new brand vision. Finally, Acne Studios provides an example of a company 'rediscovering the potential of social media'. It also demonstrates the impact of organisational structures and changes in the motivations for using social media. Thus three cases provide rich and detailed information in relation to the process of adopting social media in marketing communications.

Case selection is a crucial phase in case research and the literature is full of advice on how to select cases (Eisenhardt, 1989, 1991; Pettigrew, 1989; Romano, 1989; Stake, 1995; Perry, 1998). Eisenhardt (1989) points out that cases should be selected for theoretical reasons until saturation is reached, while Pettigrew (1989) recommends choosing a case that represents situations in which the object

of interest is clearly observable. Stake (1995: 4) highlights maximising what we can learn, while Perry (1998) advises researchers to select information-rich cases. Common to all of these is a theoretically purposeful selection aimed to maximise the amount that can be learned. In addition, a contribution to science should be visible. These three methodological and theoretical criteria are evaluated based on the purpose of the research (Stake 1995: 4). Nevertheless, the decision as to how many and which cases are selected is left to the researcher (Romano, 1989: 36).

The purpose of studying the role of social media in marketing communications in the fashion industry provides two important criteria: first, that the company has recently adopted social media in its marketing communications, so that a study of the whole process is possible; second, that the person responsible for developing the social-media strategy is available for interview. Four additional criteria are as follows: access to data collection should be possible; the researcher can devise an appropriate role to maintain continuity of presence for as long as necessary (Marshall and Rossman, 1989: 54) and that one industry only has been chosen in order to decrease the complexity of the dissertation. Additionally, the process of adopting social media and the progression of the firm's social-media presence should be observable.

The case selection was based on these six criteria. Most companies in the fashion industry are impacted by the emergence of digital and social media. Thus selection could not be based on identifying all the relevant cases, and therefore only theoretically valid and accessible cases were shortlisted. Possible case access was based on the researcher's own personal network, especially through #Fashmash (see section 5.5.), as well as the access possibilities of close research colleagues. Moreover, cases employing an innovative and strategic approach to social media were given higher priority.

The fashion sector was selected as an industrial environment since access was as-

sured and only a few studies have been conducted on the impact of social media on the fashion industry (see e.g. Kim and Ko, 2010, 2012; Chu, Kamal and Kim, 2013; Dhaoui, 2014; Kontu and Vecchi, 2014). Additionally, the fashion industry was deemed the ideal setting for the study since it is by definition very focused on aesthetics and visual representations (Workman and Caldwell, 2007), and it is a consumer-driven industry where establishing empathy with the final consumers is of paramount importance (Venturi, 2011).

After selecting the fashion industry as the empirical context, three cases were deemed appropriate. Subsequently, academic papers and managerially oriented texts and books about the fashion industry were collected both online and offline. Then the author attempted to find cases that had been studied previously within the fashion industry, and by comparing those with the list of possible cases, ended up with three: Acne Studios, Hunter and Matthew Williamson, as illustrated in Table 5.1. Additionally, the selection of case studies was informed by a series of key informant interviews with digital fashion experts in London and New York, who provided examples of current innovators in the digital fashion space. The access to these cases also influenced the decision-making.

TABLE 5.1 OVERVIEW OF CASE COMPANIES

CASE COMPANY	FOUNDED	SOCIAL-MEDIA STARTEGY LAUNCH	SOCIAL-MEDIA MANAGER
Acne Studios	1996	March 2014	Jenny Lau
Hunter	1856	February 2014	Michelle Sadlier
Matthew Williamson	1997	October 2012	Rosanna Falconer

A great amount of company-related material was collected and reviewed in order to better comprehend the chosen case companies. All three companies are active in social channels and have various development projects in progress. All have recently made considerable investments in social media, including the launch of a social-media strategy and the appointment of a social-media manager (as shown in Table 5.1.). As such, the three companies provide interesting examples of applying social media as an instrumental part of the company's marketing-communications strategy. Moreover, the three companies have made considerable investments in a broader digital strategy, ranging from interactive catwalk shows to a redesign of the company website, including a highly innovative e-commerce function. In addition, the three companies have a diversified product range and a strong international presence with shows in the major fashion weeks: at the time of writing this research Matthew Williamson and Hunter were presenting collections at London Fashion Week, while Acne Studios' shows had recently moved from London to Paris Fashion Week. Matthew Williamson and Hunter are London-based, and Acne Studios is headquartered in Stockholm. Owing to the diversity of their retail operations, ranging from a narrow retail format such as own stores and flagship stores to a diversified network of retail platforms, they represent three examples of companies in the fashion industry. In the light of both the exploratory nature of the study and the wide variety of the fashion-companies' features, three case studies were deemed adequate to provide rich insights into the role of social media as a part of marketing-communications strategy in the fashion industry.

After the author's interest in the case was sparked, first contact was made through the researcher's personal network, especially through #FashMash, a network of digital fashion professionals in London and New York. The first contact was made via email, phone or face-to-face (the form of confirmation communication varied between cases). The author introduced the research project briefly and asked whether these companies would be willing to participate. Having received a positive response, the author drafted an information sheet (see Appendix 3) presenting

the research project in more detail and asking for the company’s participation. This information sheet was sent via email or given face-to-face, varying from case to case.

5.5 Data collection

One of the important issues in case-study research is access to data. The researcher must keep in mind the strengths and weaknesses of each data-collection technique (Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Yin, 2009). The data types that are identified and used in this study are listed in Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2 INFORMATION SOURCES FOR THE CASE STUDIES

SOURCE	ACNE STUDIOS	HUNTER	MATTHEW WILLIAMSON
Academic literature	Various	Various	Various
Industry and managerial literature	Various sources both offline and online	Various sources both offline and online	Various sources both offline and online
Interviews	Head of PR, Social Media Manager, Key informants close to Acne Studios	Head of Innovation and Social Media, Key informants close to Hunter	Communications Director, Web Designer, Key Informants close to Matthew Williamson
Direct observations	Site visits (HQs, flagship store)	Site visits (HQs, flagship store)	FW14 show, site visits (HQs, flagship store)
Social-media data (retrieved from Fashionbi ¹ database)	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

¹ A leading provider of digital-marketing optimisation data specialising in the fashion industry (www.fashionbi.com)

Table 5.2 depicts, in brief, the data sources employed when selecting, studying and analysing cases. Information searches in both academic and managerially oriented databases were conducted. Interviews were designed and evaluation of these was based on the literature review. Documentary and archival data were requested from each of the case companies. Below, an illustration of the interview design is provided.

Case studies can accommodate a rich variety of data sources including interviews, archival data, survey data, ethnographies and observations (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Yin (2008) notes that one of the most important sources of case-study information is the interview. In this research, interviewing was chosen as the main data-gathering method since it allows for the exploration of the differing perspectives and perceptions of a diversity of stakeholders (Daymon and Holloway, 2002; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Generally, interviews aim to capture people's experiences and expectations (Patton, 2002), which is central to this research. Furthermore, interviews may be used as a research method when the research addresses an unknown area whose research outcomes are difficult to predict. In this study, it was predicted that the research subjects of social-media and marketing-communications strategy would generate multifaceted answers and that it would be necessary to ask for clarification and further argumentation when desired (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Thus the interview as a data-gathering method was considered the most fruitful for the research.

One common type of case-study interview is the in-depth interview (Yin, 2008, 2009). In this research, the in-depth interview was chosen because it allows the researcher to ask respondents about the fact of a matter as well as their opinions about events. In some situations, interviewees can be asked to give their own insights into certain occurrences, and such propositions may be used as the basis for further inquiry. The interview may therefore take place over an extended period of time, not just a single sitting (Yin, 2009).

Yin (2009) notes that key informants are often critical to the success of case-study research. Such persons provide the case-study investigator with insights into a matter and can initiate access to corroboratory or contrary sources of evidence. The interviewees can suggest other persons for further interviews, as well as other sources of evidence. The more an interviewee assists in this manner, the more the role can be considered one of an 'informant' rather than respondent. In this research, the interviewees became crucial informants for the entire duration of the study. An open dialogue was carried on from the first interview meeting, and the interviewees provided updates, news and recent developments as the companies' social-media presence evolved during the research. Because the interviewees were well-connected within the digital fashion sector, they suggested other persons for further interviews, provided introductions and recommended additional sources of evidence in various formats.

The interviews were conducted with individuals involved in the design of social-media activities using a semi-structured interview method (Yin, 2009; Arksey and Knight, 1999: 7). The semi-structured interview approach was chosen because it allows for the flexible collection of data within the interview situation (Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara, 1997; Daymon and Holloway, 2002; Bryman and Bell, 2011). The term 'semi-structured' in this dissertation suggests that there are no pre-established questionnaires or limited set of response categories (see e.g. Fontana and Frey, 2005; Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara, 1997; Arksey and Knight, 1999). The themes of the interview were predetermined (e.g., social media, marketing communications, digital fashion), but the research questions and script were loosely structured, allowing for the modification of the interview if required (Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara, 1997). Yin (2009) suggests that interviews for case studies are guided conversations rather than structured queries. In other words, although a consistent line of enquiry is pursued, the actual stream of questions in a case-study interview is likely to be fluid rather than rigid (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). This approach provided greater opportunities for interpreta-

tion of the answers in comparison to questionnaires, and allowed the interviewer to react and ask for more information when something interesting emerged (Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara, 1997; Daymon and Holloway, 2002). Additionally it allowed new themes to appear during the interview that may not have been considered in the framework but are central to the research question (Patton, 2002).

As a primary-data collection method, the first set of key-informant interviews was conducted with senior managers at the case companies (Table 5.3). These consisted of marketing, PR and social-media managers internal to the firm, or external consultants who were involved in the development or implementation of the company's digital strategy (e.g. Will Ryan, the Founder of Electric Lab, who was responsible for developing Matthew Williamson's digital strategy together with the Head of Digital Rosanna Falconer). The purpose was to gain insights from the managerial perspective into the process of designing social-media activities as well as the companies' objectives for their social-media strategy.

TABLE 5.3 KEY INFORMANTS – SET 1

KEY INFORMANT	ROLE	COMPANY
Rosanna Falconer	Communications Director	Matthew Williamson (formerly at BFC)
Jesper Kling	Head of PR	Acne Studios (founder of Jung PR Agency)
Jenny Lau	Social Media Manager	Acne Studios (formerly at Harvey Nichols)
Michelle Sadlier	Head of Innovation and Social Media	Hunter (formerly at Net-a-Porter)
Will Ryan	Founder	Electric Lab (Web design for Matthew Williamson)

Along with the senior managers at case companies, ten key-informant interviews were conducted with selected digital experts in the industry to provide further insight into the role of social media as a part of marketing-communications strategy in the fashion industry. The aim of these key-informant interviews was two-fold: first, to inform the selection of case-study companies; second, to validate the themes and findings arising from the case studies. Based in London and in New York, the key informants included experienced brand strategists and digital experts as well as editors and marketing professionals with relevant insight and expertise in the role of social media in the fashion industry. The informants were recruited through a collaboration with #FashMash, a network of digital fashion professionals in London and New York. The network is designed to be an interactive space for a wide range of professionals working on the digital side of the fashion industry, including social-media managers at major international brands such as Burberry, Hunter and Matthew Williamson, or digital innovators at Net-A-Porter, Lyst, Twitter and Google. The following Table 5.4 introduces the selected key informants.

TABLE 5.4 KEY INFORMANTS – SET 2

KEY INFORMANT	ROLE	COMPANY
Rachel Arthur	Global Senior Editor	WGSN
Jonathan Chippindale	CEO	Holition
Emily Fleuriot	Editor-in-Chief	Sunshine
Ceci Joannou	Founder and Editor-in-Chief	Brand + Commercial
Konstantinos Lazarou	Marketing Manager	Stella McCartney
Carl Martin	Head of Digital Partnerships	Burberry
Johannes Reponen	Founder and Editor-in-Chief	Address Journal
Will Ryan	Founder	Electric Labs
Natalie Thnkg	SVP Digital and CRM	Temperley London
Tevi Tuakli	Digital Strategist	Joule

After sending out the information sheet (Appendix 3), a confirmation email or telephone call (the form of confirmation communication varied between cases) was received by the researcher. Following the interview with the contact persons, the names of other relevant people to be interviewed were requested, based on areas of expertise and knowledge specified by the researcher. The persons to be interviewed were contacted and then the author checked the material that had already been collected to ensure that those recommended were the most appropriate. When insights of a particular type required from the informants were not provided, other relevant people were interviewed. The overall selection criterion for the key informants was their participation in the development of the company's social-media strategy.

A total of 15 semi-structured interviews were completed with 15 interviewees, with each interview lasting over an hour. All the interviews were personal, face-to-face meetings (see e.g. Fontana and Frey, 2005). More interviews could have been conducted, but sufficient information had been gathered for studying the role of social media in marketing communication, and thus further interviews were not considered necessary. Before the interviews were conducted, a number of decisions were made relating to the practical arrangements, including planning the location of the interview, deciding what materials would be needed to give to the interviewees, and what materials should be collected at the location (see e.g. Arksey and Knight, 1999: 104; Fontana and Frey, 2005).

Themes for the interviews were selected to reflect a range of important themes like the interviewee's motives for using social media, the role of social media in marketing communications and the process of designing the social-media activities, but the research questions and script were loosely structured, allowing for the modification of the interview if required (Yin, 2009; Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara, 1997). In other words, the author provided a short list of relevant themes and interview questions, but the respondents were asked to speak freely. The list of themes and questions was followed, but when the author felt that something was missing or the interviewee was avoiding a question or subject, the issue was gently raised either immediately or later on in the interview. Interview themes and questions are presented in Appendices 4 and 5.

All interviews were audio-recorded and the interviewer's permission was always sought and gained. In addition to this, during the interview the author made notes and these were later typed onto a computer. After the interview, initial feelings concerning the interview situation were spoken onto tape. Later, all of the interviews were transcribed and the handwritten notes and spoken comments were typed to be filed. The procedure described above was undertaken in all cases. Appendix 7 provides an example of a transcribed interview text and illustrates

how the author has employed the interview material in building the case studies.

Additionally, the author brought together material from various sources. This material was used when choosing and deciding on the cases and the interviewees. The first distinct phase was the collection of academic and managerial literature concerning the cases. After that, books and articles concerning case studies and interviews were read. Then, before conducting the interviews, information from newspapers, online databases and other material that described the case companies was collected to provide insights into the case companies. This was used as background material for interviews and later at some points when describing the cases. In addition, during the interviews and afterwards, documents and other archival data on each of the companies were requested from the companies, and the author continued with data collection. Finally, the qualitative data collection was followed by quantitative data collection across three social-media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) as described in the subsequent sections.

Research suggests that although case studies can and have been conducted based on a single, individual source of evidence, a major strength of case-study data collection is the opportunity to use multiple sources of evidence (Stake, 1995; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2008). These data-collection techniques were used in combination, thus employing the strategy of triangulation to establish the validity of the findings and allow for greater interpretation using multiple sources of data (Denzin, 1989). Multiple sources of evidence can be used to offset possible bias caused by any of the methods or techniques (Creswell, 2014; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2010). Below is a description of these secondary data.

Firstly, documentation was used as source of evidence. Research suggests that except for studies of preliterate societies, documentary information is likely to be relevant to every case-study topic (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Silverman, 2010). Yin (2009: 103) notes that this type of information can take many forms, for example:

- letters, memoranda, email correspondence, and other personal document such as diaries, calendars and notes;
- agendas, announcements and minutes of meetings and other written reports of events;
- administrative documents and proposals, progress reports and other internal records;
- formal studies or evaluations of the same ‘case’ that you are studying;
- news clippings and other articles appearing in the mass media or community newspapers.

Moreover, Yin (2009: 103) argues that these and other types of documents are increasingly available through Internet sources. This is particularly relevant for the present study, which concerns digital and social media. In fact, a large part of the relevant documents were only available in electronic format, and systematic searches online were fundamental throughout the data collection. For example, an Internet search prior to an interview or field visit provided invaluable insight. In addition, time was allowed during field visits for browsing local libraries and other reference centres whose documents, such as back-issues of periodicals, were not available electronically.

Because of their overall value, documents play an explicit role in any data collection when conducting case studies (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2010; Silverman, 2010). Yin (2009) suggests that they are useful even though they are not always accurate and may be biased. Documents must therefore be used carefully and should not be accepted as literal recordings of events that have taken place. For case studies, the most important use of documents is to validate and augment evidence from other sources (Yin, 2008). First, documents are helpful in verifying the correct spellings and titles of names of organisations that might have

been mentioned in an interview. Second, documents can provide specific details to corroborate information from other sources, and third, they allow one to make inferences.

Finally, quantitative social-media data were used as secondary data to assess the social-media activities of the three companies. To overcome the challenges of collecting accurate and reliable data on social-media activity, collaboration was launched with a Milan-based social-media data specialist Fashionbi (www.fashionbi.com) to utilise its database. Fashionbi is a leading provider of digital-marketing optimisation data specialising in the luxury fashion industry. Their aim is to enable companies to make informed strategic decisions and improve their social-media performance. In particular, the Fashionbi database provides data on website, mobile and social-media platforms' usage, by forecasting, analysing and reporting social-media performance and client perceptions on the web. The database covers over 2,000 companies across 90 countries. For social media, the database is directly connected to the API system of networks, gathering and computing the data and elaborating them into analytics (www.fashionbi.com).

Using the data retrieved from the Fashionbi database, the social-media activity of Acne Studios, Hunter and Matthew Williamson was analysed for a fifteen-month period from 1 August 2013 to 31 October 2014. The period was set for these dates in order to cover three rounds of fashion weeks: SS14 shows in September 2013, FW14 shows in February 2014 and SS15 shows in September 2014. A one-month period was allowed both before and after each round of fashion weeks in order to observe possible changes in the level of activity. The collection of social-media data was restricted to three groups of Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) taxonomy as previously discussed: social-networking sites, blogs and microblogs, and content-sharing sites, which are extensively used by fashion companies and amongst consumers within the fashion industry (Arthur, 2013; Bautista, 2013; Schneier, 2014). Furthermore, the largest platform in each group was analysed in more

detail, namely Facebook (social-networking sites), Twitter (blogs and microblogs) and Instagram (content-sharing sites).

This secondary data provided an overview of the company's social-media activity and performance, e.g. the average reactions by users to the action of the brand. For each case company, Facebook activity was assessed by monitoring the brand activity and the associated user activity. The brand activity is defined as the number of posts made by the brand at a given period while the user activity is the activity generated by the users' reactions (shares, comments and likes) on published content. Monitoring this relationship allowed the analysis and identification of the most effective Facebook activities, by assessing how well these were received by the audience (i.e. Facebook fans). Similarly, the relationships between brand activity and associated user reactions were analysed on Twitter and Instagram to assess the engagement and impact. On Twitter, the average reactions by users to the action of the brand was also analysed by day and by hour, revealing particular times when brand activity tends to have the highest impact. In addition, the most popular posts were assessed on each platform along with the top ten hashtags both of the users and the brands.

To illustrate how these secondary data were used to evaluate the interviews, the quantitative social-media data give an overview of changes in the level of engagement per action of the brand. Among others, this data shows how the brands' social-media activities and campaigns were received, and illustrate how the social-media presence evolved. Additionally, this data helps to match time aspects, as opposed to those reported by the persons interviewed. This triangulation was employed a couple of times only. However, it points out the important role that supplementary data have in qualitative analysis and case studies.

To summarise, the selection of interviewees was based on the probable results that were to be obtained from interviews with them. The data were collected with

the help of semi-structured interviews from the relevant, i.e. knowledgeable, key informants both internal and external to the company. Other relevant information describing the case companies was composed accordingly. The sections to come will present the methods of analysis, the empirical material as well as the assessment of the empirical material.

5.6 Data analysis

Analysis of case-study material is an integral part of the entire research strategy. According to Stake (1995), the main reason for the analysis phase is to give meaning to the material collected. Nevertheless, it has been illustrated in various sources that analysis of case-study material has not been thoroughly elaborated on (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 16). Regarding analysis, there are two general options to choose from: either to rely on theoretical propositions derived from literature, or to develop a case description (Yin, 1989: 106–107). A third option is to rely simultaneously on theoretical propositions and to evaluate and review them in accordance with the case description. The third option is employed here: the author has provided a case description based on empirical and theoretical conceptualisation and has therefore attempted to generate propositions from each case study to be tested in future studies.

Yin (2009) suggests that strategies or techniques for case-study analysis are not mutually exclusive. Marshall and Rossman (1989: 113) further illustrate this by stating, ‘The researcher is guided by initial concepts and guiding hypotheses, but shifts or discards them as the data are collected and analysed.’ In this study, motivations are seen as important factors affecting a company’s social-media strategy, and they are affected by internal company factors such as brand characteristics or organisational structures and changes. It is further emphasised that multiple

empirical materials were collected, as explained in the previous section, in order to get as broad and thorough an understanding as possible from various viewpoints.

Analysing qualitative data is ‘the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data’ (Marshall and Rossman, 1989: 112). Yin (1989) emphasises similar points. More precisely, analytic practices fall into five stages: organising data, generating categories, themes and patterns, testing the emergent hypotheses against the data, searching for alternative explanations of the data and writing the report (Marshall and Rossman, 1989: 114). A similar line of thought is taken by Yin (1989: 105).

The researcher started analysis by familiarising herself with the skills needed when interviewing and then analysing data. After all interviews had been conducted, each of the interviews was transcribed in its complete form (see Appendix 7 for an example). According to Arksey and Knight (1999: 141), transcribing plays a major part in the organisation and management of data. It was also pointed out that the transcript itself is an interpretation of the real interview. At first, interviews were transcribed in their entirety; later, non-meaningful words or naturally occurring breaks were left out of the transcriptions. However, the author did not attempt to condense the transcripts. Small edits have been made to the excerpts included here for the sake of readability.

Subsequently, the actual data analysis was initiated through familiarisation with the collected empirical material. The materials, including online sources, newspaper articles and the interviews, were all read over and over again (see e.g. Miles and Huberman, 1984, 1994; Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014). This initiated the processing of the raw data, the purpose of which is to enable the retrieval of meaningful pieces of information (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 430). Then came a process of data reduction: the ‘process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the “raw” data as part of analysis’ (Miles and Huber-

man, 1984: 21). Classification is seen as crucial in data analysis (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973; Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: 45–46; Arksey and Knight, 1999: 150–155). Schatzman and Strauss (1973) illustrate this point as follows: ‘Probably the most fundamental operation in the analysis of qualitative data is that of discovering significant classes of things, persons and events and the properties which characterise them.’ The interview themes divided the empirical material into naturally occurring classes that were used as a basis for theme development (Appendix 7) and later on for data analysis. Marshall and Rossman (1989) have shown that category generation involves noticing regularities in the case material; for example, mutual goals and expectations acted as a theme that occurred in each case. Natural classes or themes were: social-media strategy, motivations, organisational structures, brand characteristics, platform characteristics, content strategy, tone of voice. Similar classes are to be found in the interview text that is given as an example (Appendix 7).

Further categories of meaning emerge when the researcher searches for those that have internal convergence and external divergence (Guba, 1978), in other words, that are internally consistent while distinct from each other. Seidel and Kelle (1995: 52) have illustrated that the coding of empirical material acts as a link connecting the raw data, e.g. transcripts, and the researcher’s theoretical concepts.

After finding the meaningful themes, each category was challenged and alternative explanations or negative instances were identified and described in order to enhance the credibility of the study (see e.g. Marshall and Rossman, 1989: 118; Arksey and Knight, 1999: 161).

The data analysis, i.e. reading, organising and creating themes, was conducted (as described above) in all cases. The process varied between the cases, but it can be said that they were roughly similar. Some of the themes found at first were modified, but most of them remained unchanged. Following data collection and reduc-

tion, chronologically written case narratives acted as data-display forms (Miles and Huberman, 1984: 21–22).

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 5, an analysis was then undertaken regarding the ways in which the social-media strategy was built and how the company's social-media presence evolved. The analysis was completed within and across cases. The linkages between interview data and previous research were considered during the sorting and condensing of interviews, as well as during the writing of the different case-study descriptions and the process of designing social-media strategy.

The within-case analysis considered what happens within each case, and how as well as why things are proceeding as they are. Once these descriptions had been completed, a more comprehensive cross-case evaluation was carried out by combining sections from the descriptions in order to compare and contrast patterns and themes that appeared in the cases. According to Miles and Huberman (1984: 151), by 'comparing sites or cases, one can establish the range of generality of a finding or explanation, and, at the same time, pin down the conditions under which that finding will occur'. Eisenhardt (1991: 620) provides a similar estimation when she states that different cases 'often emphasise complementary aspects of a phenomenon'. She also states (1989: 540) that one should look at the empirical material in many different ways: one way is 'to select categories or dimensions, and then to look for within-group similarities coupled with inter-group differences'. In the analysis phase, attention was given simultaneously to different levels of analysis and their linkages. The level of organisational processes was analysed in each case, while an additional level was the cross-case analysis. This was done in order to tease out the influence of context and process on the different levels of analysis. The collection of empirical material from various sources described in the previous section, as well as using many carefully planned interviews with key informants close to the case companies, made this analysis possible.

When the data have been collected, reduction has occurred, and data have been displayed in narrative forms, it is time to draw final conclusions from the data displayed and to verify them. Conclusions are part of analysis and occur before and after data collection, but also during the phases described above (Miles and Huberman, 1984: 21–23, Miles and Huberman, 1994: 428–429).

The analysis phase was concluded by writing up the three cases that are presented in Chapter 6. There are many ways to report a case (Marshall and Rossman, 1989: 119) and this dissertation has attempted to relate theory and practice by using numerous information sources and in-depth interview ‘stories’. The case descriptions aim not only to describe history but also to illuminate the current stages and future aims of the companies. The author has also employed excerpts from the transcribed interviews to elaborate on some relevant aspects. The subsequent section describes the process of assessing the empirical study.

5.7 Reliability and validity of the research

The soundness of research work is measured in terms of validity and reliability (Creswell, 2014). Here, a description of how the validity and reliability of this research are understood is presented, and how attempts are made to improve them in each phase of data collection and analysis.

The terms ‘validity’ or ‘verification’ are discussed in the literature in many ways (see e.g. Cook and Campbell, 1979; Yin, 2009; Robson, 2002; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2010; Silverman, 2010). ‘Construct validity’ means the applicability of the operational measures adopted for the specific concepts being studied (Yin, 2009: 40; Gummesson, 2000). Besides construct validity, the quality of research depends on ‘internal validity’ (for explanatory or causal case studies only), ‘exter-

nal validity' and 'reliability' (Yin, 2009). Internal validity is not a crucial aspect for this dissertation since it does not look for causal relationships using a single case study to test hypotheses. However, external validity is very important due to the fact that it shows the soundness of findings and generalisations arising from a study (Yin, 2009; Miles and Huberman, 1994). It is noted that case studies, like experiments, are generalised to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes (Yin, 2009).

Reliability is another measure of the soundness of research work (see e.g. Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 316; Yin, 1989: 38; Gummesson, 2000: 91), often referring to research techniques. The accuracy, stability and repeatability of procedures are essential to reliability. According to Babbie (1998), a study is reliable if the research technique yields the same results when applied repeatedly to the same object. Yin (1989: 40) consolidates this statement by stating that when operational procedures such as data collection can be repeated with the same results, the study is reliable. This means that the researcher should establish a clear chain of evidence, research, report, use case-study protocols and a case database (Yin, 2008). In other words, if two or more research studies are undertaken on the same phenomenon, for similar purposes, the results should be similar to be considered reliable. The use of systematic methods increases the probability that the study is valid (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

In this dissertation construct validity has been maximised by carefully planning and consistently presenting the metatheoretical orientation, research design, case selection and case-study strategy. This means that the focus of the study is carefully planned and the concepts developed, like the preliminary model planned. The validity of a case study is the fit between theory and reality (Gummesson, 2000). In this study, this is assured by going back and forth from the evolving model that is developed to the empirical phenomenon that is being studied. The reality to which Gummesson (2000) is referring is ontology.

While forming the empirically grounded framework, the concepts that were employed in the preliminary framework and proceeding frameworks were produced so that they were logically coherent, relevant and testable (Brinberg and McGrath, 1985; Eisenhardt, 1989: 548). The framework was constructed to describe the phenomenon in detail by differentiating the factors and their characteristics (see e.g. Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Thus the author avoided forming contradictory relations between concepts used in the empirically grounded framework presented in Figure 8.4. Moreover, factors and their characteristics were depicted in a diagram to clarify the author's own thinking and to improve the reader's comprehension (Whetten, 1989). Additionally, Appendix 7 was provided to highlight data-analysis procedures and theoretical reasoning.

Additionally, while conducting the case studies, many measures were taken to ensure the correspondence validity of research (see e.g. Brinberg and McGrath, 1985) as depicted earlier in this chapter and in the research strategy Figure 5.3. Correspondence refers to the logic of the entire research process and also includes the idea of construct validity (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In short, this means that the data collected and the interpretations formed reveal the essential nature of the phenomenon and that the researcher's procedures are not creating a bias in the results. These types of mistakes and misunderstandings are avoided with the help of various measures that are employed to increase correspondence validity:

- The planning of research strategy, research design, and case-study strategy was carefully conducted.
- Key informants outside the case companies were interviewed.
- Systematic procedures were employed before and after the interviews (see Appendices 7 and 8 for data-analysis example).

- Data triangulation (Patton, 1987; Denzin, 1989; Eisenhardt, 1989) was used.
- In the data documentation process the interviews were transcribed and a case-study database was formed, which included research notes and feedback from the interviews. The empirical material collected formed another database for each case.

Furthermore, software tools that aid in transcribing and analysing case material or interview material were not employed in this study, since they can cause systematic errors and harm the study's validity (Seidel, 1991; Seidel and Kelle, 1995; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

Multiple key-informant interviews both internal and external to the case companies were conducted. This was done because the perceptions of the informants vary based on whether they have been involved in the development of the company's social-media strategy or not. By using multiple informants the author has enhanced both the reliability and validity of the research (Bagozzi, Yi and Philips, 1991; Kumar, Stern and Anderson, 1993). Using key informants augments the understanding of the companies and the cases (Yin, 2009). The author has carefully selected the interviewees used and accurately reported the information given. Reliability is thus increased. The advice of Tull and Richards (1980: 144–147) was followed through the whole interviewing process: for example, the bias that the interviewer brings to the interviewing situation was decreased by training in interviewing, formatting the themes carefully, and by planning every step of the interview. However, this does not mean that the interviews were fully structured. All these actions led to a higher degree of generalisability (Tull and Richards, 1980).

In addition, empirical material from various sources was collected, as described in an earlier section. These have made it possible to triangulate, i.e. compare the transcribed interviews with other empirical material. Like many of the words and concepts used in social sciences, 'triangulation' is a 'fuzzy' term (Patton, 1987; Denzin,

1989; Eisenhardt, 1989). Patton (1987) presents four levels of triangulation; data triangulation was employed here to find and analyse possible misunderstandings between the interviewees and researcher in order to increase the validity of the study (Yin, 2009). The data triangulation in this study involved the use of many sources of data and these were collected, arranged and analysed from many viewpoints. To give a concrete example, in one case where the informant provided information about the date of an event, it was compared to a description of that event in a newspaper article as well as quantitative social-media data retrieved from the Fashionbi database, and it was noted that the date was wrong. However, this was a rare occasion.

With the help of the data triangulation the validity and reliability of the research is increased (Eisenhardt, 1989). Triangulation is not employed in this dissertation as methodological triangulation since there are many pitfalls and uncertainties relating to it, as Patton (2002) points out. Using multiple sources of evidence can help a researcher to overcome problems regarding construct validity and the reliability of the study.

Using only one researcher for all the interviews and putting clear, understandable questions to people who can answer them reduces the inherent biases of interviewing and increases the reliability of the study. The locations of all the interviews were quiet and familiar to the interviewees. After each interview, the author checked the notes, ensuring that they were complete and understandable. Handwritten notes were typed onto computer files immediately after each interview session. The interview was audio-recorded, with the permission of the interviewee. Following the interview session, when off the case-company's premises, the author briefly described the overall impression of the interview session on tape. Transcriptions took place immediately after the interview session while the information was fresh. Systematic errors were avoided by following the same transcribing procedure each time. This increases the reliability of the research because it reduces the amount of random error.

The data collection and analysis methods in general were documented in much detail. The transcriptions and case narratives were sent back to the interviewees, who were asked to point out any misinterpretations or misunderstandings. Minor text revisions were made, such as corrections to dates and names. Moreover, the interviews were done with key informants both internal and external to the case organisations in order to get valid and comparable descriptions of the companies and their approach to social media. This makes comparison of the statements possible, and multiple sources of data were used in order to achieve better validity (Yin, 2009). The sources of data are transcribed interviews, videos, social-media data, trade magazines, industrial magazines, general magazines, industrial-analysis data, annual reports, look books, campaign books, correspondence, project plans, fashion shows, plant visits, and books concentrating on the history of the case companies or the designer. Other relevant information used to triangulate the information, such as internal documents, newspaper documents, internal as well as external corporate newspapers for clients, investors and employees, made the triangulation possible.

The results of this dissertation are proposed to be generalisable to the fashion industry. It may be that the developed framework can be used to describe the design of social-media strategy in other contexts, such as similar industries like interior design; however, further studies are needed to be sure of this (see e.g. Miles and Huberman, 1994, 2014; Creswell, 2014).

This section pointed out that the assessment of the quality of this study is complex. It presented validity and reliability as focal constructs to evaluate the quality of a study. Various elements were identified that increased reliability and validity and those elements were incorporated into the research design and strategy to further emphasise the quality of the dissertation.

5.8 Ethical considerations

This section discusses the ethical considerations relating to data collection and analysis. Since all social-media data were collected in an online space without physical interaction with the participants, and documentation was analysed without physical interaction, any ethical considerations in this research relate to the personal interviews.

In order to protect participants' rights and interests, all participants were given an information sheet explaining the purpose of the project and were asked to sign a consent form (both forms are presented in the Appendix). The participants were reminded that (i) they had the right to refuse to answer any question; (ii) anything they said would remain strictly confidential, and (iii) they could withdraw consent at any time. Participants were reminded that their contributions were voluntary and that they had the right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the project at any stage of the research process without consequence. In addition, the participants were given the contact details of the UAL Research Support Office as a contact point during the project, should they feel they needed independent advice about their rights.

Interviewees were asked to provide their consent to participate in the research project and determine one of three levels of 'identification': (i) full identification by name, job position and company; (ii) generic identification i.e. 'marketing professional'; and (iii) anonymous. With the exception of one key informant, who preferred to stay anonymous, all participants agreed to full identification. For the last category, no personal data were kept on the interviewee except for contact details and job title for the duration of the project. All of the data, including transcripts of interviews, will be kept strictly confidential. Transcripts may only be discussed with the supervisory team or examiners upon request. The audio files of the interviews will be retained and kept in a password-protected file to which only

the researcher has access. Similarly, the electronic transcripts or back-ups of audio files will be stored in a separate password-protected file. Any paper records, such as printouts of interview transcripts, will be kept in a physically secure location. All physical and electronic data files will be destroyed following the completion of the research project. Research data sets may be retained for future research explorations.

5.9 Risk assessment

There is an attendant risk to participants but not greater than the everyday experience of their professional lives. Interviews were planned in advance and conducted in public places. Furthermore, the researcher followed the usual procedures of informing family and friends as well as her supervisors of her whereabouts and timescales. Overall, supervisors were carefully informed about the time and the place and any other arrangements relating to the interviews. If any of the findings were time-sensitive, a time embargo for the public release of data was placed on specific aspects of the material.

5.10 Conclusions

To summarise, this study adopts interpretivism as a philosophical position. The position of interpretivism in relation to ontology and epistemology is that interpretivists believe reality is multiple and relative (Carson et al., 2001). The knowledge acquired in this discipline is socially constructed rather than objectively determined and perceived (Carson et al., 2001; Black, 2006). In this study, the main point of the research is not the attempt to discover general laws, but to

describe and understand the process of building a social-media strategy. Derived from the ontological and epistemological assumptions, the chosen methodology for this research is an idiographic one (Denzin, 1989; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), namely case-study research (Yin, 2008).

Three cases (Acne Studios, Hunter and Matthew Williamson) with a cross-sectional focus were selected, in order to capture the role of social media in its real-life context. The 'case' is a firm that adopts social media in its marketing communications and designs social-media activities. Three cases were selected to maximise what can be learned. In addition, twelve key-informant interviews were conducted with digital fashion professionals in London and New York. A semi-structured interview technique was used both for cases and key informants. Additionally, material from various sources was collected, including online sources, site visits and industry magazines. The material gathered was analysed accordingly and measures were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the study.

6 Case studies

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the case study descriptions: Acne Studios, Hunter and Matthew Williamson.

As explained in the previous sections, the data analysis was initiated through familiarisation with the collected empirical material. The materials, including interview transcripts, online sources and newspaper articles were all read over and over again (see e.g. Miles and Huberman, 1984, 1994; Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014). This initiated the processing of the raw data, the purpose of which is to enable the retrieval of meaningful pieces of information (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 430). Then came a process of data reduction: the ‘process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the “raw” data as part of analysis’ (Miles and Huberman, 1984: 21).

Following data reduction, the next stage of analysis was classification. Classification is seen as crucial in data analysis (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973; Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: 45–46; Arksey and Knight, 1999: 150–155). Schatzman and Strauss (1973) illustrate this point as follows: ‘Probably the most fundamental operation in the analysis of qualitative data is that of discovering significant classes of things, persons and events and the properties which characterise them.’ The interview themes divided the empirical material into naturally occurring classes that were used as a basis for theme development (Appendices 7 and 8) and later on for data analysis. Marshall and Rossman (1989) have shown that category generation involves noticing regularities in the

case material; for example, in this research, mutual goals and expectations (clustered later as ‘motivations’) acted as a theme that occurred in each case. At the first stage, natural classes were developed from the interview themes that were derived from the preliminary framework: motivations, channel strategy and content. Further categories of meaning emerged when the researcher searched for those that have internal convergence and external divergence (Guba, 1978), in other words, that are internally consistent while distinct from each other. In particular, ‘key appointments’ emerged as significant reoccurring theme from empirical material. Similar classes are to be found in the interview text that is given as an example (Appendix 7). As Seidel and Kelle (1995: 52) have illustrated, the coding of empirical material acts as a link connecting the raw data, e.g. transcripts, and the researcher’s theoretical concepts. After finding the meaningful themes, each category was challenged and alternative explanations or negative instances were identified and described in order to enhance the credibility of the study. Figure 6.1 illustrates the theme development process. A complete list of themes and their development is shown in Appendix 8.

FIGURE 6.1 ILLUSTRATION OF THEME DEVELOPMENT

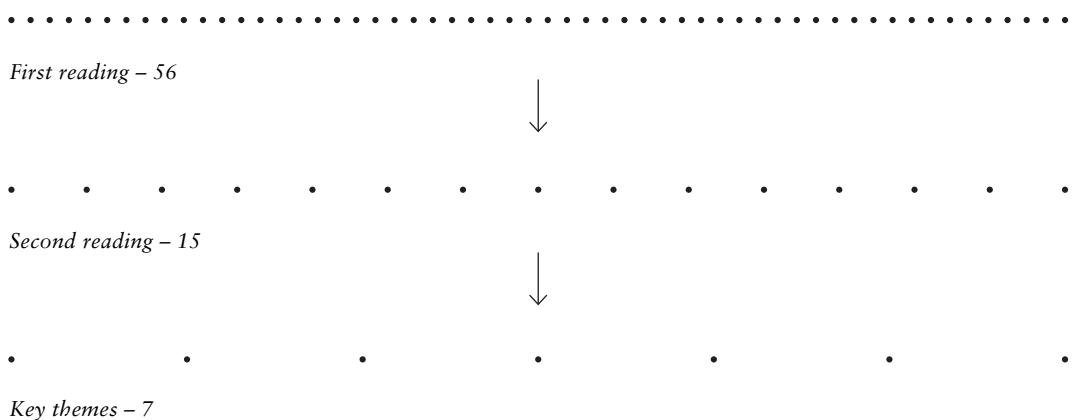


Figure 6.1 and Appendix 8 provide an overview of theme development. In the first reading, altogether 56 themes emerged as illustrated in Figure 6.1. In the second reading, these were cascaded up and cross-checked towards the preliminary framework while identifying whether any new themes emerged that were not part of the initial framework. In the final reading, these were re-grouped into a tighter list of seven key themes (see Appendix 8). The data analysis, i.e. reading, organising and creating themes, was conducted (as described above) in all cases. The process varied between the cases, but it can be said that they were roughly similar. Some of the themes found at first were modified, but most of them remained unchanged.

Finally, following data collection, reduction and classification, the analysis phase was concluded by writing up the three case studies that are presented in this Chapter. As discussed in previous chapters, an analysis was undertaken regarding the ways in which the social-media strategy was built and how the company's social-media presence evolved. The analysis was completed within and across cases. The linkages between interview data and previous research were considered during the sorting and condensing of interviews, as well as during the writing of the different case-study descriptions. Chronologically written case narratives acted as data-display forms (Miles and Huberman, 1984: 21–22).

This chapter presents the case-study descriptions, in particular the within-case analysis for Acne Studios, Hunter and Matthew Williamson. There are many ways to report a case (Marshall and Rossman, 1989: 119) and this dissertation has attempted to relate theory and practice by using numerous information sources and in-depth interview 'stories'. The case descriptions aim not only to describe history but also to illuminate the current stages and future aims of the companies. The author has also employed excerpts from the transcribed interviews to elaborate on some relevant aspects.

First, a brief overview of the company background is provided in order to contextualise the social-media strategy within the broader development of the company. This includes a discussion of the relevant organisational changes and key appointments that initiated the process of building a social-media strategy. Second, the companies' social-media strategies are discussed in detail. The preliminary framework and its three initial factors provide a lens to guide the data analysis and will be used as section headings to structure the case-study descriptions (Perry, 1998). The three dimensions – motivations, channel strategy and content – are analysed in each case company. Finally, the companies' social-media activity is assessed across three platforms: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The within-case analysis in this chapter considers what happens within each case company, and how, as well as why, things are proceeding as they are. Once these descriptions are completed, a more comprehensive cross-case evaluation is carried out by combining sections from the descriptions in order to compare and contrast patterns and themes that appeared in the cases. This is presented in Chapter 7.

6.2 Acne Studios

6.2.1 Company background

Acne Studios is a Stockholm-based fashion house with a multidisciplinary approach. Through the founder and Creative Director Jonny Johansson's interest in photography, art, architecture and contemporary culture, Acne Studios has grown into an established creator of ready-to-wear, magazines, furniture, books and exhibitions. Acne Studios holds shows during Paris Fashion Week and owns flagship stores in Stockholm, Paris, London, New York City, Los Angeles and Tokyo.

Acne Studios was founded in 1996 by four entrepreneurs, who invested 10,000 euros in the company, and launched a multidisciplinary digital film-design-creative consulting collective in Stockholm (Yaeger, 2013). During the course of almost twenty years, the company has developed into a highly profitable business and an established international fashion brand producing ready-to-wear collections for men and women, as well as footwear, accessories and denim. The collections feature Jonny Johansson's signature juxtaposition of design and attention to detail, with an emphasis on tailoring and an eclectic use of materials and custom-developed fabrics. (Phelps, 2014; Yaeger, 2013)

6.2.2 Key appointments

Acne Studios' approach to digital and social media saw significant strategic developments in 2014. Out of the three case companies, Acne Studios was the latest to launch a social-media strategy and appoint a social-media manager. The process started in September 2013, when Jesper Kling joined the company as the Head of PR, and social media was moved from the e-commerce department to PR and marketing. To investigate the managerial perspectives and strategic rationale around this shift, Kling was interviewed on two occasions, in April 2014 and May 2014. A month earlier, in March 2014, Jenny Lau, formerly the Social Media Manager of Harvey Nichols, was appointed as the Social Media Manager at Acne Studios. She was interviewed later in October 2014, eight months into her new role, in order to gain insight into developing the new social-media strategy.

Until these two key appointments, Acne Studios had no distinct strategy for social media. While the e-commerce team managed the social-media channels, content was primarily focused on pushing product. The Facebook feed mainly consisted of product images accompanied by a direct link to the relating product page on the brand's e-commerce site. The copy-writing and tone of voice were simple,

comprising a product name and the link, for example: ‘Acne Studios College Dot. Shop online at <http://bit.ly/1ba1tqJ>.’ (The post appeared on www.facebook.com/acnestudios on 30 January 2014.) Kling explains the change as follows:

For social media, we’ve until recently focused a lot on what we already have, so we haven’t really produced specific content for social media to any extent. The setup now, or after two months, is that our new social-media manager is responsible for the planning and execution of our presence on social media, but she works with deliverables that are being planned and created in the bigger marketing context, so we don’t separate campaigns.

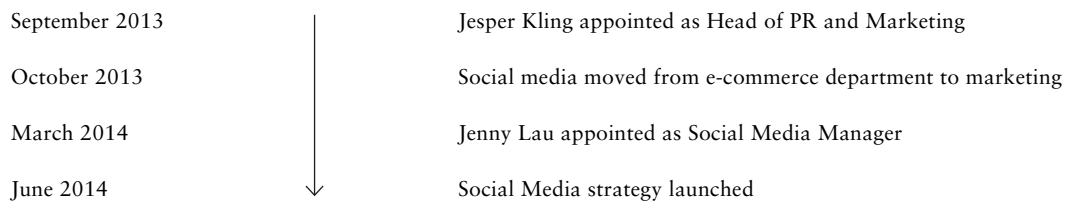
When Lau started in her new role in March 2014, the first two months went into absorbing the brand and the culture in order to develop a new social-media strategy. ‘For me, the first thing you want to do is definitely about observation. Observing the way in which we behave and the values that we have as a business ... You’re not able to create any digital strategy without fully understanding what your brand values are.’ Moreover, benchmarking against competitors’ approach to social media was another critical part of the background work.

Here at Acne we benchmark ourselves against super high-end luxury brands. Not many people would necessarily put us in the same bracket as Prada, Chanel, Miu Miu, Givenchy or Balenciaga, but those are the brands that we benchmark ourselves against. We don’t care about the Swedish brands; we don’t care about contemporary mid-range brands. So part of my initial strategy was to really look at what those competitors are doing and cherry-pick the best case studies and examples of how they excel in digital, and to try and bring that into an argument, backed up by data and my observations, to present this full social-media strategy – which I did about two months in – to the key stakeholders here.

Acne Studios experienced a significant increase in the level of social-media activity

and customer engagement in June 2014, when the new social-media strategy was launched. While social media was previously used for one-way commercial messages from the e-commerce department, the new strategy aims for a visual two-way dialogue and interaction with consumers. Figure 6.2 shows the key moments in the development of social-media strategy.

FIGURE 6.2 KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN ACNE STUDIOS' STRATEGY



6.2.3 Motivations

In terms of more specific objectives for social-media strategy, Lau lists commerce, community growth, brand awareness and CRM. Another important function on social media is customer service, which is managed entirely by an online customer-service team based at the company's e-commerce department. The objectives form the basis of KPIs and guide the practices of measuring social media. The importance of data and measuring are emphasised in creating relevant social-media campaigns and content.

Data has always been a friend of mine: being able to actually look at statistics, like historical traffic and sales that have been driven from our social media, and

looking at the way in which our community behaves. And I think Facebook is the best thing for this. We have a very large Facebook community. We've been able to identify where most of our fans come from, what kind of demographics they are, what kind of content they like the most, and to pick a profile that we can target.

At Acne Studios, motivations for social media shifted significantly when social media was moved from the e-commerce department to PR and marketing. While the e-commerce team had previously managed social-media channels, the motivation was commerce and content was primarily focused on pushing product. The brand's Facebook feed mainly consisted of product images accompanied by a direct link to the relating product page on the brand's e-commerce site. After social media was moved to PR and marketing department, commerce remained important, but other motivations emerged. A distinct strategy was created for social media which now highlights brand awareness, community growth and CRM as key motivations along with commerce. This finding suggests that organisational changes have a direct impact on motivations. The impact is discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

6.2.4 Channel strategy

Acne Studios' social-media strategy focuses primarily on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, which all have different roles. Content is tailored according to the nature of the platform. At the time of this research, Facebook is the platform where the brand has the biggest community, somewhat bigger than on Instagram. It is also deemed the most 'commerce-friendly' platform, from where most of the website traffic and sales come. It further allows for targeting specific customer segments because of the rich data and in-depth analytics that Facebook offers to brand pages. 'We can drill down and we can actually do a lot of very targeted campaigns. We can send a message to just our Japanese segment if that's what we

want’, Lau explains. Image 6.1 (see Appendix 1) provides an example of a typical post on Acne Studios’ Facebook feed. While the copy-writing remains tight and simple, there is more variation in terms of imagery and types of content that the brand pushes on social media.

While Facebook is primarily focused on commerce and product images, Instagram is seen as a platform for storytelling, building brand awareness and establishing the brand voice. It is also the platform where Acne Studios sees the highest levels of engagement. Lau comments:

We tailor our content so that it’s much more commerce-focused on Facebook and we also do our localised activations there. Instagram we see as almost like our brand channel; it’s where we put the highest level of content. So for Instagram we only ever share campaign imagery, show imagery, and if you look at the feed, it’s actually a very beautiful narrative. So we never put product images there, we never put the flat model shots there that we use on our website. For us, Instagram is very much about storytelling. And that’s where we get the most engagement. We can’t track sales, but it’s where you get all the ‘likes’ and you get the comments.

Table 6.1 summarises Acne Studios’ channel strategy.

TABLE 6.1 OVERVIEW OF ACNE STUDIOS' CHANNEL STRATEGY

CHANNEL	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
MOTIVATIONS	Commerce, brand awareness, CRM	Commerce, brand awareness	Brand awareness, community growth
CHANNEL STRATEGY	driving traffic and sales, creating targeted campaigns	sharing news, press features and promotional messages	building brand awareness and establishing brand voice
CONTENT	product images, promotional messages, targeted campaigns	news, press features and promotional messages	only the highest level of content to create a beautiful narrative, i.e. campaign imagery and show imagery
ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTE	'We tailor our content so that it's much more commerce-focused on Facebook and we also do our localised activations there.'	'Twitter we see as very much a way to enhance the press that we receive.'	'Instagram we see as almost like our brand channel; it's where we put the highest level of content.'

6.2.5 Content

The overarching theme for all social-media content at Acne Studios is summarised in six words, 'visually seductive dialogue with our community', which came out of an internal strategic discussion with the company's key stakeholders. The first

part is captured around the word ‘seduction’, which has always been central to the brand identity. ‘Seduction is this mystery element that we’re very keen to maintain as a brand. We’ve always been about maintaining that mystique. We think it’s very important’, Lau explains.

The second part is about building a two-way dialogue and an open conversation with the consumer, which is new to the brand.

We’re trying to push it from this one-way conversation to two, which we haven’t quite done yet. So that in part has to do with the reluctance to let go of control. But that’s our overarching strategy. And with anything we do in social, if it doesn’t meet that criterion, we don’t do it.

In its attempt to move from one-way commercial messages into two-way communication and interaction with consumers, Acne Studios has already seen both positive and negative outcomes in the first six months. The brand was recently hit by negative publicity around the use of ‘skinny models’ in its catwalk shows, which escalated from a comment initially posted on its Facebook feed on 28 September 2014 (see Image 6.2 in Appendix 1). The complaint created a snowball effect across various media, and even top management was involved in seeking a solution. Lau explained:

It is difficult because you don’t want to go back on any creative decisions you’ve made. All you can say really is: ‘We’ve taken on your feedback for the future.’ There was a huge article in the Norwegian media that sparked us. And now there’s this woman who’s taken it on herself to campaign against us, but we’re not sure what she’s trying to do, because she’s set up this ‘Anti Acne’ Facebook page, and she got 400 fans in one day, which we were really worried about. She keeps posting these unrelated articles like ‘this and this model died of anorexia’. We made the strategic decision to ask our CEO to reach out to her. He emailed her with a

response, a really sensible and constructive response, but she didn't post that response to her community. So she's just out there to bait us for no reason, despite us seeking resolution.

Overall, Acne Studios' approach to social media changed fundamentally as it was moved from the e-commerce department to marketing. Its role shifted from being a message board for e-commerce towards becoming a highly strategic marketing-communications channel with a growing community and strong brand voice. However, this does not mean a move away from commerce. 'I'd say that we're even building more resources and activities geared towards a more commercial approach on social media by linking everything together and doing things more frequently, posting more frequently', Kling explains. Thus there is a strong commercial perspective in Acne Studios' approach to social media.

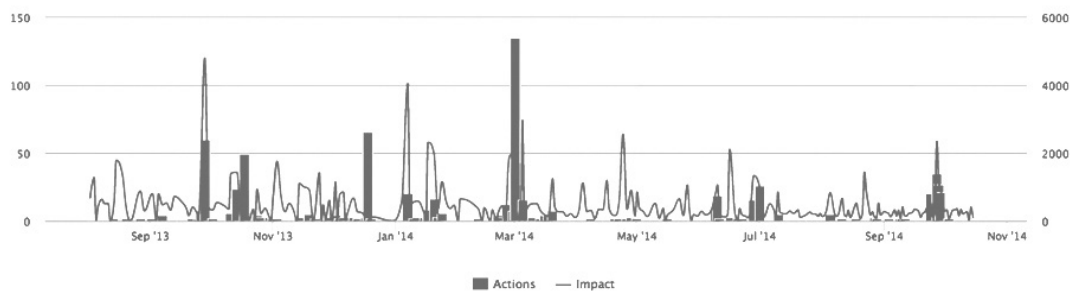
The next section provides an overview of Acne Studios' social-media activity across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for a fifteen-month period from 1 August 2013 to 31 October 2014, as described in the previous chapter.

6.2.6 Review of social-media activity

As of 30 October 2014, Acne Studios' Facebook page had a total of 490,082 fans, which is the largest Facebook community among the case studies in this research. It is also the largest community for Acne Studios, somewhat bigger than on Instagram. The average number of reactions (likes, comments and shares) per brand action was 136.42 during the analysis period. This is slightly above the market average of 117.16 in Acne Studios' market segment, but considerably lower than the best of market, which is 1,1352.0 in the bridge market segment. Benchmarking to the core business segment, apparel, Acne is performing below the average, since the market average is 211.19 and best of market 41,467.0 (www.fashionbi.com).

Figure 6.3 shows the level of impact measured as fans' reactions to Acne Studios' posts by liking, commenting and sharing, over the selected period. These data give an overview of changes in the level of engagement per action of the brand. The left-hand axis measures the number of posts made by the brand on Facebook (i.e. actions) and the right-hand axis shows the corresponding fan activity in the form of likes, comments and shares.

FIGURE 6.3 ACNE STUDIOS' FACEBOOK IMPACT
(SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)

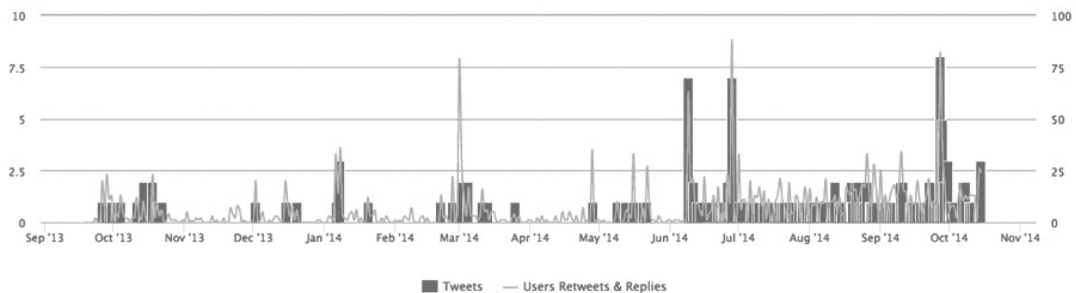


There are clear peaks in the brand-activity data, mostly taking place around the Paris Fashion Weeks in September 2013, March 2014 and again in September 2014. While the highest brand activity appeared around the show in March 2014, the user's reactions were the highest in September 2013. In contrast to Hunter and Matthew Williamson, whose user-engagement primarily followed the brand actions, Acne Studios' followers remained engaged with the brand regardless of several quiet periods in brand activity.

The Twitter activity was analysed for the same fifteen-month period. Acne Stu-

dios' Twitter account had 96,839 followers on 30 October 2014. Figure 6.4 shows the impact of the brand's Twitter activity in the form of users' retweets and replies over the selected period. These data highlight changes in the level of user engagement per action of the brand. The left-hand axis measures the number of tweets made by the brand and the right-hand axis shows the corresponding user activity in the form of retweets and replies.

FIGURE 6.4 ACNE STUDIOS' TWITTER IMPACT
(SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)



The data reveal a significant change in the level of brand activity from June 2014, when the new social-media strategy was launched. Until June 2014, the level of brand activity and impact was low, with the exception of small peaks around Christmas and the shows during fashion weeks (SS14 show in October 2013 and FW14 show in March 2014). However, from June 2014 onwards the level of activity and impact has increased significantly. There are still peaks around the fashion weeks, in particular the menswear shows in July 2014 and the SS15 womenswear show in October 2014, but the activity and user engagement remain high between the shows too (see Figure 6.4).

FIGURE 6.5 ACNE STUDIOS' TWITTER IMPACT BY DAY
 (SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)

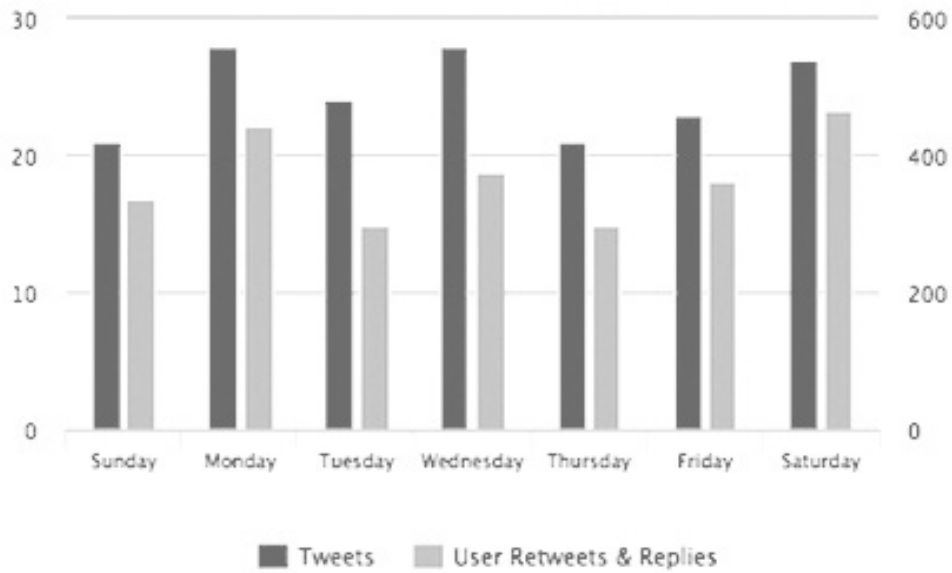


FIGURE 6.6 ACNE STUDIOS' TWITTER IMPACT BY HOUR
 (SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)

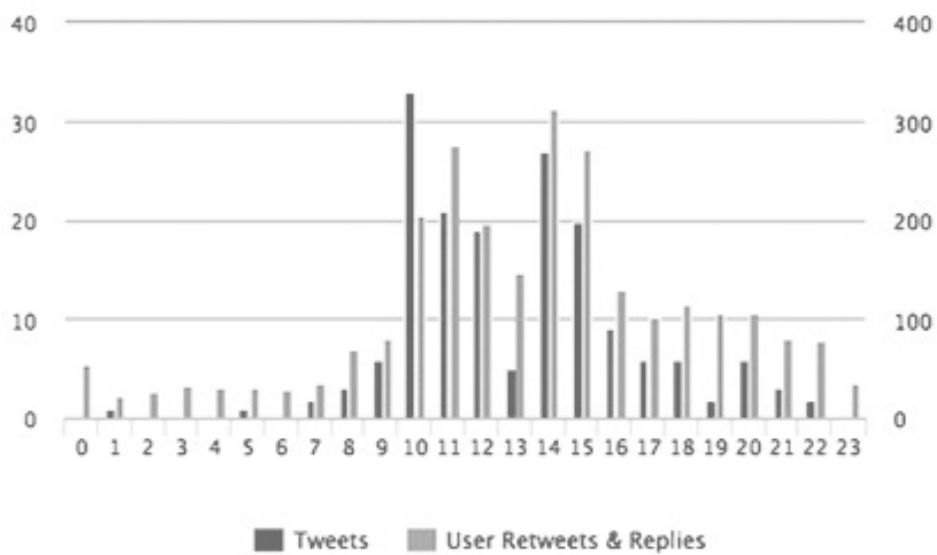


Figure 6.5 shows the level of user engagement on Twitter by day while Figure 6.6 displays engagement by hour. Acne Studios' community is most active on Saturdays and Mondays. Looking at the reactions by hour, the user activity follows the brand activity closely. Evenings are quiet, while the highest user activity appears during the day.

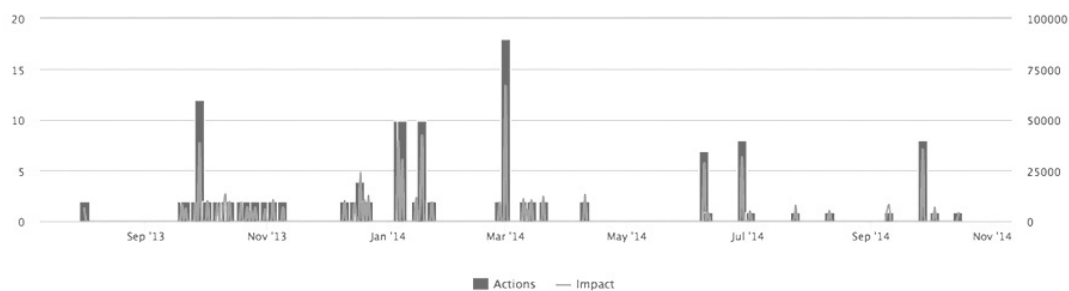
The ten most commonly used Twitter hashtags were tracked during the same period. The brand has not created signature campaign hashtags, and the only regular hashtag is #AcneStudios (or #acnestudios) which has been well adopted by the brand's community. Together with the official hashtag for Paris Fashion Week, #PFW, #AcneStudios consistently appeared in the top two hashtags for both brand and user posts.

TABLE 6.2 TOP TEN TWITTER HASHTAGS FOR ACNE STUDIOS
(SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)

BRAND HASHTAG	OCCURENCES	USER HASHTAG	OCCURENCES
#AcneStudios	125	#AcneStudios	1,705
#PFW	24	#PFW	1,606
#SS15	21	#SS15	443
#Resort2015	10	#fashion	391
#acnestudios	6	#pfw	378
#FW14	5	#acnestudios	372
#pfw	4	#ootd	228
#underwearmemos	2	#acne	212
#NYFW	2	#style	156
PreFall2014	2	Resort2015	153

Finally, the Acne Studios' Instagram impact was analysed. The brand's Instagram account had 437,171 followers on 30 October 2014. This is the largest Instagram community among the case studies in this research. Figure 6.7 shows the level of impact of Acne Studios' Instagram activity on users' reactions (liking and commenting) over the selected period. In particular, the data show changes in the level of user-engagement per brand action. The left-hand axis measures the number of posts made by the brand on Instagram and the right-hand axis shows the corresponding fan activity in the form of likes and comments.

FIGURE 6.7 ACNE STUDIOS' INSTAGRAM IMPACT
(SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)



Both the level of brand actions and users' reactions was irregular during the period. Acne Studios only joined Instagram on September 2013 and the brand did not create specific Instagram campaigns during the first year. Again, the fashion weeks are reflected in increased activity both for the womenswear shows in September 2013, March 2014 and in September 2014, and the menswear show in July 2014. In addition, the top 10 hashtags on Instagram were tracked during the analysis period (Table 6.3). Unlike on Twitter, the leading hashtag #acnestudios was not adopted by the brand's Instagram community, who used the former brand name #acne instead.

TABLE 6.3 TOP TEN INSTAGRAM HASHTAGS FOR ACNE STUDIOS
(SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)

BRAND HASHTAG	OCCURENCES	USER HASHTAG	OCCURENCES
#acnestudios	133	#acne	23,342
#pfw	52	#fashion	20,724
#ss14	20	#ootd	11,384
#preaw14	18	#style	9,521
#womenswear	14	#outfit	7,552
#vivianesassen	14	#streetstyle	6,434
#ss15	13	#givency	5,913
#fw2014	10	#balenciaga	5,706
#backstage	10	#celine	4,537
#aw14	8	#love	3,412

This section provided an overview of Acne Studios' social-media activity across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for a fifteen-month period from 1 August 2013 to 31 October 2014. The data reveal a significant change in the level of brand activity and user engagement from June 2014, when the new social-media strategy was launched. While social media were previously used for one-way commercial messages from the e-commerce department, the new strategy aims for a visual two-way dialogue and interaction with consumers. This shift has resulted in increased engagement across social-media platforms and the brand's overall reach has developed considerably.

6.3 Hunter

6.3.1 Company background

Hunter is a British heritage brand renowned for its iconic rain boot, the Original boot. Founded in Scotland in 1856 by American entrepreneur Henry Lee Norris as the North British Rubber Company, the brand has a long history of innovation and pioneering design, which defines the company's mission statement today. Headquartered in Edinburgh, Scotland, with offices in London, New York and Düsseldorf, the brand builds on its heritage of almost 160 years, creating footwear and outerwear to protect the wearer from the weather and perform across all terrains. The Original boot is at the heart of this. Introduced in 1956, the design is still made from 28 parts, using many of the same heritage techniques. Hunter holds two Royal Warrants by Appointment to HM The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh as suppliers of waterproof footwear, an accolade awarded to those who have provided products to the royal households for at least five years. Hunter received the first in 1977 from the Duke of Edinburgh and the second from HM The Queen in 1986.

In 2011, UK-based Searchlight Capital Partners L.P. became majority shareholders in the company. Signalling the start of a new path for the brand, James Seuss was appointed CEO in 2012, followed by Alasdair Willis as Creative Director in 2013. Under Willis's creative direction, Hunter launched Hunter Original with a debut runway show at London Fashion Week, showcasing new footwear, outerwear and knitwear alongside the iconic Original boot. Moreover, Hunter opened its first global flagship store on Regent Street in London in 2014.

6.3.2 *Key appointments*

Reflecting the new vision for Hunter under the creative direction of Alasdair Willis, the brand made significant investments in its digital strategy during 2014. In January 2014, the company announced that Michelle Sadlier, formerly the Social Media Manager at Net-A-Porter, had joined Hunter as Global Social Media Manager. She was appointed to develop and implement a social-media strategy and create a global editorial strategy for www.hunterboots.com, which relaunched in 2014 as a new digital destination aligning the brand, marketing and business objectives of Hunter. Nine months into her new role, in November 2014, Sadlier was promoted to Head of Innovation and Social Media, demonstrating the strategic importance of social media at Hunter. To investigate the role of social media in Hunter's marketing communications strategy, Sadlier was interviewed over an extended period of time, not just a single sitting, as suggested by Yin (2009). An open dialogue was continued from the first interview meeting, and Sadlier provided updates on the recent developments as the companies' social-media presence evolved during the research. Her role as an informant was instrumental, since she also suggested other people for further interviews and recommended additional sources of evidence in various formats.

Figure 6.8 shows the key moments in the development of social-media strategy.

FIGURE 6.8 KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN HUNTER'S STRATEGY

October 2012	James Seuss appointed as CEO and President
October 2013	Alasdair Willis appointed as Creative Director
January 2014	Michelle Sadlier appointed as Global Social Media Manager
February 2014	Debut runway show at the London Fashion Week
February 2014	Social media strategy launched
February 2014	Website relaunched

6.3.3 Motivations

Hunter's social-media strategy is closely aligned with and informed by a company mission statement whose cornerstones are innovation and pioneering. 'Everything we do has to be innovative and pioneering. We're all very clear about what our mission statement is and so we're all working towards the same goal, even when it's about a bespoke channel', Sadlier explains.

While Hunter's social-media strategy is informed by the company mission statement, it has specific objectives: to increase brand awareness, grow the community and drive engagement. Brand awareness is deemed the most important, as pointed out by Saldier: 'Number one objective is to increase brand awareness amongst our channels and in the social-media sphere.' Brand awareness is deemed particularly important now that the company is going through a period of change.

The second objective is community growth. Sadlier mentions that 99% of all interactions with the community have positive sentiment, and that the brand looks after the community through one-to-one interactions.

I want to harness that community. Every single morning I go in and I 'like' every single photo. If it's a great photo, then I feel that we either need to repost it or even just share it here internally and I need to say, 'Look guys, you should see what our community are doing', or commenting on a photo to say, 'This is great, thank you for sharing with us.' And you'd be surprised what further sentiment you get back from them. They go 'Oh my god, Hunter just liked my Instagram!' I think there's a real element of listening and interacting on social that still doesn't happen across a lot of brands. So for me, that's just as important as posting itself. I also want to make sure that I'm interacting.

Along with increasing brand awareness and growing the Hunter community globally and locally, the third objective is to drive engagement. 'That's definitely the third cornerstone of our objectives. Because there's no point in putting out content if it's the wrong content that's not getting the right engagement, and it's not therefore reaching more people', Saldier emphasises.

At Hunter, the motivations for social media shifted significantly as the company was going through a major brand repositioning. In particular, brand awareness became a key motivation while the company was going through a period of change. This finding suggests that brand characteristics have a direct impact on motivations. The impact is discussed in more details in the cross-case analysis and in the development of the conceptual framework.

6.3.4 Channel strategy

The most important social-media channels for Hunter are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Facebook is deemed very significant from a global perspective despite the recent critique the platform has received for its revenue model and algorithm. 'I know that there's talk about the Facebook algorithm, but there's still a pheno-

menal amount of people on Facebook’, Sadlier explains. ‘The amazing thing about Facebook is that it has so much data and you can target by city, age, even college if you want to.’

One of the key challenges for Hunter is the omnichannel approach (Rigby, 2011): ‘Omnichannel is an easy word to say but a very difficult thing to deliver’, Sadlier remarks. ‘It’s a real buzz word at the moment but I think there’s a lot of internal structural stuff that needs to happen before you can really be omnichannel for a customer.’

For Sadlier, omnichannel means not only recognising a customer on different platforms but also being able to deliver a consistent brand experience in an optimised way, regardless of where the customer chooses to engage with the brand – for example, ensuring that the in-store environment delivers the same brand experience as the digital and social channels. To make this clear internally in the organisation, Sadlier provides a one-to-one social-media briefing with every new employee that is hired to the store. She explains:

I want all our store employees to be our fan on Facebook, follow us on Instagram and follow us on Twitter, because I want to make sure that if say, a German customer comes in and says ‘Oh I follow you on Facebook and I saw these green boots and I was just wondering if you still have them’, I want the agent to be able to say ‘Oh yes, I know what you mean, we have those in stock.’

Another challenge is measuring social media, which is currently done manually though weekly insight reports across all social channels that Sadlier prepares for the company CEO and top management to inform future content strategy. The following statement by Sadlier illustrates the role of reporting at Hunter:

Listening and measurement are really important in social. I don’t think that ever

gets shouted about enough. For me, it comes down to really basic things. Every single Monday I do a weekly report across all of my channels. I notice fan growth across all of our channels, I record what the top post was, noting if there was any kind of indicative thing that we should consider for our future content strategy: were there any notable pieces of content, any notable influencers that engaged with us who hadn't before? It's a full insight report, so: top post, top engagement, most-reached post, what's working for us and what's not working for us, and then some interesting feedback that we may have received through social. Because our CEO isn't seeing all the tweets that come through, it's really important that I give him a snippet of what's happening on our channels both from an outgoing perspective and from an incoming perspective. So at the moment it's all manual, believe it or not.

For Hunter, listening and measurement are crucial in creating relevant social-media content and understanding how the platforms are evolving. Furthermore, sharing the insights from the brand's social-media channels and community is important in creating a social culture internally in the organisation.

Table 6.4 summarises Hunter's channel strategy.

TABLE 6.4 OVERVIEW OF HUNTER'S CHANNEL STRATEGY

CHANNEL	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
MOTIVATIONS	brand awareness, engagement, community growth	brand awareness, engagement	brand awareness, engagement, community growth
CHANNEL STRATEGY	key channel for product communication and targeted campaigns	responsive channel for sharing news, press features and live events	visual platform for sharing engaging content
CONTENT	product images, campaign images, targeted campaigns	news, press features, events, customer service	campaign images, show images, brand storytelling
ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTE	'The amazing thing about Facebook is that it has so much data and you can target by city, age, even college if you want to.'	'I think there's a real element of listening and interacting on social that still doesn't happen across a lot of brands. For me that's just as important as posting itself.'	'I want to harness that community. Every single morning I go in and I 'like' every single photo. If it's a great photo, then I feel that we either need to repost it.'

6.3.5 Content

Image 6.3 (see Appendix 1) shows a typical post that appeared on the brand's Facebook wall on 25 July 2014. Hunter's brand voice on social media applies

tight copy-writing and strong, colourful imagery. The brand identity and vision are clearly reflected in the content that is being pushed, focusing on adventure, outdoor and weather, which are at the heart of the brand.

The new content strategy was initiated in February 2014, when Hunter staged its debut runway show at the London Fashion Week. The brand launched the new Hunter Original Autumn/Winter 2014 collection, the first under the creative direction of Alasdhair Willis. A social-media campaign was created to amplify visibility around this milestone moment and showcase the launch of Hunter Original, ensuring that existing customers as well as new audiences discovered its social content. Sadlier describes the objectives as follows:

We needed to have a moment where people paid attention to what we were doing, and not just from a consumer perspective, but it was really important that the fashion industry stood up and were like, ‘Oh, what are Hunter doing?’ The objective really was about reaching as many new eyeballs as we could, but also delivering our new brand vision in a way that we wanted to continue forward.

A signature hashtag #BEAHUNTERORIGINAL was created for the campaign. The official announcement of the first ever catwalk show was made via Instagram, and Hunter used Instagram videos as a second-screen experience to share its debut catwalk show and engage with fans in real time. Created as part of the #BEAHUNTERORIGINAL social-media campaign, the brand uploaded short video clips to Instagram to capture the inspiration behind the collection and allow a deeper insight into what was being seen on the runway. Hunter also invited three established Instagram users to the show to capture images from behind the scenes, and the entire show was live-streamed on the company website. Moreover, the Instagram videos were used as ‘teasers’ ahead of the show day in order to build a social buzz around the high-profile event. Glenn Miller, who leads partnerships for Facebook and Instagram across EMEA, was quoted in *The Drum* (2014), saying:

The way the team at Hunter has used Instagram to create a second-screen experience at their first London Fashion Week show really demonstrates the freedom and flexibility Instagram offers. It gives brands a visual platform to reach their fans anywhere in the world with creative, engaging content that makes them feel part of something special.

Overall, Hunter created rich social-media content to capture its debut runway show. Along with the Instagram videos, the brand launched an innovative partnership with a magician @DynamoMagician, who brought his two million Twitter followers into the conversation. The campaign wove a real-time narrative on Twitter to share an insider's experience of London Fashion Week, driving engagement with both old and new audiences and maximising brand exposure. #BEA-HUNTERORIGINAL stood out among the London Fashion Week social buzz. A report released by Twitter (2014) shows that the hashtag generated 16.9 million Promoted Trend impressions, and fashion influencers such as @TheGQStyle, @WHWearing and @PORTERMAGAZINE used the hashtag in their tweets, extending its impact. Throughout the day of its debut runway show, Hunter saw a consistently high level of engagement. The average engagement rate for Promoted Tweets was 8%, with a peak engagement rate of 25.52% for a tweeted image that offered an insider's view of the show's front-row guests (Twitter, 2014).

In parallel with the recent growth of visual social media in terms of fashion influence (Arthur, 2013; Bautista, 2013; Schneier, 2014), Hunter emphasises the strategic importance of 'Instagrammers' as new influencers and essential partners for content creation. For the debut show at London Fashion Week, the brand collaborated with selected Instagram artists to cover the Hunter Original presentation.

That's the community I want to work with and that's why we invited these three Instagrammers who are amazing, like artists in themselves, either photographers or small movie-video artists. And we gave them no brief. We just said 'Come to

the show, shoot what you like. If you don't shoot anything, fine, but we'd just love for you to interpret it in your way.' And they created some really beautiful visuals for us, which we'll be reusing later when the collection actually goes live.

While many fashion brands have previously worked with bloggers and celebrities, Hunter sees the strategic value in partnering with Instagram artists, who are quickly becoming the new influencers in the visually led social-media environment.

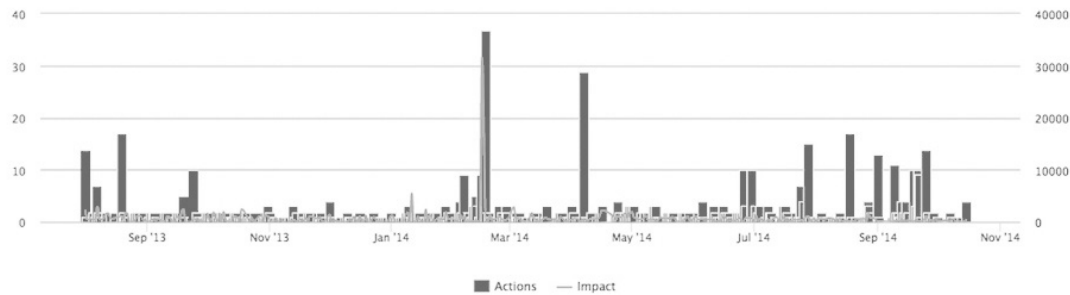
The next section provides an overview of Hunter's social-media activity across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for a fifteen-month period from 1 August 2013 to 31 October 2014.

6.3.6 Review of social-media activity

Hunter's Facebook page had a total of 295,129 followers on 30 October 2014. The average number of reactions (likes, comments and shares) per brand action was 226.43 during the analysis period from August 2013 to October 2014. This is slightly above the market average of 117.16 in Hunter's market segment, but considerably lower than the best of market, which is 1,1352.0 in the bridge market segment. Benchmarking to the core business segment, shoes, Hunter is below the average, since the market average is 520.08 and best of market 55,670 (www.fashionbi.com).

Figure 6.9 shows the level of impact measured as fans' reactions to Hunter's posts by liking, commenting and sharing, over the selected period. These data give an overview of changes in the level of engagement per action of the brand. The left-hand axis measures the number of posts made by the brand on Facebook (i.e. actions) and the right-hand axis shows the corresponding fan activity in the form of likes, comments and shares.

FIGURE 6.9 HUNTER'S FACEBOOK IMPACT
(SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)

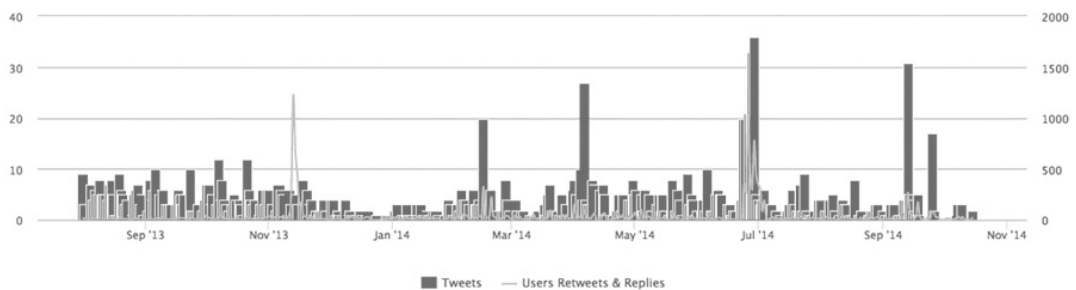


The data show increased brand activity around Hunter's first two catwalk shows at London Fashion Week in February 2014 and September 2014. However, the impact (measured as the average reactions by fans made per action of the brand) was particularly high only around the debut show on February 2014, while the show activities on September 2014 had no significant impact on user activity. The objective for the social-media campaign around the London Fashion Week debut was arguably achieved, however: 'We needed to have a moment where people paid attention to what we were doing, and not just from a consumer perspective – it was really important that the fashion industry stood up and were like, "Oh what are Hunter doing?"', Saldier recalls.

Moreover, Twitter activity was analysed for the same fifteen-month period. Hunter's Twitter page had 63,195 followers on 30 October 2014. Figure 6.10 shows the impact of Hunter's Twitter activity to users' retweets and replies over the selected period. These data highlight changes in the level of user engagement per action of the brand. The left-hand axis measures the number of tweets made by the brand and the right-hand axis shows the corresponding user activity in the

form of retweets and replies. In contrast to Facebook, Hunter’s Twitter activity is more equally divided across the analysis period with several significant peaks. However, as with the Facebook data, the debut show at London Fashion Week on February 2014 stands out as the of highest points for both brand and user activity.

FIGURE 6.10 HUNTER’S TWITTER IMPACT
(SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)



In addition, the impact-by-day-of-week graph shows the level of user engagement on Twitter day by day. This shows on which day it is the best to make the posts in order to improve engagement. The impact-by-hour-of-day graph displays the level of engagement hour by hour, showing which are the best hours in a day to schedule the post in order to improve engagement. Unlike with Acne Studios’ Twitter community, Hunter’s followers are most active in the middle of the week, in particular on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Looking at the reactions by hour, the highest user activity tends to appear around 4–5pm GMT. (Figures 6.11 and 6.12)

FIGURE 6.11 HUNTER'S TWITTER IMPACT BY DAY
 (SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)

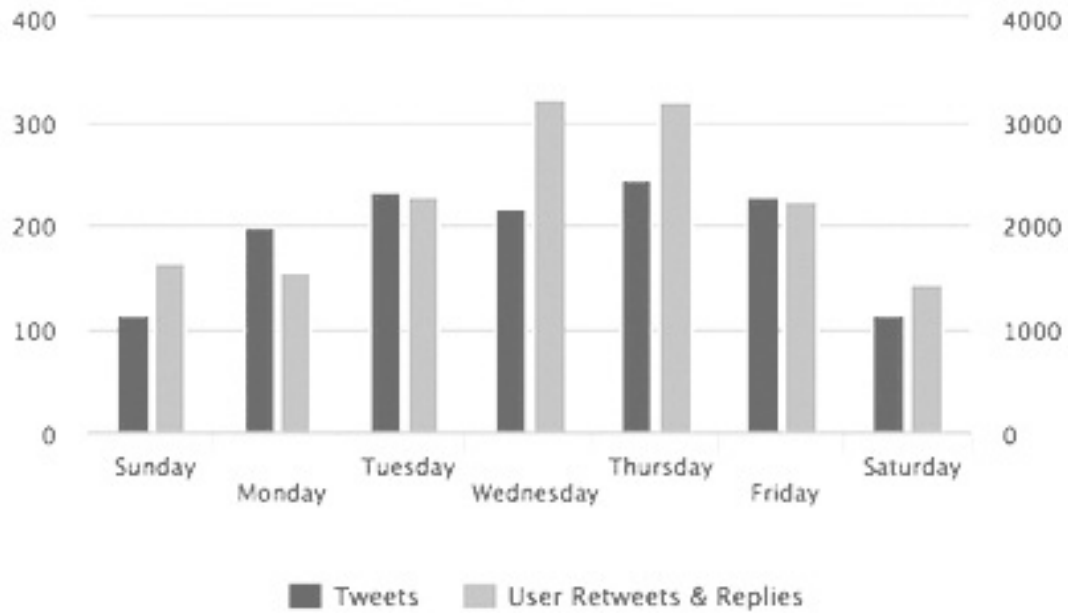
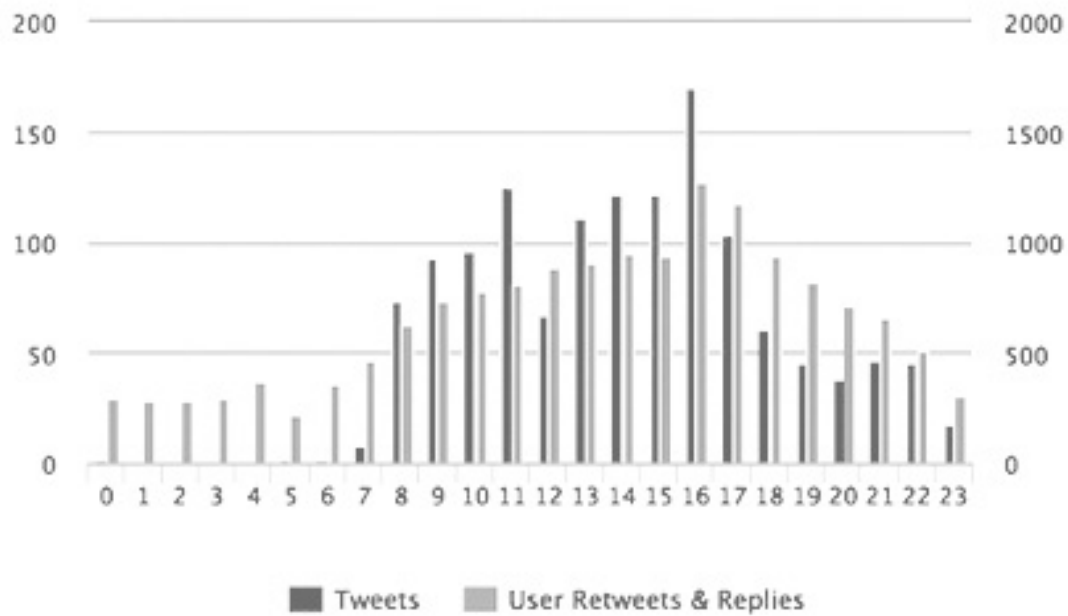


FIGURE 6.12 HUNTER'S TWITTER IMPACT BY HOUR
 (SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)



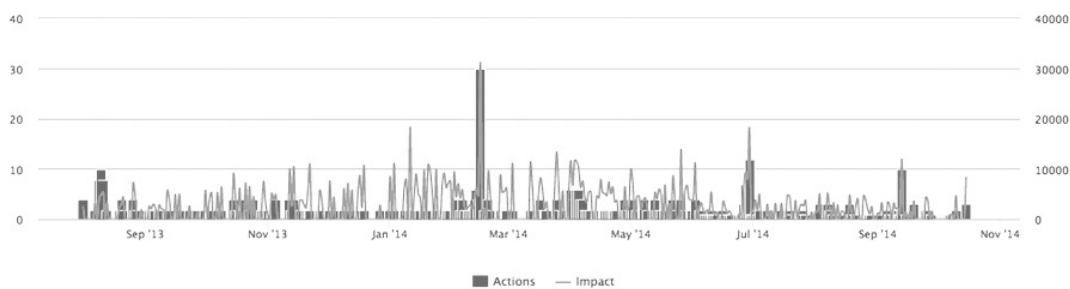
The ten most commonly used Twitter hashtags were tracked during the analysis period, both those used by Hunter and those appearing in the users' feeds (Table 6.5). The first campaign hashtag #BEAHUNTERORIGINAL (also spelled #BeAHunterOriginal and #Beahunteroriginal), originally created for the London Fashion Week debut in February 2014, was frequently used by the brand and its Twitter community throughout the analysis period. In addition, the two other key campaign hashtags #BEAHEADLINER and #BEAPIONEER appeared at the top of both lists. Overall, Hunter's hashtag strategy has been well received in its Twitter community.

TABLE 6.5 TOP TEN TWITTER HASHTAGS FOR HUNTER
(SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)

BRAND HASHTAG	OCCURENCES	USER HASHTAG	OCCURENCES
#LFW	155	#BEAHEADLINER	4,043
#Glastonbury	113	#BEAPIONEER	2,950
#HunterBoots	111	#LFW	1,580
#BEAHEADLINER	87	#RT	1,545
#Beahunteroriginal	63	#giveaway	1,129
#BEAHUNTERORIGINAL	51	#Comp	1,119
#BeAHunterOriginal	42	#Beahunteroriginal	721
#hunterboots	38	#CATrickOrTweet	698
#SoundCloud	38	#Win	602
#NowPlaying	35	#Glastonbury	526

Finally, Hunter’s Instagram impact was analysed. The Instagram account had 137,593 followers on 30 October 2014, and it is the fastest-growing community for Hunter. Figure 6.13 shows the level of impact of Hunter’s Instagram activity on users’ reactions (liking and commenting) over the selected period. In particular, the data highlight changes in the level of user engagement per brand action. The left-hand axis measures the number of posts made by the brand on Instagram and the right-hand axis shows the corresponding fan activity in the form of likes and comments. On Instagram, there is one clearly visible peak, which occurred around the February 2014 London Fashion Week, where Hunter used Instagram as a second-screen experience to share its debut catwalk show and engage with fans in real time.

FIGURE 6.13 HUNTER’S INSTAGRAM IMPACT
(SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)



Similar to Twitter, the top ten hashtags on Instagram were tracked during the analysis period, both those used by Hunter and those appearing in the users’ feeds (Table 6.6). Unlike on Twitter, the leading brand hashtags #beahunteroriginal and #beaheadliner were not adopted by the Instagram community. Instead, more product-focused hashtags such as #rainboots or #wellies were attached to the brand.

TABLE 6.6 TOP TEN INSTAGRAM HASHTAGS FOR HUNTER
(SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)

BRAND HASHTAG	OCCURENCES	USER HASHTAG	OCCURENCES
#Beahunteroriginal	90	#hunter	14,216
#regram	57	#ootd	8,241
#beaheadliner	49	#fashion	7,773
#lfw	36	#rainboots	6,315
#glastonbury	35	#wellies	4,876
#whichblueru	30	#boots	4,855
#hunterfootprints	29	#style	4,822
#hunterboots	12	#rain	4,647
#festival	9	#love	4,574
#jumpstagram	9	#hunter	3,721

This section provided an overview of Hunter’s social-media activity across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for a fifteen-month period from 1 August 2013 to 31 October 2014. Since Michelle Sadlier’s appointment, Hunter’s social-media presence has grown steadily across channels and the brand’s overall digital reach has developed significantly. In particular, reach and engagement have increased notably since the launch of the new social-media strategy.

6.4 Matthew Williamson

6.4.1 *Company background*

Matthew Williamson was founded in February 1997 by the designer Matthew Williamson and Joseph Velosa, who is currently the CEO. The brand's debut collection, 'Electric Angels', was shown at London Fashion Week in September 1997. The show of fourteen looks presented by established models including Kate Moss, Helena Christensen and Jade Jagger made a significant impact on the fashion industry. In 2005, Matthew Williamson took over as Creative Director at the LVMH owned Italian house, Emilio Pucci, while continuing at the design helm of his own company. Three years later, in September 2008, he returned to London full time in order to focus on his own label's expansion.

In August 2007, TSM Capital acquired an equity stake in Matthew Williamson Holdings Ltd. Baugur Group, which invested in the company in 2006, maintains a significant equity interest in the business to date. TSM Capital made the investment in collaboration with the Aronsson Group. Combined, Matthew Williamson and Joseph Velosa, the company's founders, retain the majority stake in the company.

Matthew Williamson is renowned for his highly recognisable signature aesthetic: print, embellishment, attention to detail and kaleidoscopic colour. The collections encapsulate a bohemian spirit and a laid-back sense of glamour. The luxury fashion house produces four women's ready-to-wear collections annually and currently has a global customer portfolio that includes 170 wholesale accounts and three standalone flagship stores including the Mayfair store in London, as well as Dubai and Qatar.

6.4.2 Key appointments

Matthew Williamson was the first of the three case companies to launch a digital strategy, in October 2012, when Rosanna Falconer started in her new role as Head of Digital (Smith, 2012). Formerly a digital-marketing executive at the British Fashion Council, she was appointed to develop a digital strategy for Matthew Williamson, who had previously been reluctant to engage with digital and social media (TFOL, 2013). In his interview with Dolly Jones, the Editor of Vogue.co.uk, Williamson talked about the brand's shift to digital (www.matthewwilliamson.com):

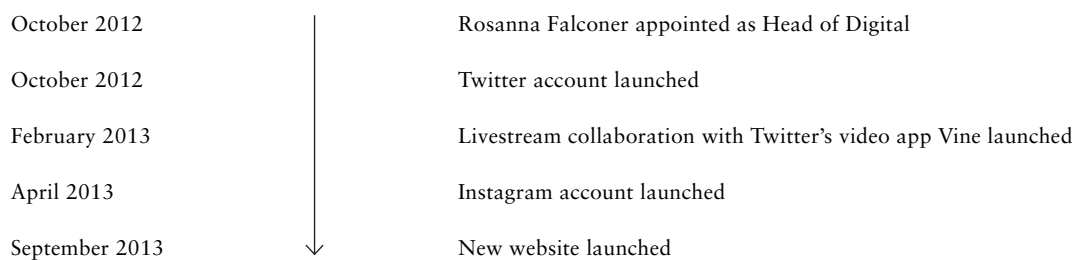
I have been cautious about moving into the digital world, as I wanted to do it with a bit of integrity. There is a lot of noise out there and I wanted to make sure our voice was relevant. We were quite late to the party but now we are in the middle of the dance floor!

Since Falconer's appointment, Matthew Williamson's digital presence has grown steadily and the company is now renowned for its digital initiatives and strategic partnerships around fashion weeks. Moreover, Falconer was promoted to Communications Director in November 2014, pointing to the strategic importance of social media in the organisation. While she is still responsible for the digital and social media, she now also oversees communications, PR and marketing. To investigate the role of social media in Matthew Williamson's marketing-communications strategy, Falconer was interviewed, like the representatives from Acne Studios and Hunter, over an extended period of time, not just a single sitting, as suggested by Yin (2009). An open dialogue was continued from the first interview, and Falconer provided updates on recent developments as the company's social-media presence evolved during the research. Her role as an informant was instrumental for the research overall, since she also suggested other people for further interviews, provided introductions and recommended additional sources

of evidence in various formats. Moreover, an in-depth interview was conducted with Will Ryan, the Founder of Electric Lab, who was responsible for developing Matthew Williamson's website and e-commerce platform together with Falconer, Williamson and their team.

Figure 6.14 shows the key moments in the development of social-media strategy

FIGURE 6.14 KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN MATTHEW WILLIAMSON'S STRATEGY



6.4.3 Motivations

The objectives for Matthew Williamson's social-media strategy are brand awareness, engagement and commerce. Brand awareness is highlighted as the most important. 'I think that social media is a brand-building exercise first and foremost and ... with all our social networks together we're able to reach over 100,000 each day', Falconer summarises.

Along with establishing a strong brand voice across the major social-media platforms, an important milestone in the brand's digital strategy was the launch of

a new website comprising a responsive web-based magazine and an e-commerce platform. The aim of the new digital destination was captured in three words: ‘content, commerce and community’. The website was built by London-based agency Electric Lab (www.electriclabs.com), who worked closely with Williamson and his team to find inspiration from traditional print including mechanisms such as drop caps, pull quotes, captions, magazine bindings and print tests. The aim was that the web-based magazine would feel completely ‘shoppable’ with seamless boundaries between the e-commerce and the magazine. The site uses Web 2.0 technology, creating a frictionless shopping experience and pushing the limits of what is possible with the latest web technologies. It was designed to be fully responsive in order to create a consistent brand experience on mobile, tablet, laptop and desktop. The site uses Ajax page loading, which means that the customer never sees the entire page refresh, but new content is displayed continuously on the screen, making the site quick to browse. The site has helped Matthew Williamson to achieve significant growth in online sales figures.

Will Ryan, the founder of Electric Lab described the process as follows:

With Matthew Williamson, from the start we tried to really understand what they wanted, what their needs were, and then just constantly worked closely with them throughout the project. So we’d be meeting them on a weekly basis, giving them snapshots of the site and what we were up to so we could constantly adjust everything so that it would be perfect for what they wanted, rather than doing a whole disappearing act for ages and then coming back to present, and doing a big ‘Ta-dah!’ moment.

Ryan recalls a hesitant start, which is often part of the picture when luxury fashion brands reach out to digital (Maman Larraufie and Kourdoughli, 2014):

I don’t know if Matthew was that enthused with digital and online websites. He’d

probably say he was a bit of a tech phobic himself, and in the first meeting it was about getting him enthused about the project and really excited about it. As soon as he was on board, he was able to open up more and really express exactly what he wanted and the adjustments he wanted to make. So we'd meet him every three or four weeks to present where we were at, and make sure that he got what he wanted.

Despite the strong editorial focus and investments in an innovative web-based magazine at www.matthewwilliamson.com, the main objective of the site was to increase online sales. Ryan describes the objectives as follows.

I suppose the main objective is, to be honest ... the fashion business, it's not charity, and they wanted to increase turnover on the site. Which they've achieved – they've done really well. So their key objective was definitely reached. Other objectives are really trying to lead towards this ultimate thing, which is trying to make more money on the site.

The other objectives to which he refers were related to content and community, as highlighted both by Falconer – ‘My buzz words in the brief were commerce, content and community’ – and by Ryan:

Other objectives were trying to communicate their brand better, trying to make the product look more luxury, trying to make them feel at the cutting edge of digital fashion, just really trying to communicate and strike a bond with their customers. Because they've got a loyal fan and customer base, but they didn't really have a good way of communicating going on, so that was really it: trying over time to slowly build up a relationship by being a really great brand with cool behind-the-scenes stuff going on, and giving a glimpse into that Matthew Williamson sort of world. Those were the key objectives.

Further to communicating the brand in the digital environment, Matthew William-

son is constantly striving for an omnichannel approach (Rigby, 2011). An early example of the firm's efforts to create a consistent brand experience across the on-line and in-store environments is to coordinate the window display of the physical store with the landing page at www.matthewwilliamson.com (see Image 6.6 in Appendix 1). The aim was to provide the same 'entrance' into the world of Matthew Williamson, regardless of where the customer decides to engage with the brand.

The e-commerce site has been very successful in terms of growth in online sales and the brand's overall digital reach. Moreover, it has brought an overarching digital culture across the Matthew Williamson organisation. Ryan observes that the real benefits go far beyond the site itself, since the process has helped to spread a whole encompassing digital strategy in the organisation. It created: 'a real focus on digital and getting everyone at Matthew Williamson to really believe that digital is the way forward, and that they can really increase their turnover and revenues by widening the reach of their digital and social', Ryan states.

Moreover, Matthew Williamson announced a renewed digital focus in April 2015 with plans to focus its business attention online and on license-based operations (Bumpus, 2015). The brand's collections are now sold exclusively online, in season and directly to the customer – a response to customers' increasing 'buy now, wear now' mentality, according to Falconer. 'Our online success can be traced to our focus on delivering product with love and attention – that personal offline relationship that can often be overlooked in e-commerce', she says (Bumpus, 2015).

The digital efforts at Matthew Williamson have caused a shift in both brand characteristics and organisational structures, which in turn affected motivations for engaging with social media. This finding suggests that brand characteristic and organisational structures together can have an impact on motivations. These relationships are discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

6.4.4 Channel strategy

Matthew Williamson's social-media strategy focuses on three main channels: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Facebook was the only channel where Matthew Williamson had an account when Falconer joined the company in October 2012. She took over the account and created a clear content strategy around various regular weekly features: 'Facebook had already been around but it wasn't really there, so I came up with various regular weekly features to use on our Facebook. The most popular was called Matthew Magnified.'

'Matthew Magnified' (also referred to as 'Magnified') was created for featuring, or magnifying, a specific product detail, print or embellishment, elements that are at the core of the brand aesthetic. Other regularly used features are 'Spotted' for celebrity and press features, 'Just In' for new store arrivals, and 'Handpicked' for promoting a product. Image 6.4 (see Appendix 1) shows a typical post for the 'Magnified' feature. There is often a strong element of storytelling involved. The copy-writing is rich and editorial, and the brand voice is authentic. Moreover, a link is provided to the brand's web-based magazine at www.matthewwilliamson.com where the story continues.

The Twitter account was launched in October 2012, on Falconer's first day in her new role, alongside the announcement of the digital strategy (Smith, 2012). The brand took over Falconer's former Twitter account from her role at the British Fashion Council, which had an audience of some 4,000 at that time. While Falconer was new in her post at Matthew Williamson, she had been following the brand carefully since the debut collection 'Electric Angels' in 1997, and had been working closely with the brand in her role at the British Fashion Council. A good deal of research and planning was put into how the Twitter voice was going to be launched. 'With Twitter, you can't launch the account without knowing your voice and without really knowing the brand inside out', Falconer points out. She

also highlights the importance of integrity in establishing a luxury brand's voice on social media:

I make sure that any tweet I ever do, even if it's a tweet that I have to make for a sponsor, or a tweet that's more for customer services, I try and make it editorial and give it a beautiful image that isn't just the catwalk show, but the backstage, always trying to give them something different and exclusive.

The third key channel is Instagram. While Falconer manages other social channels, Instagram is Matthew Williamson's personal account, where he shares the visual story of his designs along with his personal photo diary. The Instagram account launched on 1 April 2013 and had more than 20,000 followers in the first month. Along with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, the brand is building up a Pinterest page and keeps an eye on Google+ for SEO purposes. In particular, Falconer notes that Google+ is important because 'the senior management here are really talking about the great affect that it's had on our search results'.

Table 6.7 summarises Matthew Williamson's channel strategy.

TABLE 6.7 OVERVIEW OF MATTHEW WILLIAMSON'S CHANNEL STRATEGY

CHANNEL	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
MOTIVATIONS	brand awareness, engagement, commerce	brand awareness, engagement, commerce	brand awareness, engagement
CHANNEL STRATEGY	driving traffic to website and communicating product with love and attention	sharing news, events, campaigns and promotions	Matthew Williamson's personal account
CONTENT	product images, campaign images, regular weekly features	news, live events, campaigns and promotions	visual story of Matthew Williamson's designs along with his personal photo diary
ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTE	'Facebook had already been around but it wasn't really there, so I came up with various regular weekly features to use on our Facebook.'	'I make sure that any tweet I ever do, even if it's a tweet that I have to make for a sponsor, or a tweet that's more for customer services, I try and make it editorial and give it a beautiful image.'	'It's quite difficult to reach out on Instagram because if a customer says, "Where can I buy this? Do you have this in my size?", the only option is a direct email request with "Please email Rosanna at Matthew Williamson."'

6.4.5 Content

The overarching theme for the content strategy is integrity, which is critical to any aspect of social media at Matthew Williamson:

Matthew's key word that he always uses is 'integrity'. It's got to seem authentic. We should never just be adding to that huge digital noise just because we can, just because we have the tweet button and we're a bit bored at four in the afternoon. Every single piece should be well thought out and have a reason behind it: either be a brand builder or a push to sales.

The first major social-media campaign in Matthew Williamson's new strategy was built around the Autumn/Winter 2014 show in February 2013. Utilising an existing brand hashtag #MatthewMagnified, the brand established a collaboration with Twitter's new video application Vine, which had only launched in January 2013, a couple of weeks before the show. Vine is a free mobile application that enables users to record and share short, looping video clips with a maximum length of six seconds (www.vine.co). Such use of new media at a high-profile event garnered significant coverage.

The campaign aimed to bring Matthew Williamson's social-media audience even closer to the show than the front row. The teaser Vine clips that were released before the event captured the key message of the campaign: 'See the show, closer than the front row.' During the show, animated imagery that zoomed in on the intricate detail of key looks was tweeted live through the new Vine app, as the looks hit the runway. International backstage photographer Sean Cunningham, who had previously created animated GIFs for Burberry and SHOWstudio (Arthur, 2013), exclusively shot the collection using Vine, in six-second video clips that, inspired by #MatthewMagnified, magnified the looks from the full garment to the smallest detail. But as Falconer remarked: 'It wasn't about tech for tech's sake. I'm

a great believer in only using digital innovation where it's a good brand fit and not just for the sake of it, or because something is new and hip.'

While Vine was a recently launched application that had attracted significant public attention in February 2013, the key rationale for the collaboration was to use the new platform together with an existing and established campaign strategy, #MatthewMagnified. This was already a regular feature on the brand's social-media content and the aim of the Vine collaboration was to take this concept further in a dynamic way during Fashion Week. 'We were looking for the ideal tech to do so, and it was a happy coincidence that this came together so well with Twitter and the launch of Vine', Falconer recalls.

Along with #MatthewMagnified, another established campaign hashtag at Matthew Williamson is #OhMW ('Oh My Williamson'), which stemmed from internal conversations, as illustrated by Falconer:

It was always something that us girls said at the office. Someone came in wearing a good outfit and we'd be like 'OhMW!'. But then I said, 'No, this is a real campaign'. And it was great because we started seeing that women would really go for it. You'd get grannies wearing a scarf and tweeting the hashtag. To get the hashtag going we did street style of friends and ourselves. It was a great way to get it going and people are really using it.

The internally used #OhMW has grown into a widespread crowdsourcing campaign through the strategy of encouraging customers to send pictures of themselves wearing a Matthew Williamson product. The aim is to create engagement with the brand's social-media community. Image 6.5 (see Appendix 1) below captures the essence of the campaign. This was the first image on Matthew Williamson's Instagram account. The copy stated: 'Instagram us your favourite @matthewwilliamson look with hashtag #OhMW to feature in our gallery. We're launching Instagram soon...'

To sum up, Matthew Williamson's digital strategy started with content and community, and now pushes commerce. According to Falconer, a good deal of website traffic comes from social-media platforms, although it is difficult to track precisely. On Facebook, there is a strong element of commerce involved and the Facebook analytics offer detailed insight. On Twitter, she can look at links and see exactly where the customer has come from. The biggest challenges are on Instagram, where the only direct hyperlink is the user's profile, only allowing tracking via the customer name. The technologies for accurate tracking and measuring are still limited at the time of writing this research, and a large part of the work is done manually. 'It's quite difficult to reach out on Instagram because if a customer says, "Where can I buy this? Do you have this in my size?", the only option is a direct email request with "Please email Rosanna at Matthew Williamson"', Falconer explains.

The new generation most at ease on social media are the luxury consumers of the future. Hence Falconer sees social media as a brand-building exercise first and foremost. 'Not every post will drive a sale – what an unwise strategy that would be – but this is the way we now consume content, and social shopping is the future', Falconer sums up.

In the next section, similar to Acne Studios and Hunter, Matthew Williamson's social-media activity is reviewed across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for a fifteen-month period from 1 August 2013 to 31 October 2014.

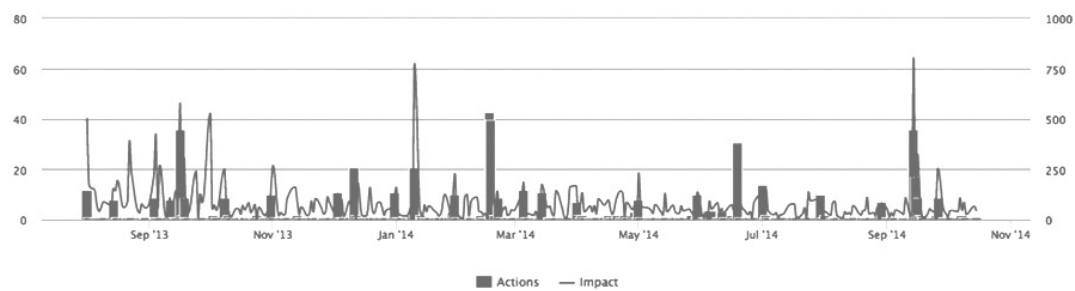
6.4.6 Review of social-media activity

Matthew Williamson's Facebook page had a total of 40,239 fans on 30 October 2014. The average number of reactions (likes, comments and shares) per brand action was 32.57 during the analysis period from August 2013 to October 2014.

Benchmarking to the peers in the premium market segment, this is lower than the market average of 516.21 and on a completely different scale from the best of market, which is at 74,350 in the premium market segment, where Burberry excels with its 17.8 million Facebook fans. Looking at the core business segment, apparel, Matthew Williamson is similarly below its peers: the market average is 211.19 and best of market 41,467. (Source: www.fashionbi.com)

Figure 6.15 below shows the level of impact measured as fans' reactions to Matthew Williamson's posts by liking, commenting and sharing, over the selected period. These data give an overview of changes in the level of engagement per action of the brand. The left-hand axis measures the number of posts made by the brand on Facebook (i.e. actions) and the right-hand axis shows the corresponding fan activity in the form of likes, comments and shares.

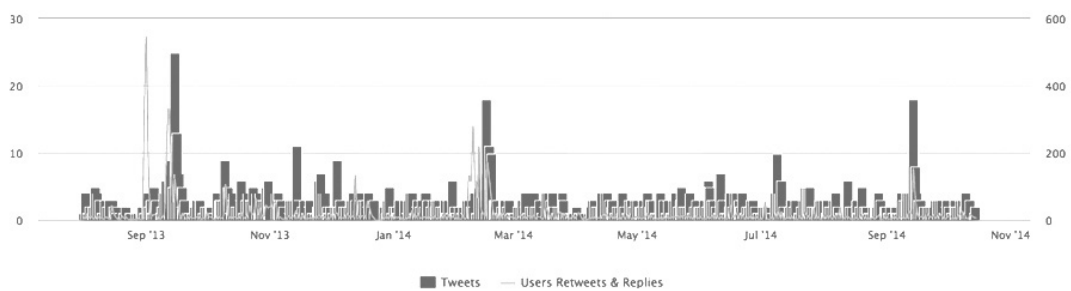
FIGURE 6.15 MATTHEW WILLIAMSON'S FACEBOOK IMPACT
(SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)



The data show a clear increase in both brand activity and fans' reactions around the fashion weeks in September 2013, March 2014 and September 2014. In particular, the impact was high for the show in September 2013, where the fan activity remained on a higher than average level for several weeks around the show, in contrast to the other two shows.

In addition, Twitter activity was analysed for the same fifteen-month period. The brand's Twitter account had 22,945 followers on 30 October 2014. Figure 6.16 below shows the impact of Matthew Williamson's Twitter activity to users' retweets and replies over the selected period. The data highlight changes in the level of user-engagement per action of the brand. The left-hand axis measures the number of tweets made by the brand and the right-hand axis shows the corresponding user activity in the form of retweets and replies. Similar to Facebook, there are clear peaks in both brand and user activity around the aforementioned fashion weeks. Again, the impact was highest for the show in September 2013.

FIGURE 6.16 MATTHEW WILLIAMSON'S TWITTER IMPACT
(SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)



The impact-by-day-of-week graph shows the level of user engagement on Twitter day by day. This reveals the best day on which to make the posts in order to improve engagement. The impact-by-hour-of-day graph displays the level of engagement hour by hour, showing the best hours in a day to schedule the post in order to improve engagement. Unlike the other two brands, Matthew Williamson's followers are most active on Sundays. Looking at the reactions by hour, the highest user activity appears around 1pm (GMT) and the second activity peak occurs later in the evening, after 7pm (GMT) (see Figures 6.17 and 6.18).

FIGURE 6.17 MATTHEW WILLIAMSON'S TWITTER IMPACT BY DAY (SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)

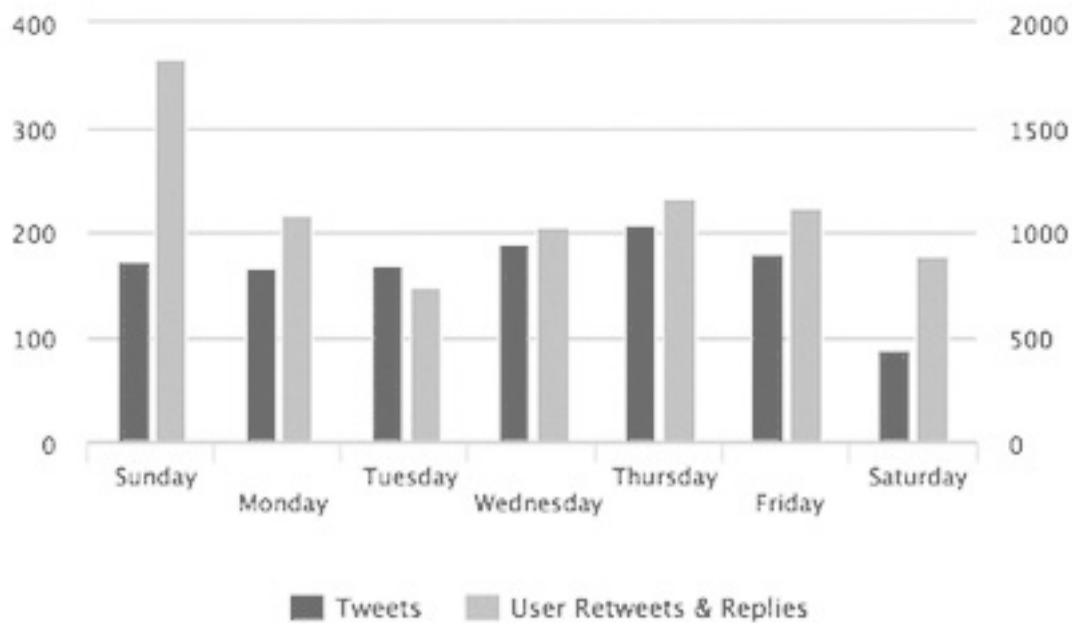
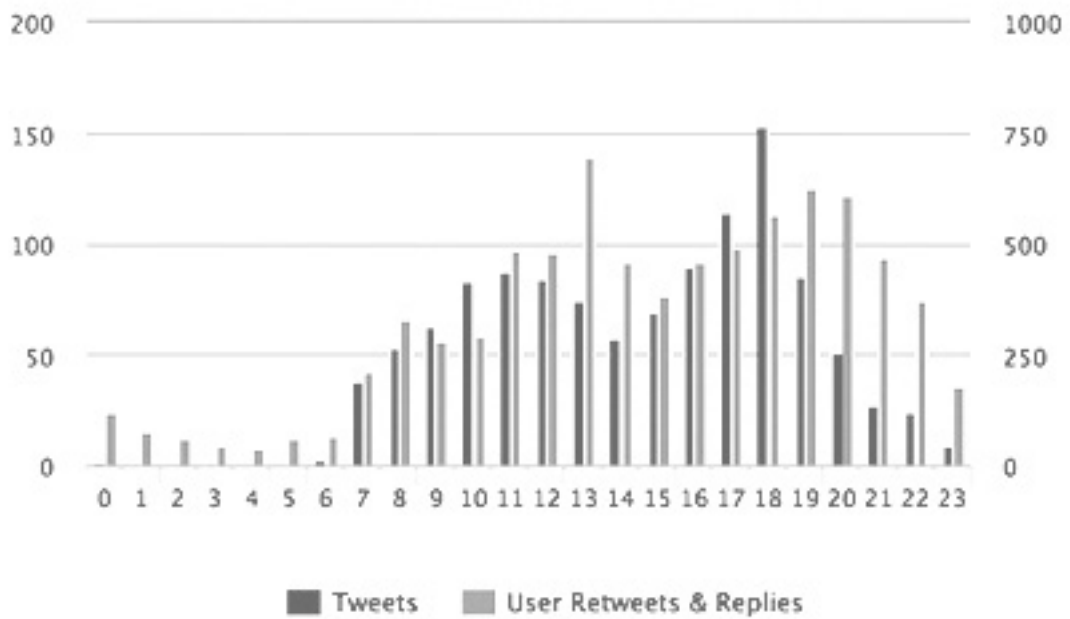


FIGURE 6.18 MATTHEW WILLIAMSON'S TWITTER IMPACT BY HOUR (SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)



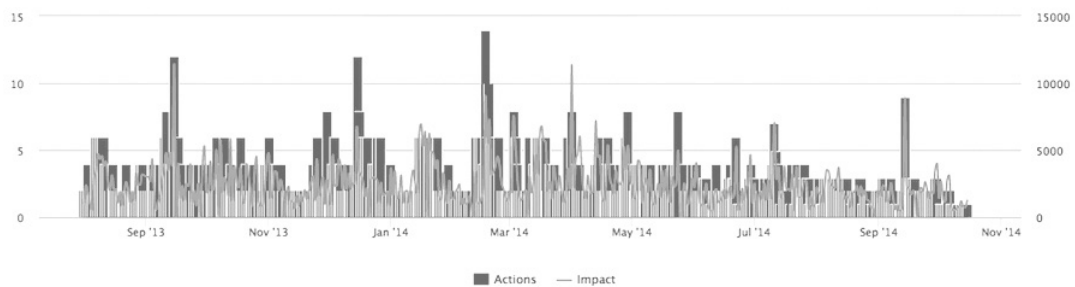
The ten most commonly used Twitter hashtags were tracked during the analysis period, both those used by Matthew Williamson as well as those appearing in the users' feeds (Table 6.8). Along with the official London Fashion Week hashtag #LFW, Matthew Williamson's campaign hashtag #ohMW appeared at the top of both lists. The other campaign hashtag #MatthewMagnified was among the top four hashtags used by the brand, but it was not adopted by brand's Twitter community.

TABLE 6.8 TOP TEN TWITTER HASHTAGS FOR MATTHEW WILLIAMSON (SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)

BRAND HASHTAG	OCCURENCES	USER HASHTAG	OCCURENCES
#LFW	205	#win	7,001
#ohMW	201	#LFW	5,959
#sale	39	#HairMeetMatthew	4,593
#MatthewMagnified	35	#ohMW	2,911
#SS14	32	#Win	1,186
#AW14	25	#SS15	693
#SampleSale	23	#FNO	516
#FNO	19	#sale	446
#MWkidsco	18	#SecretReporter	438
#win	14	#WIN	382

Finally, Matthew Williamson’s Instagram impact was analysed. The brand’s Instagram account had 80,599 followers on 30 October 2014. Figure 6.19 below shows the level of impact of Matthew Williamson’s Instagram activity on users’ reactions (liking and commenting) over the selected period. In particular, the data highlight changes in the level of user engagement per brand action. The left-hand axis measures the number of posts made by the brand on Instagram and the right-hand axis shows the corresponding fan activity in the form of likes and comments.

FIGURE 6.19 MATTHEW WILLIAMSON'S INSTAGRAM IMPACT
(SOURCE: WWW.FASHIONBI.COM, 30 OCTOBER 2014)



Unlike on Facebook and Twitter, the level of brand activity and user engagement on Instagram remained constantly high for Matthew Williamson during the whole analysis period from August 2013 to October 2014. The activity was particularly high around the fashion weeks, but the engagement and impact remained strong between the shows too. This is arguably due to the fact that Instagram is Matthew Williamson's personal account, where the content is not scheduled around specific content calendars or marketing campaigns.

As with Twitter, the top ten Instagram hashtags were tracked during the analysis period, both for those used by Matthew Williamson and for those appearing in the users' feeds (Table 6.9). Matthew Williamson's leading campaign hashtag #ohmw appeared at the top of the brand hashtags and was used over 500 times by the followers too. However #MatthewMagnified does not appear among the Instagram hashtags at all. Again, this could be explained by the fact that Instagram is Matthew Williamson's personal account, where he shares the visual story of his designs along with his personal photo diary, and there is less focus on specific content categories labelled with campaign hashtags such as #MatthewMagnified.

TABLE 6.9 TOP TEN INSTAGRAM HASHTAGS FOR MATTHEW WILLIAMSON (SOURCE: FASHIONBI, 30 OCTOBER 2014)

BRAND HASHTAG	OCCURENCES	USER HASHTAG	OCCURENCES
#lfw	195	#fashion	2,699
#ohmw	168	#lfw	1,486
#ss14	143	#style	1,169
#aw14	114	#london	977
#holiday	83	#ootd	729
#print	63	#love	729
#aw13	58	#designer	673
#summer	39	#louisvuitton	660
#prefall	39	#ohmw	543
#embroidery	32	#stellamccartney	379

In this section, Matthew Williamson’s social-media activity was reviewed across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for a fifteen-month period from 1 August 2013 to 31 October 2014. The brand’s social-media presence has grown steadily under the analysis period. In particular, reach and engagement are strong across platforms suggesting that the brand has a loyal community of followers. Overall, the new social-media strategy started with content and community, and now pushes commerce.

6.5 *Conclusions*

This section provided the within-case analysis and presented the case-study descriptions. In particular, the case companies' social-media strategies were explored in detail. This included a discussion of the relevant organisational changes and key appointments that initiated the process of building a social-media strategy. The preliminary framework and its factors provided a lens to guide the data analysis and were used as section headings to structure the case-study descriptions (Perry, 1998). The three initial factors – motivations, channel strategy and content – were analysed in each case company. Finally, the companies' social-media activity was assessed across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Now that these descriptions are completed, the next chapter provides the cross-case analysis.

7 Cross-case analysis

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a cross-case analysis.

The within-case analysis in the previous chapter considered what happens within each case company, and how, as well as why, things are proceeding as they are. Now that these descriptions are completed, a more comprehensive cross-case evaluation is carried out by combining sections from the descriptions in order to compare and contrast patterns and themes that appeared in the cases. According to Miles and Huberman (1984: 151), by ‘comparing sites or cases, one can establish the range of generality of a finding or explanation, and, at the same time, pin down the conditions under which that finding will occur’. The within-case analysis was guided by the initial factors in the preliminary framework: motivations, channel strategy and content. In this chapter, the initial start list of codes will be refined further and additional themes are developed.

7.2 Key appointments

The findings show that in all three case companies, the process of developing a social-media strategy was initiated by a series of key appointments. At Acne Studios, two key appointments radically affected the company’s approach to social media. First, Jesper Kling joined the company as Head of PR in September 2013, and assumed the overall responsibility for social media that had previously been

managed by the e-commerce department. Following this appointment, social media was moved from the e-commerce department to PR and marketing, and Kling started a recruiting process to find a social-media manager to develop a distinct social-media strategy. In March 2014, Jenny Lau, formerly the Social Media Manager of Harvey Nichols, was appointed as the Social Media Manager at Acne Studios. She assumed the responsibility for developing a social-media strategy for the company and launched the new social-media strategy in June 2014, two months into her new role. As Acne Studios' Head of PR Jesper Kling stated:

For social media, we've until recently focused a lot on what we already have, so we haven't really produced specific content for social media to any extent. The setup now, after two months, is that our new social-media manager is responsible for the planning and execution of our presence on social media.

Similarly at Hunter, a series of key appointments fundamentally changed the company's approach to social media. The brand was undergoing a major repositioning phase. Signalling the start of a new path for the brand, James Seuss was appointed CEO in 2012, followed by the appointment of Alasdair Willis as Creative Director in 2013. Reflecting the new vision for Hunter under the creative direction of Willis, the brand has made significant investments in its digital strategy since 2014. In January 2014, the company announced that Michelle Sadlier, formerly the Social Media Manager at Net-A-Porter, had joined Hunter as Global Social Media Manager. She was appointed to develop and implement strategic and innovative global social-media campaigns and create a global editorial strategy for www.hunterboots.com, which relaunched in 2014 as a new digital destination, aligning the brand, marketing and business objectives of Hunter.

Matthew Williamson's digital strategy launched in October 2012, when Rosanna Falconer started in her new role as a Head of Digital. Formerly a digital-marketing executive at the British Fashion Council, she was appointed to develop a digital

strategy for Matthew Williamson, who had previously been reluctant to engage with digital and social media. As Matthew Williamson noted in an interview for the relaunch of the new website and first e-commerce platform, ‘We were quite late to the party but now we are in the middle of the dancefloor!’ (www.-matthewwilliamson.com) Since Falconer’s appointment, Matthew Williamson’s digital presence has grown steadily and the company is now renowned for its digital initiatives and strategic partnerships around the fashion weeks.

Table 7.1 below provides an overview of the key appointments across the three case studies.

TABLE 7.1 KEY APPOINTMENTS

CASE	Acne Studios	Hunter	Matthew Williamson
STRATEGIC SHIFT	Change in organisational structure as a new Head of PR was appointed and social media was moved from e-commerce department to PR and marketing	Major brand repositioning as a new CEO and new Creative Director were appointed. The brand expanded to two new product categories and staged its debut runway show at the London Fashion Week	Major digital transformation as the brand launched e-commerce and moved from an offline boutique to a global digital business
KEY APPOINTMENT	Jenny Lau appointed as Social media manager in March 2014	Michelle Sadlier appointed as Global Social Media Manager in January 2014	Rosanna Falconer appointed as Head of Digital in October 2012
BACKGROUND	Formerly Social Media Manager at Harvey Nichols	Formerly Social Media Manager at Net-A-Porter	Formerly Digital Marketing Executive at the British Fashion Council
SOCIAL-MEDIA STRATEGY LAUNCH	June 2014	February 2014	October 2012

Overall, the three case studies provide evidence of how key appointments initiated and fundamentally affected the process of developing a social-media strategy. In all three cases, the process started with a strategic shift in the organisation that

led to a highly strategic appointment of a new social-media manager. Following the appointment, the social media manager assumed overall responsibility for developing a social-media strategy and played a key role in defining motivations for the company's social-media presence. As such, the key appointments had a direct impact on the motivations. These are discussed next.

7.3 Motivations

In this research, the motivations arising from the literature review serve as a starting point for developing a conceptual framework for the design of social-media strategy. Although research into social media has grown in recent years, the focus has predominantly been on understanding why consumers engage with social media, and not on the motivations from a company perspective. To address this gap, motivations for engaging with social media are investigated from the company perspective. Table 7.2 below summarises the motivations and influencing factors across the case studies.

TABLE 7.2 OVERVIEW OF MOTIVATIONS AND INFLUENCING FACTORS

CASE	Acne Studios	Hunter	Matthew Williamson
MOTIVATIONS	brand awareness, community growth, commerce	brand awareness, community growth, engagement	brand awareness, engagement, commerce
PRIORITIES	'Brand awareness is the first port of call.'	'Number one objective is to increase brand awareness.'	'I think that social media is a brand-building exercise first and foremost.'
INFLUENCING FACTORS	Shift in organisational structures as social media was moved from e-commerce department to PR and marketing department	Shift in brand characteristics as the company was undergoing a major brand repositioning and expanded to two new product categories	Shift in organisational structures and brand characteristics as the company was undergoing a major transformation from an offline boutique to a global digital business

To summarise the motivations for social-media strategy at case companies, Acne Studios emphasised brand awareness, community growth and commerce, while Hunter listed brand awareness, community growth and engagement. Matthew Williamson highlighted brand awareness, engagement and commerce. 'Every single piece of content should be well thought out and have a reason behind it: either be a brand builder or a push to sales', summarises the Communications Director Rosanna Falconer. Moreover, further interviews with key informants illustrate that the motivations for social-media strategy are rarely separate from the overall marketing strategy, but directly driven by it:

Key motivations for social media are really brand awareness and sales, the same as for marketing strategy. (Natalie Thng, SVP Digital and CRM at Temperley London)

Our social-media manager works with deliverables that are being planned and created in the bigger marketing context, so we don't separate campaigns. (Jesper Kling, Head of PR at Acne Studios)

All three case companies emphasised brand awareness as the most important motivation for using social media, as highlighted in the table above.

Additionally, the maturity of social media strategy was assessed using a framework devised by Effing and Spil (2016). This consists of seven key elements grouped into three levels of maturity of a social-media strategy: 'initiation', 'diffusion' and 'maturity' as discussed in the literature review. The initiation level includes the elements of 'target audience' and 'channel choice', while the diffusion level includes 'goals', 'resources' and 'policies'. The maturity stage adds the elements of 'monitoring' and 'content activities'. In all case companies, the target audience and channel choice were defined, and the companies had moved on from the initiation phase. Moreover, as discussed above, the goals and motivations were clearly stated and companies had allocated resources and developed policies to build a social-media strategy. In two cases, Matthew Williamson and Hunter, the strategy is fully emergent. For Acne Studios, the social-media strategy is in development, at the diffusion level. Although the academic literature notes the importance of monitoring and measuring (Kumar and Mirchandani, 2012; Kumar and Sundaram, 2012), the findings show that there is need for more attention in practice.

7.4 Content and channel strategy

In this research, ‘channel strategy’ refers to the selected social-media platforms and their respective roles in a company’s social-media strategy. In line with the literature, the channel strategy for Acne Studios, Hunter and Matthew Williamson is primarily focused on three social-media platforms: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In addition, the three companies are building an archive of brand imagery on Pinterest, experimenting with Snapchat and Periscope, and keeping an eye on Google+, which is currently mainly used for SEO purposes. As pointed out by Falconer at Matthew Williamson: ‘Google+ is becoming important just because the senior management are talking about the great affect that it’s had on search results.’ However, no specific content is created for Google+ because of its low consumer engagement, and the three brands mainly replicate the content posted on Facebook.

An overview of the case companies’ social-media presence across the three major platforms at the end of the analysis period on 30 October 2014 is provided in Table 7.3.

TABLE 7.3 OVERVIEW OF CASE COMPANIES’ SOCIAL-MEDIA PRESENCE ON 30 OCTOBER 2014

COMPANY	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	INSTAGRAM	TOTAL
Acne Studios	490,082	490,082	437,171	1,024,092
Hunter	295,129	295,129	137,593	495,917
Matthew Williamson	40,239	40,239	80,599	143,783

Acne Studios has the largest community across all platforms. The brand's Facebook community alone is over three times larger than the total number of followers engaging with Matthew Williamson across all three platforms, and about the same as Hunter's total number of followers across the three channels. While these figures are not comparable as such, they provide a useful indication of the relative importance of the three platforms as part of the companies' channel strategy.

For all three companies, the Facebook community is the largest. Facebook was deemed the most 'commerce-friendly' channel and particularly useful for targeted marketing campaigns, since the platform allows brands to send targeted messages to specific customer groups based on demographics or geographical areas. Moreover, Facebook offers more detailed data and in-depth analytics than other social-media platforms:

We obviously focus most on Facebook where we have our biggest community, slightly bigger than Instagram. It's our most commerce-friendly platform. It's still where we see most of our traffic and our sales coming from and because of the data that Facebook gives you they can be very in-depth analytics. We can drill down and we can actually do a lot of very targeted campaigns. We can send a message to just our Japanese segment if that's what we want. Or we can target gender. (Jenny Lau, Social Media Manager at Acne Studios)

From a global perspective Facebook is really important. I know that there's talk about the Facebook algorithm, but there's still a phenomenal amount of people on Facebook. The amazing thing about Facebook is that it has so much data, and you can target by city, age, even college if you want to. (Michelle Sadlier, Head of Innovation and Social Media at Hunter)

While the Facebook community was still the largest, the Instagram community is

growing fastest for all three case brands, which is in line with the trend towards visual social media (Arthur, 2013; Bautista, 2013; Schneier, 2014). Moreover, Instagram is the key strategic focus for all case companies, despite the fact that, unlike Facebook and Twitter, it does not allow direct links on a post, which limits commerce on the platform. The following quote highlights the challenges around commerce:

It's quite difficult to reach out on Instagram because if a customer says, 'Where can I buy this? Do you have this in my size?' the only option is a direct email request with 'Please email Rosanna at Matthew Williamson.' It is actually a very manual way. I'd love to say I have the perfect piece of tech. (Rosanna Falconer, Communications Director at Matthew Williamson)

While commerce is challenging on Instagram, the focus is on visual storytelling. It is the platform where brands put the highest level of content to make sure that the Instagram feed makes a narrative. The feed mainly consists of campaign and show imagery, while flat product images used on the brands' e-commerce site and Facebook pages are not shared on Instagram. Moreover, Instagram is the platform where brands see the most engagement at the moment. With the restrictions that Facebook has implemented on organic reach, Instagram is becoming the preferred platform.

I think for us Instagram is very much about storytelling. And that's where we get the most engagement. We can't track sales, but it's where you get all the 'likes' and you get the comments. (Jenny Lau, Social Media Manager at Acne Studios)

For all three companies, the Twitter audience remains the smallest with respect to other social-media platforms. Twitter is mainly used for news, promotional messages and day-to-day customer service with existing customers. Engagement is low and the tweets disappear quickly in the feed.

Twitter we see as very much a way to enhance the press that we receive. We also use it for commerce, but we mainly use it to share all the top-tier press that we get, so it's very much about connecting with influences, because that's where all the top-tier media and the bloggers and celebrities are. So if anyone does engage with us, we always make sure that we mention them or we tweet them or something like that. (Jenny Lau, Social Media Manager at Acne Studios)

Additionally, the literature review revealed that more research is needed on the role played by inter-platform differences, given the substantial variation in content and functionality that exists across platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest. Specifically, to gain more definitive insights about the effects of platform characteristics, field experiments and empirical evidence are needed. The present study addresses this gap by developing close relationships with the case companies and key informants and providing in-depth insights into how they have developed social-media strategies and how content is tailored according to the nature of the different platforms.

Table 7.4 below illustrates how the case companies tailor content across the distinct channels. Initial insight into channel strategies for each brand was provided in the previous chapter (see tables 6.1, 6.4 and 6.7).

TABLE 7.4 CONTENT

CASE	Acne Studios	Hunter	Matthew Williamson
FACEBOOK	product images, promotional messages, targeted campaigns	product images, campaign images, targeted campaigns	product images, campaign images, regular weekly features
TWITTER	news, press features and promotional messages	news, press features, events, customer service	news, live events, campaigns and promotions
INSTAGRAM	campaign imagery and show imagery	campaign images, show images, brand storytelling	visual story of Matthew Williamson's designs along with his personal photo diary
ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTE	'We tailor our content so that it's much more commerce-focused on Facebook and we also do our localised activations there. Instagram we see as almost like our brand channel; it's where we put the highest level of content. Twitter we see as very much a way to enhance the press that we receive.'	'Every single Monday I do a weekly report across all of my channels. I notice fan growth across all of our channels, I record what the top post was, noting if there was any kind of indicative thing that we should consider for our future content strategy.'	'It's got to seem authentic. We should never just be adding to that huge digital noise just because we can, just because we have the tweet button and we're a bit bored at four in the afternoon. Every single piece should be well thought out and have a reason behind it: either be a brand builder or a push to sales.'

Overall, the channel strategy is similar across the case studies and in line with the existing literature. While all three companies keep an eye on new emerging platforms, the main focus remains on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Furthermore, the findings confirm that content and channel strategy are key elements in the case companies' social-media strategies as suggested in the preliminary framework. The next chapter provides more insights into the role played by inter-platform differences (see section 8.5).

7.5 Conclusions

This chapter provided a cross-case evaluation by combining sections from the individual case descriptions in order to compare and contrast patterns and themes that appeared in the cases. According to Eisenhardt (1991: 620) different cases 'often emphasise complementary aspects of a phenomenon'. She also states (1989: 540) that one should look at the empirical material in many different ways: one way is 'to select categories or dimensions, and then to look for within-group similarities coupled with inter-group differences'. In the analysis phase, attention was given simultaneously to different levels of analysis and their linkages. The level of organisational processes was analysed in each case, while an additional level was the cross-case analysis. This was done in order to tease out the influence of context and process on the different levels of analysis. The collection of empirical material from various sources described in the previous section, as well as using many carefully planned interviews with key informants close to the case companies, made this analysis possible.

The present research shows that in all three organisations studied, the social-media strategy is quite different, yet consists of similar key factors. Moreover, the process of developing a social-media strategy has similar key stages. In particular,

for all three cases, the process was initiated by key appointments that remained instrumental for the entire process. Following the key appointment, the first stage in the process was defining the motivations for the social-media strategy. In addition, the cross-case analysis showed that content and channel strategy are key elements in the social-media strategy, as suggested in the preliminary framework, and provided novel insights into how content is tailored according to the nature of the different platforms.

Overall, the literature review revealed a lack of strategic understanding about social media. In order to effectively address both the challenges and risks of social media and benefit from the professional opportunities it presents, companies should approach the topic more strategically to deliver more competitive value. The empirical findings emerging from this research provide new insights into this topical area as all three case companies demonstrate highly strategic approaches to social media. In two cases, Matthew Williamson and Hunter, the strategy is fully emergent. In the case of Acne Studios, the social-media strategy is still in development, at the diffusion level.

Moreover, the literature review indicated a lack of effective frameworks for developing, analysing and comparing social-media strategies. To address this gap, a conceptual framework is introduced based on the empirical results of this study. The preliminary framework developed in this research was comprised of three initial factors derived from the literature review and used as a tool to structure case-study analysis. Moreover, the case studies have provided evidence that additional factors are needed to describe the process of building a social-media strategy. The within and cross-case analysis led to the identification of certain patterns regarding the importance of four emergent factors of social-media strategy development. In the next section, these are combined to constitute a conceptual framework for the study.

8 Discussion of the findings

8.1 Introduction

Now that the data have been collected, reduction has occurred, and the data have been displayed in narrative forms, both within and across case studies, it is time to draw final conclusions from the data displayed and to verify them. As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984: 21–23; 1994: 428–429), conclusions are part of analysis and occur before and after data collection, but also during these phases, as described in the preceding chapters.

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings and proposes an empirically grounded framework for the design of social-media strategy. The discussion is divided into two major areas: (1) the journey that a company takes in designing a social-media strategy; and (2) the external factors that impact on the process. The chapter starts by discussing the role of motivations, and continues by identifying firm-related variables that may affect them, namely organisational structures and brand characteristics. Secondly, the external factors relating to platforms characteristics are discussed and the recent changes and emerging technologies are explored. The chapter concludes by proposing a conceptual framework to describe the process of building a social-media strategy.

8.2 The role of motivations

Since the literature review showed that there is a lack of standard methods for

evaluating professional social-media practices and underlying strategies, the principles of hierarchy-of-effects models originating from the advertising field were considered as a way of categorising the motivations relating to the use of social media. Replicating the structure of the traditional cognition–affect–conation model (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961), motivations were grouped into three categories, namely awareness, engagement and commerce, as illustrated in Table 8.1. Emerging from the empirical analysis, the table further presents the attributes, expected benefits and case study findings relating to each motivation. Despite the increasing interest in social media in recent literature, the establishment of a systematic categorisation of motives for using social media in marketing communications is in its infancy. This study sheds some light on the topic.

TABLE 8.1 FIRMS' MOTIVATIONS TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

MOTIVATIONS	Awareness	Engagement	Commerce
ATTRIBUTES	Brand awareness, product awareness, word-of-mouth, advocacy	Reach, community growth, dialogue, insight discovery, CRM	Lead generation, purchase, sales, customer service
KEY REFERENCES	Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012; Hutter et al., 2013; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014	Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014; Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014; Malt-house et al., 2013	Liang et al., 2011–2012; Harris and Dennis, 2011; Zhou, Zhang and Zimmermann, 2012; Yadav et al., 2013
CASE STUDY FINDINGS	All three case companies highlighted brand awareness as a key motivation	Hunter listed community growth and engagement among key motivations; Acne studios emphasised community growth	Acne Studios and Matthew Williamson highlighted commerce among key motivations
ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTES (EMPHASIS ADDED)	'I would love it [social media] to always drive sales but as every social-media person says, brand awareness is the first port of call , just because of the nature of that audience.' (Jenny Lau, Acne Studios)	' Reach and engagement are obviously really important for us. Because there's no point in putting out content if it's content that's not getting the right engagement , and it's not therefore reaching more people.' (Michelle Sadlier, Hunter)	' Not every post will drive a sale – what an unwise strategy that would be – but this is the way we now consume content, and social shopping is the future. ' (Rosanna Falconer, Matthew Williamson)

The findings show that brand awareness was deemed a key motivation for creating a presence in social media. Since social media allows firms to communicate with millions of people, it has the potential to establish and raise brand awareness, as highlighted by Matthew Williamson's Communications Director Rosanna Falconer: 'With all our social networks together we're able to reach over 100,000 each day.' The logic behind this argument is that because a large number of consumers are already engaging with social media, a firm's presence on those networks can help consumers become familiar with the brand and the product, thus creating and enhancing brand awareness. All three case companies highlighted brand awareness as the most important motivation for using social media. This was quoted as follows:

Number one objective is to increase brand awareness amongst our channels and in the social media sphere. (Michelle Sadlier, Head of Innovation and Social Media at Hunter)

I think that social media is a brand-building exercise first and foremost. (Rosanna Falconer, Communications Director at Matthew Williamson)

I would love it [social media] to always drive sales but as every social-media person says, brand awareness is the first port of call, just because of the nature of that audience. (Jenny Lau, Social Media Manager at Acne Studios)

The findings are in line with previous research, which shows that one of the basic motivations for getting involved with social media is to increase brand awareness (Hutter et al., 2013; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). Adding to the existing knowledge, the findings suggest that social media are particularly important for their long-term effects in creating brand awareness in the eyes of a future customer and potential brand ambassador. As argued by Acne Studios' social-media manager Jenny Lau: 'They're not necessarily going to immediately shop with you, but

it's this long-term effect of getting in the line of sight of someone who might one day be a customer of yours.'

Along with awareness, engagement was emphasised among the key motivations. The findings demonstrate how social media allow brands to develop and enhance engagement with customers through liking, sharing and commenting, and to grow the community of fans and followers on the platforms. The findings are in line with the literature, which suggests that social media have brought fundamental changes in the ease of contact, volume, speed and nature of these interactions, increasing the ability of firms to engage customers in a rich and interactive dialogue (e.g. Hollebeek, 2011; Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Edelman, 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012; Malthouse et al., 2013). Additionally, the findings suggest that engagement relates to more specific objectives such as reach, community growth, conversation and a two-way dialogue with the consumer, as illustrated in the following extracts:

Reach and engagement are obviously really important for us. And that's definitely a cornerstone of our objectives, because there's no point in putting out content if it's content that's not getting the right engagement, and it's not therefore reaching more people. (Michelle Sadlier, Head of Innovation and Social Media at Hunter)

We're trying to push it from this one-way conversation to two, which we haven't quite done yet. And I think for me, with anything we do in social, if it doesn't meet that criterion, we don't do it. (Jenny Lau, Social Media Manager at Acne Studios)

The importance of creating a two-way dialogue with the consumer was underlined in all three case companies. This is particularly challenging for brands in the luxury and premium-fashion sectors, which are traditionally distant from consumers and reluctant to let go of control. With social media, brands are increasingly moving from traditional one-way messages to a two-way dialogue. The findings show

how case companies aim to establish direct contact with consumers in order to engage and co-create content. In addition to publishing content on the brands' own accounts, they interact on consumers' accounts through liking and commenting on consumers' photos and reposting them on the brands' official profile. Moreover, the importance of sharing consumer insights from the social-media community internally in the organisation was stressed in the interviews. The following statement from Michelle Sadlier, Head of Innovation and Social Media at Hunter, provides an example of interacting with the brand community on Instagram and shows how it is largely a manual process:

I want to harness that community. Every single morning I go in and I 'like' every single photo. If it's a great photo, then I feel that we either need to repost it or even just share it here internally and I need to say, 'Look guys, you should see what our community are doing'. Or commenting on a photo to say, 'This is great, thank you for sharing with us.' And you'd be surprised what further sentiment you get back from them. They go 'Oh my God, Hunter just liked my Instagram!' I think there's a real element of listening and interacting on social that still doesn't happen across a lot of brands. For me that's just as important as posting itself. I also want to make sure that I'm interacting.

Whereas the role of social media in creating brand awareness and engagement is recognised in the existing literature, it remains unclear whether social media can also help companies market and sell their products (Yadav et al., 2013). Although the platforms and technologies have developed considerably, many companies struggle to influence sales through social media. Such efforts are generally associated with the notion of 'social commerce' by scholars (e.g. Harris and Dennis, 2011; Zhou, Zhang and Zimmermann, 2012; Yadav et al., 2013). The findings suggest that while commerce is a key motivation for using social media, companies often fail to measure its direct effect on sales, which is in line with the existing literature. As Jenny Lau, Social Media Manager at Acne Studios comments:

We track what we can in terms of sales and traffic. Obviously it's a very broken attribution model so social media might drive one to three percent of traffic and sales, but we don't see all the other traffic and sales it drives offline or on multi device, which is so common nowadays.

All case companies experienced similar challenges in measuring the direct impact that social media have on sales. The tools for social media measurement are developing, and most of the data is available to companies for free. For example, Facebook has very detailed analytics allowing companies to measure reach and engagement in different segments and geographic areas, or identify the number of clicks on the links that direct users from Facebook's News Feed to e-commerce sites, and all the way to the respective product pages, where the customer can make a purchase. Yet the case companies can only track a fraction of all the traffic and sales that social media drives because the measurement tools do not allow firms to see the indirect effect that social media have on sales offline or through multi device. Currently the best way to show tangible sales results of a social-media campaign is a surprisingly manual process. The following statement from Lau provides a useful example:

Every season we'll set maybe three or four key commercial products that we want to push on social media and for each of those I'll have a monitoring campaign to see how much buzz we're creating, what the reactions are online. And we've actually successfully measured the launch of a new shoe. We saw that with absolutely no other kind of marketing support it was a number-one selling shoe for a whole month or two months, which is unusual. We were very pleased with that. So that's tangible ROI from the PR department, which is traditionally quite fluffy.

Lau employs a commonly used industry term in social-media marketing, namely 'buzz'. The literature suggests that traditional marketing communication tools such as TV, radio and print have become less effective channels with which to reach

consumers (Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008) and today, an integrated marketing-communication campaign often involves creating a ‘buzz’ around the product or service using social media. While the term mainly appears in loose industry jargon, marketing scholars and practitioners agree that this buzz may be as important to the success or failure of the product or service as the product or service is to itself (e.g. Dobele, Toleman and Beverland, 2005; Singh, Veron-Jackson and Cullinane, 2008). The example above illustrates how social media constitute an efficient way for marketers to create buzz around their product, service or idea. Moreover, it shows how buzz can lead to measurable sales results, which is one of the biggest challenges in the current social-media environment.

The evidence from the case studies and key-informant interviews suggest that a firm’s motivations to engage with social media are influenced by firm-related variables as highlighted in Table 8.2 on the following page.

TABLE 8.2 FACTORS AFFECTING FIRMS' MOTIVATIONS TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

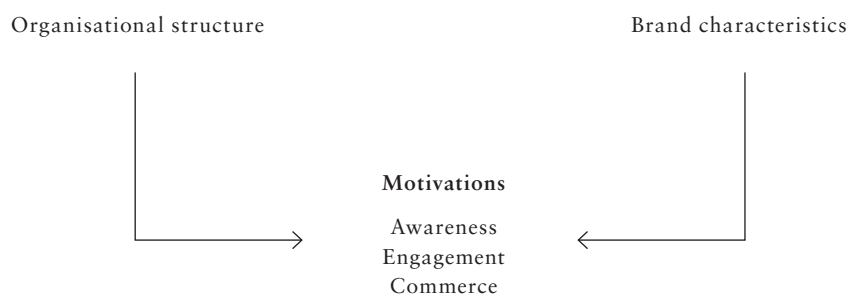
CASE	Acne Studios	Hunter	Matthew Williamson
MOTIVATIONS	brand awareness, community growth, commerce	brand awareness, community growth, engagement	brand awareness, engagement, commerce
BACKGROUND	Shift in organisational structures as social media was moved from e-commerce department to PR and marketing department	Shift in brand characteristics as the company was undergoing a major brand repositioning and expanded to two new product categories	Shift in organisational structures and brand characteristics as the company was undergoing a major transformation from an offline boutique to a global digital business
INFLUENCING FACTORS	organisational structures	brand characteristics	brand characteristics and organisational structures
ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTES (EMPHASIS ADDED)	'Digital now touches every point of a business. It's not something that exists in its own silo.'	'The objective really was about reaching as many new eyeballs as we could, but also delivering our new brand vision in a way that we wanted to continue forward.'	'It's a whole encompassing digital strategy . A real focus on digital and getting everyone at Matthew Williamson to really believe that digital is the way forward.'

While motivations guide the design of social-media activities, they are affected by organisational structures and brand characteristics, as illustrated in Table 8.2, Figure 8.1 below and the following quotes:

The first step is always to absorb the brand and absorb the culture. For me, the first thing you want to do is definitely about observing the way in which we behave and the values that we have as a business. You're not able to create any digital strategy without fully understanding what your brand values are. (Jenny Lau, Social Media Manager at Acne Studios)

With social media, you can't launch any account without knowing your voice and without really knowing the brand inside out. (Rosanna Falconer, Communications Director at Matthew Williamson)

FIGURE 8.1 FACTORS AFFECTING FIRMS' MOTIVATIONS TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA



The factors affecting motivations will be discussed in greater detail in the next sections.

8.3 Organisational structures

Social media can be engaged with by a single individual in the firm, such as the social-media manager, but their use is mostly embedded within an array of organisational activities, as noted in the literature review (Peters et al., 2013). Although it is clear that social media are powerful and ubiquitous (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011), many firms have not yet allocated substantial resources for learning how to use them effectively in marketing (Berthon et al., 2012); nor has academic research shed much light on the organisational adaptations required for success in the social-media environment (Malthouse et al., 2013).

Two recent studies provide initial insight into this far-reaching and complex matter. Weinberg et al. (2013) focus on the concept of ‘social business’ and offer arguments for transforming organisations into such social businesses, stressing the benefits achieved when firms substitute silo-type structures with more cross-functional collaboration, and when employees are enabled to display expressive individuality. Similarly, Malthouse et al. (2013) shed light on the role of organisational elements for mastering the challenges that social media bring, stressing the need for an empowered culture and skilled employees, among other things. Building substantially on this early evidence, the findings arising from these case studies provide examples that can help managers make sense of social media and better understand the organisational adaptations required for success in the social-media environment. In particular, two themes emerge from the findings, namely *key appointments* and the *transition from silo-type structures to cross-functional collaboration*. These will be elaborated upon next.

In all three case companies, the process of developing a social-media strategy was initiated by a series of key appointments as discussed in the previous chapters. At Acne Studios, two key appointments radically affected the company’s approach to social media. First, Jesper Kling joined the company as Head of PR

in September 2013 assuming the overall responsibility for social media. Following this appointment, social media was moved from the e-commerce department to PR and marketing, and Jenny Lau was recruited as social-media manager March 2014 to develop a distinct social-media strategy. Similarly at Hunter, a series of key appointments fundamentally changed the company's approach to social media as the brand was undergoing a major repositioning phase. Signalling the start of a new path for the brand, James Seuss was appointed CEO in 2012, followed by the appointment of Alasdhair Willis as Creative Director in 2013. In January 2014, the company announced that Michelle Sadlier had joined Hunter as Global Social Media Manager to develop a social media strategy. Matthew Williamson's digital strategy launched in October 2012, when Rosanna Falconer started in her new role as a Head of Digital. In all three cases, the process of developing a social media strategy started with the appointment of a new social-media manager, who assumed overall responsibility for the project and played a key role in defining motivations for the company's social-media presence. As such, the findings show that key appointments have a direct impact on the motivations.

Another central theme arising from the findings is the transition from silo-type social-media function to cross-functional collaboration and the development of an overarching social-media strategy. The three case companies provide examples of the required organisational changes and their effect on motivations, and consequently on content and channel strategy. At Acne studios, social media was moved from the e-commerce department to PR and marketing. While the e-commerce team had previously managed the social-media channels, there was no distinct social-media strategy, motivation was commerce, and content was primarily focused on pushing product. The Facebook feed mainly consisted of product images accompanied by a direct link to the relating product page on the brand's e-commerce site. After social media was moved to PR and marketing, commerce remained important, but other motivations emerged and the brand introduced a greater variation in terms of imagery and the types of content pushed on social media. The

following comment by Kling of Acne Studios illustrates how this organisational change has affected motivations:

Social media has previously been overseen by the e-commerce department. Now that it's under marketing it doesn't mean that we'll be moving away from commerce. I'd say that we're even building more resources and activities geared towards a more commercial approach on social media by linking everything together and posting more frequently. So there is a strong commercial perspective in how we work with social media.

At Hunter, social media sit between the creative marketing team and e-commerce. While the organisational structure at Hunter is relatively traditional, there is a highly innovative culture around it, as Head of Innovation and Social Media Sadlier remarked:

It's a very collaborative team. It's a workplace where everyone can collaborate and everyone can suggest ideas. I think that's a very innovative culture to have and that comes back down to Alasdhair Willis, who's a very innovative leader and he's always challenging me, like: 'How is it innovative, what are we doing differently?' But generally it's a very traditional structure, with an innovative culture around it.

The way that Hunter's organisation is structured is in line with the findings by Malthouse et al. (2013), who stress the need for an empowered culture and skilled employees. An example of this is Hunter's effort to build an omnichannel approach. Broadly defined, 'omnichannel' refers to not only recognising a customer on different platforms but also being able to deliver a consistent brand experience in an optimised way regardless of the channel, as discussed in previous chapters (Rigby, 2011) – for example, ensuring that the in-store environment delivers the same brand experience as the digital and social channels. To make sure that this is clear internally in the organisation, Sadlier provides a one-to-one social-media

briefing with every new employee recruited to the store. Moreover, she puts together weekly insight reports from the brand communities across all major social channels to share the information internally in the organisation. The following quote provides a concrete example:

I want all our store employees to be our fan on Facebook, follow us on Instagram and follow us on Twitter, because I want to make sure that if, say, a German customer comes in and says ‘Oh I follow you on Facebook and I saw these green boots and I was just wondering if you still have them’, I want the agent to be able to say ‘Oh yes, I know what you mean, we have those in stock.’

At Matthew Williamson, social media sit under Communications. The development of a social-media strategy was initiated when Rosanna Falconer was appointed Head of Digital. Furthermore, Falconer was promoted to Communications Director in November 2014, assuming overall responsibility for the communications strategy, and there was a transition from silo-type social-media function to cross-functional collaboration. A similar transition took place at Hunter, where Michelle Sadlier was promoted from Social Media Manager to Head of Innovation and Social Media, and at Acne Studios, where Jenny Lau was promoted from Social Media Manager to Social Media and PR Manager. Thus the case studies provide further evidence for the arguments put forward by Weinberg et al. (2013), who stress the benefits of substituting silo-type structures with cross-functional collaboration. Will Ryan, the Founder of Electric Labs, worked closely with Matthew Williamson’s team during the transition. He observes the change as follows:

It’s a whole encompassing digital strategy. A real focus on digital and getting everyone at Matthew Williamson to really believe that digital is the way forward, and that they can really increase their turnover and revenues by widening the reach of their digital and social ... The brand [Matthew Williamson] wasn’t really doing itself justice online, even if they had a lot of nice imagery and beautiful photos.

All three case studies provide strong evidence of the benefits that are achieved when firms substitute silo-type structures with more cross-functional collaboration. As highlighted by Lau: ‘Digital now touches every point of a business. It’s not something that exists in its own silo.’ This is corroborated by Weinberg et al. (2013), who focus on the concept of transforming organisations into ‘social businesses’.

8.4 Brand characteristics

Along with organisational structures, it emerged from the analysis that brand characteristics affect a firm’s motivations to engage with social media. The three case studies provide examples of this relationship. These are presented below.

The overarching theme for Acne Studios’ social-media strategy can be summarised in six words: ‘visually seductive dialogue with the community’, drawing on a key brand characteristic for Acne Studios, namely ‘seduction’, which, as Lau commented, has always been central to the brand:

Seduction is this mystery element that we’re very keen to maintain as a brand. We’ve always been about maintaining that mystique. We think it’s very important. We’re not going to go all-out Burberry on people – you know, ‘Hey guys come and engage with us’. We’d never do that.

A ‘visually seductive dialogue’ is a starting point for any social-media activity at Acne Studios and maintaining a level of mystique is important to the brand positioning. As summarised by Lau: ‘With anything we do in social, if it doesn’t meet that criterion, we don’t do it.’ Similarly for Hunter, social-media activities are closely aligned with and informed by the company mission statement, which

draws on two key brand characteristics: innovation and pioneering, as Sadlier states:

Everything we do has to be innovative. And pioneering. We're all very clear about what our mission statement is and so we're all working towards the same goal, even when it's about a bespoke channel. So my social-media strategy is definitely informed by that mission, but obviously it has bespoke objectives.

For Matthew Williamson, the most important brand characteristic is integrity, which, as Communications Director Rosanna Falconer pointed out, is critical to any aspect of digital in the firm:

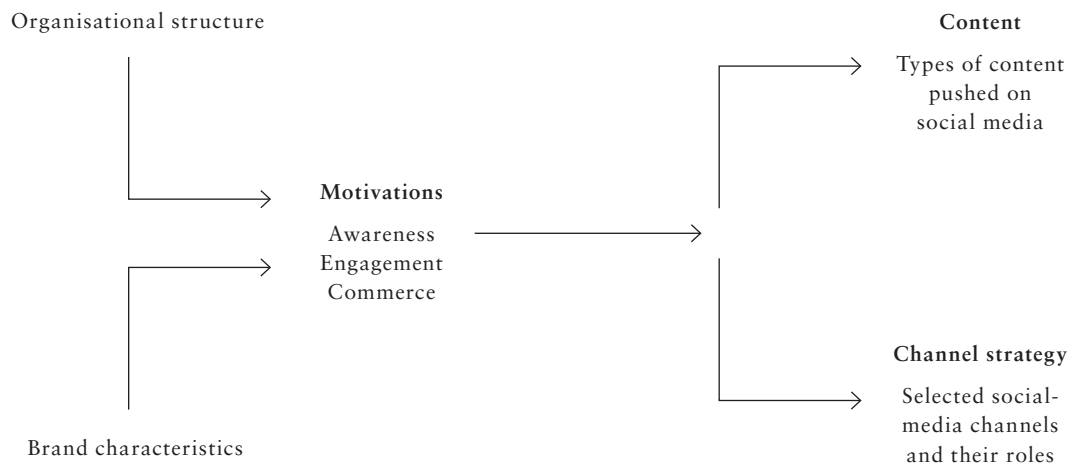
Matthew's key word that he always uses is 'integrity'. It's got to seem authentic. We should never just be adding to that huge digital noise just because we can, just because we have the tweet button and we're a bit bored at four in the afternoon.

The relationship between brand characteristics and a firm's motivations to engage with social media has not been studied previously, and there is little knowledge on the motivations from the company viewpoint overall in the current social-media literature. The new findings emerging from the three case studies suggest that brand characteristics are often a starting point for the design of any social-media activity, and a key factor affecting motivations. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 8.2 below and in the conceptual framework emerging from this research (Figure 8.4). While the social-media strategy may have specific objectives that relate to distinct platforms, it is strongly driven by the brand characteristics. As stressed by Falconer: 'It is not about tech for tech's sake. I'm a great believer in only using digital innovation where it's a good brand fit and not just for the sake of it, or because something is new and hip.'

To summarise the preceding sections, Figure 8.2 illustrates the role of motivations

in developing of social-media strategy as it emerges from the analysis. In particular, the focus is on the journey that a company takes in designing a social-media strategy, as proposed in the beginning of this chapter. While motivations guide the process of designing a social-media strategy, they are affected by organisational structures (key appointments and the transition from silo-type structures to cross-functional collaboration) and brand characteristics, as shown in Figure 8.2 and discussed in the preceding sections. These, in turn, affect the selection of social-media channels and the types of content that a firm pushes on social media. These links are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

FIGURE 8.2 THE ROLE OF MOTIVATIONS



The literature review revealed increasing attention to the strategic aspect of social media but showed that social-media strategies are not yet fully developed in

the fashion industry. The empirical findings emerging from this research provide novel insights into this topical area as all three case studies demonstrate highly strategic approach to social media. In two cases, Matthew Williamson and Hunter, the strategy is fully emergent. At Acne Studios, the social media strategy is in development, at the diffusion level (Effing and Spil, 2016). Overall, emerging from the findings in terms of companies' approach to social media is the fact that they are becoming more sophisticated and strategic. On an organisational level, this manifests itself in the highly strategic key appointments and changes in organisational structures that the case companies have made in order to allocate resources efficiently. Moreover, companies are becoming more sophisticated in content creation and channel strategy as they are learning more. While motivations guide the process of designing social-media activities, a series of strategic decisions is taken to develop a sustainable social-media strategy and allocate resources to engage with these new channels.

8.5 The role of platform characteristics

In addition to the journey a company takes in building a social-media strategy, another strong theme emerging from the findings is the changing nature of social-media platforms. Along with the firm's internal motivations to engage with social media, the distinct platforms and their characteristics affect the design of social-media activities. These relationships are discussed below.

A rich and diverse ecology of social-media sites currently exists, which vary in scope and functionality and need further differentiation (Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011). For the purpose of this study, the analysis was restricted to three groups of Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) taxonomy: social-networking sites, blogs and microblogs, and content-sharing sites, which are ex-

tensively used by fashion companies and amongst consumers within the fashion industry (Arthur, 2013; Bautista, 2013; Schneier, 2014). Furthermore, the largest platform in each group was analysed in more detail, namely Facebook (social networking sites), Twitter (blogs and microblogs) and Instagram (content-sharing sites).

For all three companies, Facebook was considered the most ‘commerce-friendly’ channel and particularly useful for targeted marketing campaigns, since the platform allows brands to send targeted messages to specific customer groups based on demographics or geographical areas. Moreover, Facebook offers more detailed data and in-depth analytics than other social-media platforms. This was highlighted both by case-study companies and key informants:

In terms of targeting tools, Facebook is probably the most relevant for fashion brands. If you’re pushing out the right kind of content, there’s a real ability to hit the right consumer now on there: geographically, demographically, based on interests, whatever, you name it. (Rachel Arthur, Global Senior Editor at WGSN)

Facebook is very strong. There’s a clear reason why we have Facebook and it’s a commercial reason. (Natalie Thng, SVP Digital and CRM at Temperley London)

Moreover, both the case-study companies and key informants talked about the concerns around the changing revenue models and algorithms on social-media platforms. In particular, there were concerns about a decline in organic reach for their Facebook Pages (‘Page’). ‘Organic reach’ refers to how many people can be reached for free by posting to a Page (www.facebook.com).

There are two main reasons for this decline. The first involves a simple mechanism: more and more content is being created and shared every day and it is becoming harder for any story to gain exposure in the Facebook News Feed (‘News

Feed'). In addition to the growth in content, people also 'like' more and more Pages ('Page Likes'). Facebook reports a 50% decline in reach over the past year, which matches the 50% increase in Page Likes per typical Facebook user over the same time period. As people like more Pages, competition in News Feed increases and the organic reach of each post drops (Constine, 2014).

The second reason involves how the News Feed works. Rather than showing people all possible content, News Feed is designed to show each Facebook user the content that is most relevant to them. Facebook reports that of the 1,500+ stories a person might see whenever they log onto Facebook, News Feed displays approximately 300. To choose which stories to show, News Feed ranks each possible story (from more to less important) by looking at thousands of factors relative to each person (Boland, 2014).

The only way to beat the system is to pay for ads – which is not a new feature on Facebook. In fact, Facebook has allowed advertisers to pay for visibility since its early days, but where the ads appear and how they are bought has changed over time. Originally, the ads were relegated to Facebook.com's sidebar, and had to be bought through a clunky interface. Eventually Facebook began allowing ads to appear in the feed and then the mobile feed, and buying them became simpler. (Constine, 2014)

With the recent changes that Facebook has introduced, brands are increasingly promoting their posts to cut through the clutter. Promotional messages and campaigns are becoming more and more common on social media, and consequently the budgets for social-media marketing are growing. In 2015, there are over two million active advertisers on Facebook alone (www.Facebook.com). While the industry has long acknowledged this trend, there is no academic literature on the changing algorithms or revenue models of social-media platforms and this study presents some of the first insights on the topic.

I don't know if you know about Facebook algorithms, but they're showing less and less of your content to less and less of your fans. It's a very crowded market place. So there are more brands fighting for space and Facebook are also trying to get you to pay for that more and more. (Jenny Lau, Social Media Manager at Acne Studios)

The audience on Facebook is huge, and with the restrictions Facebook has implemented, it now only shows your post to certain people depending on how your brand is already rated. So it's like Google and Google Search. Sometimes a little bit of budget can just help you amplify a post or campaign when organically you maybe wouldn't have that reach, so I think it's very successful. Certainly if we want to make sure that something gets shared, there will be a budget that goes behind certain aspects of a campaign or imagery or ideas. (Natalie Thng, SVP Digital and CRM at Temperley London)

If you're putting a paid spend behind what you have to do to target, then definitely there's a lot of potential with Facebook. (Rachel Arthur, Global Senior Editor at WGSN)

While social-media marketing was considered virtually 'free' in the beginning, the recent changes in the platforms' algorithms mean that budgets for social media are increasing. Despite the growing costs and the declining organic reach, Facebook remains an important channel for case companies, and it was deemed particularly useful in targeted campaigns and local activations in specific geographic markets and selected customer segments.

Through the numerous social-media applications and technologies available, the rise of visual content-sharing sites in recent years has introduced further changes to the social-media landscape across industries (Pew Research Center, 2012). The explosive growth of visual social media such as Instagram, Pinterest, Vine and

Snapchat illustrates how visual content is becoming increasingly important – especially in an industry like fashion that is heavily focused on aesthetics and visual representations (Workman and Caldwell, 2007). Additionally, platforms that were previously text-led, such as Facebook and Twitter, are becoming more visually oriented, while the algorithms are shifting. The interface and image format on Facebook and Twitter have changed, and visual content spreads faster than posts containing only text. In the current social-media landscape, fashion brands are experimenting with the power of visual content, using images and videos to build awareness and encourage consumer engagement. The findings highlight the growing importance of visual social media.

Two channels for me are more of a focus than others, Pinterest and Instagram. Because they're visual. (Natalie Thng, SVP Digital and CRM at Temperley London)

What's happened with social is that we've gone from this strategy that was actually very text-led when you think Facebook and Twitter, but obviously their algorithms have shifted. Facebook is very visual-led on purpose now and obviously then we've got the likes of Instagram and Pinterest and ... Snapchat ... that are all totally about visuals. (Rachel Arthur, Global Senior Editor at WGSN)

In line with this trend towards visual social media (Arthur, 2013; Bautista, 2013; Schneier, 2014) Instagram is the key strategic focus for all case companies despite the fact that, unlike Facebook and Twitter, it does not allow direct links on a post, which limits commerce on the platform.

Obviously from a commerce perspective there isn't any ability to actually push the product in a seamless way, but for brand awareness that's [Instagram's] an important one to just be there. (Rachel Arthur, Global Senior Editor at WGSN)

At the time of conducting this research, the only way brands can direct traffic

from Instagram to their e-commerce sites is a link in the biography text at the top of the profile. Image 7.1 (see Appendix 1) provides an example by presenting a screenshot from Acne Studios' Instagram profile. While the company conducts an eyewear campaign with the latest five posts focusing on eyewear only, the link in the biography has been temporarily changed to www.acnestudios.com/eyewear. Instead of directing traffic to the landing page www.acnestudios.com, a direct link is provided to the eyewear product category in the webshop. Additionally, a note 'Link in bio' has become a common practice on Instagram.

While commerce is challenging on Instagram, the focus is on visual storytelling. Moreover, Instagram is the platform where brands see the most engagement at the moment. With the restrictions that Facebook has implemented on organic reach, Instagram is becoming the preferred platform.

Instagram probably is the most relevant for fashion at the moment from a visual perspective, but I also think that from an engagement and a growth perspective it's the platform people are most interested in at present. If you're a fashion brand you can't not be doing Instagram. It would be a bit of a miss to not do it. (Rachel Arthur, Global Senior Editor at WGSN)

Instagram is far more important in terms of my strategy for 2015. (Natalie Thng, SVP Digital and CRM at Temperley London)

People are using Instagram, and Instagram is increasingly becoming a point of sales. (Johannes Reponen, Founder and Editor in Chief at Address Journal)

For all three companies, the Twitter audience remains the smallest with respect to other social-media platforms. Twitter is mainly used for news, promotional messages and day-to-day customer service with existing customers. Engagement is low and the tweets disappear quickly in the feed. Additionally, the findings suggest

that some brands may simply not resonate with Twitter users as well as others.

Twitter isn't very strong for us. It used to be during fashion week, now not so much, because Instagram has overtaken. So Twitter for me is potentially about customer service, maintaining but not driving. It's not going to ever drive our social strategy. (Natalie Thng, SVP Digital and CRM at Temperley London)

The customer-service piece is still pretty fundamental through there [Twitter] and I think the customer-service piece on Facebook probably travels just as well. I'm not sure actually, statistics-wise, which one does better. I would imagine Twitter, but again it depends on your brand because you might have a brand that just doesn't resonate with the Twitter users at all. (Rachel Arthur, Global Senior Editor at WGSN)

The literature review revealed that the relationships between platform characteristics and content need further investigation. Table 8.3 provides a summary of distinctive features of the different platforms. In particular, it shows the links between platform characteristics and content, as brands are tailoring content according to the nature of the platform.

TABLE 8.3 PLATFORM CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTENT

PLATFORM	CHARACTERISTICS	CONTENT	MOTIVATIONS
Facebook	most 'commerce-friendly' platform; allows brands to target customers; provides rich data; concerns about changing algorithm and declining organic reach	product posts, campaign images, promotions, targeted campaigns	commerce, awareness
Twitter	engagement is low and the tweets disappear quickly in the feed; some brands do not resonate with Twitter users as well as others	news, press features, promotional messages and day-to-day customer service with the existing customers	awareness
Instagram	high engagement; strong focus on visual storytelling; commerce is difficult since the platform does not allow direct links on posts	campaign images, show images, behind-the-scenes images, brand storytelling	engagement, awareness

While the table illustrates the distinctive features of the different platforms in the current environment, the changing nature of existing platforms and the emergence of new social-media channels has to be considered. Social-media strategy must be constantly adapted to the evolving environment and hence, monitoring the changing platforms and their characteristics plays an instrumental role in the design of social-media activities. The following quotes describe the constantly evolving social-media landscape at the time of the research:

I don't think social media is going to disappear in any shape or form, but there are many, many more channels coming. We used to talk about Facebook or Twitter,

and maybe LinkedIn, and then Instagram came along. But then Pinterest came and then Vine came along. And then, which channels do you use? The market is becoming more cluttered, a bit more fragmented. (Jonathan Chippindale, CEO at Holition)

I'm hearing really mixed things about Twitter at the moment. A lot of people seem to be just a bit over it. I think from a media perspective, at the moment it's feeling increasingly like a B2B platform because the people that are on there are probably brand and media and not necessarily so many consumers. I think it's one of those channels you absolutely have to be on, but a 24/7 strategy is probably not as necessary. (Rachel Arthur, Global Senior Editor at WGSN)

Overall, an important theme emerges from the empirical analysis: the findings suggest that there are signs of 'sophistication' in social-media use, as the platforms are maturing. The algorithms have developed and social media are increasingly becoming strategic marketing channels that offer a range of sophisticated features and targeting tools. Despite some criticism of the changing algorithms and declining organic reach, the sophistication brings significant benefits to brands, allowing them to target consumers geographically or based on demographics. Arguably, as Rachel Arthur, Global Senior Editor at WGSN noted, there are benefits to the consumers too, because they receive more targeted content:

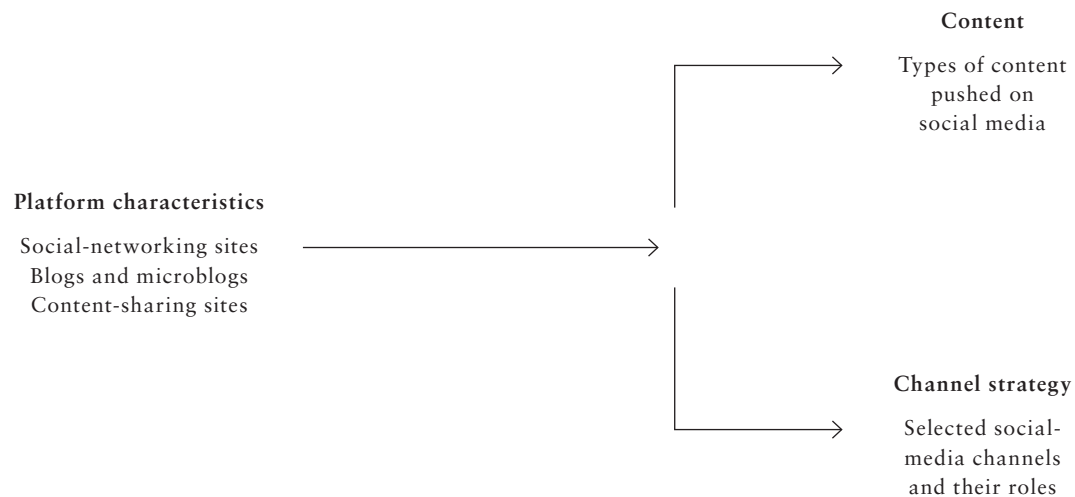
There is a big shift. And that sophistication comes from the platforms themselves as they now have the technology that allows brands to target consumers accordingly and to reach them with the right kind of campaigns.

While the existing research notes the differences across the distinct platforms, there is no prior knowledge on how the changes in social-media landscape or the shifting algorithms of the platforms affect companies' approach to social media. This study presents some novel insights on the topic.

Another important theme arising from the findings is a commercial one, suggesting that social-media platforms are increasingly trying to monetise. As Arthur suggests, social media have fundamentally changed from being a ‘free beast’ to paid media and the budgets for social-media marketing are on the rise:

What we’re seeing now is that social media is not this free beast anymore. It’s not just a matter of having the resources to do it. If you want to do it effectively you do have to put money behind it because it’s a paid media. It’s not this ‘put out and people see it and everybody follows’ any more.

FIGURE 8.3 THE ROLE OF PLATFORM CHARACTERISTICS



Finally, Figure 8.3 illustrates the role of platform characteristics in the design of social-media strategy. The findings from the empirical analysis suggest that the

emerging platforms and their characteristics affect the firm's channel strategy and the types of content pushed on social media. Although the existing research acknowledges the differences across the platforms, there is no scholarly literature on how the changes in social-media landscape or the shifting algorithms affect social-media strategies, and this research provides novel insights into this emergent area. The links are discussed in more detail in the final sections of this thesis.

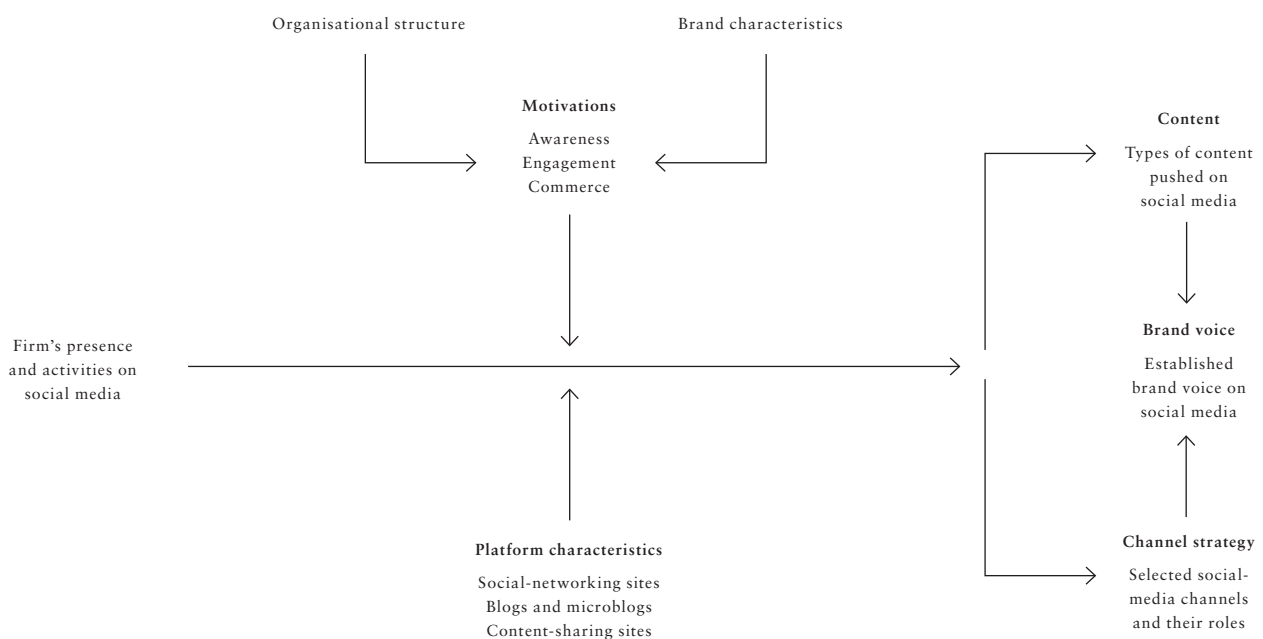
8.6 Introducing a conceptual framework

Based on the empirical findings, the research proposes a conceptual framework that enables an understanding, explanation and description of the process of building a social-media strategy (see Figure 8.4). The preliminary framework was comprised of three initial factors derived from the literature review and used as a tool to structure the case-study analysis. The within and cross-case analysis led to the identification four emergent factors of social-media strategy development. In this section, these are combined to constitute a conceptual framework for the study. Altogether, seven factors were identified, drawing from the empirical evidence and supported and detailed by the existing literature.

The proposed framework consists of the following key components: (1) the firm's presence and activities on social media; (2) the outcomes related to channel strategy (selected social-media channels and their roles), content (the types of content pushed on social media) and the brand voice that stems from the firm's presence and activities on social media; (3) the factors that moderate the relationships between the primary antecedent constructs and outcomes, namely platform characteristics and the firm's motivations to engage with social media, as illustrated in Figure 8.4.

However, it needs to be acknowledged that while motivations and platform characteristics were depicted as illustrative control variables in the framework, other factors may also play a role. The exploration of further variables is subject to future research, which is discussed in Chapter 8.

FIGURE 8.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



In the conceptual framework, the unit of analysis is a firm that adopts social media in its marketing communications. The primary antecedent construct in the model is the firm's presence and initiatives in social media. This construct refers to the efforts of a firm with respect to (1) creating a presence in one or more social-media channels (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010); and (2) specific activities in which the firm engages to leverage its presence on social media.

The second component of the framework, outcomes, refers to three interrelated factors regarding the firm's social-media activities: channel strategy, content and the established brand voice on social media. Channel strategy refers to the selected social-media channels and their respective roles, as discussed in the literature review and case-study findings. Content considers the types of content the brand publishes on social media, such as product post, press feature or campaign image, as illustrated in Table 8.3. Lastly, the brand-voice component refers to the narrative and brand voice that the firm establishes on social media. The brand voice stems from the firm's presence and activities on social media, and it is the outcome of the model. In particular, it is directly affected by the channel strategy and content, and indirectly affected by e.g. motivations and brand characteristics, as illustrated by the arrows in Figure 8.4. In other words, the established brand voice has bearing on content and channel strategy.

Finally, the proposed framework features two broad categories of moderating factors: (1) motivations; and (2) platform characteristics. Findings from the literature review and empirical research suggest that these factors affect the design of social-media strategy and the related outcomes, as explained below.

It emerges from the findings that motivations guide the design of social-media activities, and as such, play a central role in the process. Hence, classifying motivations from the company perspective is instrumental to understanding the decision-making process. Drawing from the literature review and empirical evidence, three principal motivations were identified: awareness, engagement and commerce.

First, firms may create a presence in social media (for example establish a brand page on Facebook) simply to create and enhance brand awareness (e.g. Edelman, 2010; Hutter et al., 2013; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). Second, social media allow brands to foster engagement with consumers (e.g. Hollebeek, 2011; Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Malthouse et al., 2013; Claffey and Brady, 2014; Hollebeek,

Glynn and Brodie, 2014; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). Social media have arguably brought fundamental changes in the ease of contact, volume, speed and nature of these interactions (Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin, 2012), increasing the ability of firms to engage customers in a rich and interactive dialogue. Third, firms may use social media to sell their products directly or indirectly through promotional messages or campaigns (e.g. Liang et al., 2011–2012; Harris and Dennis, 2011; Yadav et al., 2013).

Moreover, the empirical findings emerging from this research suggest that motivations are affected by two firm-related factors, namely organisational structures and brand characteristics (see Table 8.2). For example, for Acne Studios, the motivations for social media strategy changed fundamentally when social media was moved from the e-commerce department to the marketing department in the organisation.

The last set of moderating factors depicted in Figure 8.4 pertains to platform characteristics referring to the differences between the social-media platforms such as their different roles or the types of content that relate to a certain platform, as discussed in the literature review and empirical findings. Three types of social-media platforms were analysed in this research, drawing from the categorisation by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010): social-networking sites (Facebook), blogs and microblogs (Twitter) and content-sharing sites (Instagram). Exploring these platforms, it emerged that, for instance, large social-media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have significant differences in terms of their interfaces and functionalities to create and manage content, and the ability to ‘follow’ individuals on the platforms (Gummerus et al., 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Harris and Dennis, 2011; Caers et al., 2013). Moreover, the moderating impact is also shaped by platform-specific differences.

Overall, an important overarching theme emerges from the empirical research.

The findings suggest that there is an increasing ‘sophistication’ of social-media use, as the field is emerging. This theme is two-fold: (1) the sophistication coming from the brands and (2) the sophistication coming from the platforms.

The former refers to brands becoming more sophisticated and strategic in their approach to social media. In the conceptual framework, this is illustrated as the journey a firm takes in designing social-media activities, shown in the upper part of the framework. Brands are becoming more sophisticated in the design of social-media activities, e.g. choosing social-media channels and tailoring content according to the nature of the platform. To that extent, Facebook was deemed the most ‘commerce-friendly’ platform, from where most of the website traffic and sales come. Instagram was seen as a platform for storytelling, building brand awareness and establishing the brand voice, whilst Twitter was used mainly for news, promotional messages and day-to-day customer service for existing customers.

Facebook tends to be a bit more commercial for us, while Instagram is a bit more playful because you have the image, you kind of associate it with something. Facebook is more about collection launches, what’s in store, what we’re promoting for Valentine’s, about new stores, new collaborations etc. But Instagram is a bit more personal. (Konstantinos Lazarou, Marketing Manager at Stella McCartney)

Social-media platforms have different functions. I think Facebook is a very commercial platform for us, but a key one. Instagram is a very inspirational and creative channel and we use it more for brand and lifestyle. It’s a key focus going into 2015. (Natalie Thng, SVP Digital and CRM at Temperley London)

The second part of the ‘sophistication’ theme refers to the notion that the social-media platforms are developing and maturing, and as such, affect the process of building a social-media strategy. For example, the changing algorithms require

constant revising of content and channel strategy. This effect is illustrated in the lower part of the framework. As Arthur notes:

I suppose what we're seeing a lot of now is this social sophistication era. And that sophistication isn't just coming from the brands, in terms of their approach to it, but it's coming from the platforms. Facebook really is still just a teenager and it's growing up and going through all of these changes and these kind of teething problems. All of the platforms, they've all gone through it, and obviously what we're seeing is that every single one of them is trying to monetise.

Whilst the existing research notes the differences across the distinct platforms, there is no scholarly literature on the changes in the social-media landscape or the shifting algorithms of the platforms, and this study provides novel insights into the topic. In particular, the findings suggest that as a result of the increasing sophistication of the social-media platforms, companies are tailoring content according to the nature of the platform. As discussed, Facebook is the most 'commerce-friendly' platform, where content is focused on product and promotions. Instagram is where the brands see most engagement and where content is focused on visual storytelling. On Twitter, content is focused on news and customer service, but the engagement is low.

Additionally, it emerges from the findings that channel diversity impacts the content and campaigns on social media, and will eventually affect the quality of content. As highlighted by Rachel Arthur: 'Hopefully what we'll start to see with this, and I don't think we're there yet, is that the campaigns become much more creative as a result.'

8.7 Summary of key findings

The literature review revealed increasing attention to the strategic aspect of social media, but showed that there is a lack of standard methods for evaluating professional social-media practices and underlying strategies. To address this gap, a new framework is introduced based on the results of this study. The framework summarises the key findings arising from this research.

First, motivations emerged as a key factor affecting the design of social-media strategy. Three principal motivations for engaging with social media were identified from the company perspective drawing from theoretical considerations and empirical evidence: awareness, engagement and commerce. Moreover, the findings suggest that brand characteristics and organisational structures affect the motivations. Case studies provide examples of the impact that a change in brand personality (as seen in the case of Hunter) or a change in organisational structure (as seen in the case of Acne Studios) can have on the motivations and consequently on the design of social-media strategy.

Second, the findings propose a framework to guide organisations in the process of creating a social-media strategy by highlighting the key factors and their relationships. Altogether, seven factors were identified, drawing from the empirical findings and supported and detailed with the existing literature. Along with a firm's efforts related to social-media presence and activities, motivations, platform characteristics, brand characteristics and organisational structures can play a facilitative role in influencing outcomes related to channel strategy, content and consequently the perceived brand voice, which is the outcome of the model.

In particular, the findings suggest that key factors affecting the design of social-media strategy are motivations and platform characteristics. One of the key themes emerging from the findings is the increasing 'sophistication' of social-media use

as the field is emerging. This is not only coming from the brands, in terms of their approach to social media, but also from the platforms as they come of age. As suggested by Rachel Arthur, Global Senior Editor at WGSN, ‘Facebook really is still just a teenager and it’s growing up and going through all of these changes and these kind of teething problems’. The findings suggest that all platforms are going through similar phases as they mature, and that each platform is increasingly trying to monetise.

Finally, while platform characteristics relate to structural differences that are driven by technological development and the revenue models behind the big social-media players such as Facebook (Caers et al., 2013), and as such cannot be affected by companies, the findings suggest that companies should focus on the motivations that are at the heart of designing a social-media strategy (see Figure 8.4). Nonetheless, it needs to be acknowledged that while in this framework motivations and platform characteristics are depicted as illustrative control variables, other factors may also play a role. The exploration of further variables is an area for future research. These are discussed in the last chapter.

9 Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

Social media have altered the communication landscape and significantly impacted marketing communication. Research suggests that with the rise of social media, marketing communication has been democratised, and the power has shifted from those in marketing to the individuals and communities that create and consume content, redistributing it across a variety of channels. Yet the implications of social media are still largely unknown among practitioners and managers. Researchers have just started giving their attention to the subject of ‘social media strategy’ as such, highlighting a gap in our knowledge, which this study seeks to address.

This research was undertaken to understand the role of social media as a strategic marketing-communications tool. More specifically, the aim was to build an empirically grounded framework that enables an understanding, explanation and description of the process of building a social-media strategy. This aim was divided into four distinct objectives:

- To define the concepts of fashion and fashion marketing, and understand the unique attributes that make fashion a particularly interesting context for social-media research.
- To define social media and explore the role and nature of the different platforms.
- To understand brands’ motivations for using social media.

– To identify the key factors constituting a social-media strategy and study their characteristics.

This chapter draws together the proposed answers to these questions, discusses the limitations of the study, and suggests future research areas. First, the theoretical and then the managerial contributions of the study are discussed and the main findings are evaluated. After that the limitations of the dissertation and avenues for further research are presented.

9.2 Theoretical contributions of the study

The intention of this study has in essence been theory development. In order to state the theoretical contribution or value added to current theories one must define ‘theory’ in some way. According to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2002), theory is a set of interrelated concepts, definitions and propositions that present a systematic view, specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena. The author has provided multiple concepts, defined them, made clear their relationships to each other, and formed testable propositions for future studies. As described in Chapter 4, the preliminary framework can be used to understand and describe a phenomenon, and in some elementary sense it can be employed to explain development.

Besides knowing what theory is, one must understand what constitutes a theoretical contribution or value added to existing theory (Whetten, 1989). A theoretical contribution is made if the concepts provided and their relations offer comprehensive factors and some explanation of the phenomenon. Sometimes factors and their characteristics can be easily deleted or grouped into other factors that can result in a more coherent explanation of the phenomenon. Thus, if there are too

many unnecessary factors and characteristics in the framework those are evaluated, deleted or grouped into one. After discussing the elements of theory and theoretical contribution we can move forward to state the contributions of this study.

The main theoretical contribution of this research is the development of an empirically grounded framework that enables an understanding, explanation and description of the process of building a social-media strategy (Figure 8.4). The framework is based both on the preliminary framework (Figure 4.1) and empirical analysis that together constitute the contribution to knowledge. Without a doubt the empirically grounded framework is the most important theoretical contribution of this research, since the literature review indicated a lack of effective frameworks for developing, analysing and comparing social-media strategies. There has been a call for this type of research from a managerial perspective, across multiple platforms and objectives, and this work provides much-needed insights. As such, it makes an important contribution to the field. This main theoretical contribution, i.e. the empirically grounded framework, is delivered via several stages, which are presented below.

The *first stage* was to provide a basis to discuss the role of social media in marketing communications in the fashion industry. The concepts of *fashion* and *fashion marketing* were defined in the context of this research in order to understand the unique attributes that make fashion a particularly interesting context for social-media research. While fashion as an academic subject has emerged as an interdisciplinary field of scholarly research, it was concluded that for the purposes of this research, fashion is examined from the point of view of ‘fashion business’ rather than in the broader sociological context, and with emphasis on the fashion clothing industry. Moreover, the nature of fashion marketing as a discrete area for academic research was outlined, exploring its emphasis on marketing communication and the different forms of fashion-driven marketing communications compared to marketing in general. A summary of key current research themes in

fashion marketing was provided, and the digital fashion research was explored in more detail, including the areas of e-commerce, mobile commerce, omnichannel, social media and the new fashion influencers.

Given the current literature and research outputs relating to digital fashion marketing, it was noted that there has been a fundamental shift in marketing communications in the fashion industry. In this context, the explosive growth of social media has been one of the main catalysts in the process. In a similar way to how value retailers contributed to the 'democratisation of fashion' in recent years, social media have brought democratisation in terms of shifting power to consumers. The Internet, and particularly social media, have given consumers much more control, information and power, posing fashion brands with a number of important dilemmas and challenges. In addition, there has been a shift in power from the trade papers and editors that once exclusively covered the runway shows to the individuals who watch the shows through their mobile devices. In this context, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat have become an integral part of how fashion brands connect with consumers, providing substantial opportunities for innovative marketing communications (Kim and Ko, 2010, 2012; Chu, Kamal and Kim, 2013; Dhaoui, 2014; Kontu and Vecchi, 2014). Researching this development makes an important contribution in the field.

The *second stage* was to provide a synthesis of the existing social-media literature. Social media was defined in the context of this research and the role and nature of different social-media platforms were discussed. Additionally, the technology-acceptance model, originating from information-systems research, was explored as a way to understand how consumers adopt new technologies and how social-media platforms emerge. The relationships between social media and marketing were examined and a summary of key themes and findings arising from the review of the recent social-media literature was presented. Despite the growing importance of social media amongst both practitioners and academics, it was concluded that

there is a gap in the literature in developing conceptual understanding of the strategic use of social media from the managerial perspective. In particular, the literature review showed that there is a need for more refined, standard methods for evaluating professional social media practices and underlying strategies. The early research in this topical area consists of articles primarily focused on the identification of specific social-media-related strategies – not strategies for social media specifically. Researchers have just started to give their attention to the subject of ‘social-media strategy’ as such, highlighting a gap in the knowledge, which this study addresses.

The *third stage* was the development of an empirically grounded framework, the main theoretical contribution of this research. Although the literature in this domain is not well developed, the analysis of existing work in the field led to the identification of initial patterns regarding the importance of certain elements of social-media strategy development. Furthermore, the review of existing literature resulted in an initial theoretical framework modelled with boxes and arrows, as explained in Chapter 4. This preliminary framework was comprised of three initial factors (motivations, content and channel strategy) derived from the literature review and used as a tool to structure the case-study analysis. Based on the empirical findings, four emergent factors were identified (organisational structures, brand characteristics, platform characteristics and brand voice) and combined to constitute a conceptual framework that enables an understanding, explanation and description of the process of building a social-media strategy. The framework is intended to be holistic and not industry-specific, even though the empirical evidence was collected from one particular context, the fashion industry.

The motivations arising from the literature review serve as a starting point in developing a conceptual framework for describing the process of building a social-media strategy. While the existing literature pays little attention to defining

more refined and comprehensive ways of comparing and evaluating social-media strategies, the principles of hierarchy-of-effects models originating from the advertising field were considered as a way of categorising the objectives and use of social media in marketing communications. Replicating the three-step structure of the traditional cognition–affect–conation model (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961) the propositions of existing studies on the motivations related to the use of social media were grouped into three major categories: awareness (cognition), engagement (affect) and commerce (conation), as illustrated in Figure 3.4 in Chapter 3. These were explored and detailed with the empirical findings from the case studies and key-informant interviews. In particular, it emerged from the findings that brand characteristics and organisational structures affect the motivations. Case studies provided evidence of the impact that a change in brand personality (as seen in the case of Hunter) or a change in organisational structure (as seen in the case of Acne Studios) can have on the motivations and consequently on the outcomes of social-media activities.

Building on the motivations for using social media, an empirically grounded framework was proposed to guide organisations in the process of designing a social-media strategy, identifying the key factors and their characteristics. Altogether, seven factors were identified as discussed above, drawing from the empirical evidence and supported and detailed by the recent social-media literature: motivations, organisational structures, brand characteristics, platform characteristics, channel strategy, content and brand voice. Along with the firms' efforts related to social-media presence and activities, their motivations, platform characteristics, brand characteristics and organisational structures can play a facilitative role in influencing outcomes related to channel strategy, content and perceived brand voice.

Motivations and platform characteristics were identified as key factors affecting the social-media strategy. Moreover, while platform characteristics relate to struc-

tural differences that are driven by technological developments and revenue models behind the big social-media players such as Facebook (Caers et al., 2013) and therefore cannot be controlled by marketers, the findings suggest that managers should focus on motivations that are at the heart of designing social-media activities and affecting the outcomes. Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that while motivation and platform characteristics were identified as the most influential factors in this research, other factors may also play a role. The exploration of additional variables is subject to future research, as discussed in the last section of this chapter.

In terms of knowledge and new insights, it can be summarised that the dissertation provides many new concepts, illustrates their relations, attempts to understand, describe and explain a phenomenon currently occurring in the business field. In addition, this study has generated a number of testable propositions for further research. All in all it can be stated that the study has altered earlier knowledge structures and raised interesting new questions.

9.3 Managerial contributions of the study

Business research, in essence, is engaged in investigations that aim to make sense of the complex commercial environment. This process attempts to provide tools such as two-by-two tables or acronyms like PLC (product life cycle, as discussed in Chapter 2) that accurately describe a phenomenon but depict it in a simplified way. Besides theoretical contributions to the current social-media discussion, this dissertation has tried to provide meaningful tools for managers involved in fashion and other business areas tackling digital technology and social media in marketing communications. There has been a call for this type of research from a managerial viewpoint and this work provides much needed insights.

'Social media' were described as resources and prominent tools to build brand awareness, enhance consumer engagement and drive commerce, as emerged from the empirical findings. The author discussed in detail the process of building a social-media strategy and provided concrete examples from the industry context on how social-media strategy can be built and the key factors to be considered. For many organisations it is relatively easy to create a presence on various social-media platforms, but how to build a sustainable social-media strategy is a more complex issue. The main managerial contributions of this dissertation are the ideas and examples presented to help managers build a social-media strategy.

The conceptual framework emerging from this research is a managerial tool that can be used to tackle the process of building a social-media strategy and to identify its key elements. In particular, the framework (illustrated in Figure 8.4) can be deployed to guide and evaluate the process of creating a social-media presence and strategy. With the help of the framework, managers can harness their resources successfully and identify the factors that need to be considered. Moreover, the framework aims to guide managerial action towards a sustainable social-media approach that helps to build competitive advantage in the longer term. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the framework is simple, while the reality faced by managers is much more complex. Therefore, it should be used in conjunction with other models such as Lavidge and Steiner's (1961) framework.

Based on the developed framework, the author has identified two influential themes that are discussed throughout the dissertation and deserve the attention of managers. These are the evolving platform characteristics and the firm's motivations to engage with social media, depicted in Figure 8.4. First, the findings demonstrate how the design of a social-media strategy starts with understanding and defining the motivations for its use. The three stages of the hierarchy model and its modifications presented in Chapter 3 act as a practical guide for managers when initiating and developing social-media efforts. Social media were deemed

useful means for building brand awareness, fostering consumer engagement and affecting commerce, as illustrated in Figure 3.4 in Chapter 3. The findings further highlight the influence of motivations on the choice of platform. Given this, managers need to be clear what the key motivations are and communicate these carefully. If they do not have a clear vision of what they want to achieve with social media, they risk targeting the wrong channels and generally weakening the effective use of social media, since – as has emerged from these findings – different social-media platforms are more/less effective for different purposes. Moreover, the findings suggest that managers should pay close attention to organisational structures and internal communication in order to ensure that the key objectives are being clearly transmitted to the people responsible for implementing the social-media strategy. The key informants provided examples of cases where CEOs temporarily assumed the role of Chief Digital Officer when new digital strategies were initiated. This helps in their implementation and establishes an overarching digital culture across the organisation. Overall, the findings highlight the role of managers in allocating responsibility for social media within the organisation, as well as deciding how social-media activities should be funded and managed, and analysing what broader changes with regard to structures, processes, leadership, training and culture are needed to harness the potential of this transformative force.

Second, the evolving platform characteristics were identified as the other important factor that requires managers' attention. The findings highlight the importance of understanding how the social-media platforms develop and the ability to adapt the social-media strategy as platforms evolve and new channels emerge. In particular, the findings suggest that there are signs of increasing 'sophistication' in the use of social media as the field is emerging. This sophistication is not only coming from the brands in terms of their approach to social media, but is also coming from the platforms as they mature and develop. Whilst the existing research notes the differences across the distinct platforms, there is no literature to guide managers in understanding the changes in the social-media landscape or the shifting

algorithms of the platforms, and this study provides novel managerial insights. In particular, the findings suggest that as a result of the increasing sophistication of social-media platforms, brands should tailor content according to the nature of the platform. At the time of writing this research, Facebook is the most ‘commerce-friendly’ platform, where content is focused on product and promotions. Instagram is where the brands see most engagement and content is focused on visual storytelling. On Twitter, content is focused on news and customer service, but the engagement is low. Accordingly, the findings show the links between platform characteristics and motivations as illustrated in Table 8.3 above: Facebook is most effective for commerce, Instagram fits best for engagement and awareness, and Twitter is mostly linked to awareness. Additionally it emerges from the findings that channel diversity impacts on the content and campaigns on social media, and will eventually affect the quality of content and campaigns, which become much more creative as a result.

Derived from the developed frameworks, the following steps (Table 9.1) can guide managers in the process of creating a social-media strategy and initiating social-media efforts.

TABLE 9.1 QUESTIONS GUIDING THE SOCIAL-MEDIA APPROACH

VARIABLE	DESCRIPTION
Objectives	What do you want to achieve? What are your motivations?
Target audience	Who do you want to reach?
Available content	What assets (photos, videos, etc.) do you have?
Available resource	Who will be posting, and how frequently?

The first step is to define the objectives at the heart of building a social-media strategy. This involves discussing and deciding how to establish a distinct brand voice on social media: what is the voice, what are the key messages, what are the motivations for engaging with social media? The top management's involvement is crucial in this process. It is important that key decision-makers are involved in defining the objectives in order to ensure that the vision comes 'from the top' rather than from an organisational silo. The second step involves selecting the target audience: defining the targeted customers and where they spend their time. This informs the channel strategy in the sense that the process of selecting channels starts from understanding where, and on which social-media platforms, the targeted customers spend their time and can be reached best. The third step involves mapping out the available content and understanding what assets are available. This can inform the channel strategy too: if the brand has a wealth of high-quality photos available, Instagram is the right channel, while available video content is a good reason to open a YouTube channel. The fourth step involves mapping out the available resources: who will be posting, and how frequently? This informs the content strategy in terms of how many posts can be scheduled for a weekly or monthly content calendar. Another helpful tool for content strategy is the creation of regular weekly features (or types of content) to be used on selected social-media platforms, as seen in the case of Matthew Williamson. The weekly content is not limited to these, but the regular features can act in the background to provide structure and consistency, and to help establish a clear and recognisable brand voice across the platforms. These regular features are not limited only to press placements or celebrity endorsements, but also to original content that communicates the essence of the brand, and drives traffic and sales.

Digital skills, recent knowledge of different social-media platforms, as well as managerial activities have an important role to play when building a social-media strategy. Digital and social-media tools can today be acquired relatively easily, but simply acquiring the skills is not sufficient. Companies need to develop and share

strategic digital knowledge in-house in the organisation. Twenty years ago Porter and Millar (1985) had already noted that managers must be directly involved in the adoption of a new technology. This is supported by Mata, Fuerst and Barney (1995), who identified managerial information-technology skills as the only sustainable competitive weapon in complex and turbulent markets. This implies that the way managers use and manage digital and social media is more important and harder to imitate than, for example, acquiring the latest applications or technical digital skills, which do not provide a sustainable competitive advantage. Technology skills can only provide a temporary competitive advantage (Porter and Millar, 1985). This leads to the conclusion that it does not matter how much a company has invested in digital tools; it is the way managers and employees use them that counts. The findings arising from the case studies support this argument. All three companies provide examples of how key appointments initiated and fundamentally affected the process of developing a distinct digital positioning. In all three cases, the process started with the appointment of a new social-media manager, who assumed overall responsibility for developing a social-media strategy and played a key role in defining the company's social-media presence and sharing the knowledge internally in the organisation to create a digital culture.

The amount of digital skills or social-media knowledge needed varies case by case, but as the number of experienced digital managers grows, so do the skills related to digital and social media. Moreover, it will be interesting to see what happens in the industry when these roles evolve and the current digital and social media managers become the CEOs of the future, as noted here by Rachel Arthur:

What I'm really excited about is the fact that you've got some really intelligent and very hands-on people that are running these areas and they're all very young. It will be really exciting to see what happens when those people become the CEOs of the future, which will happen because they're really smart people, they understand content, they understand commerce, and they understand more and more

about how to make the business work. I think that has the potential to really shift this industry once they become the ultimate decision makers.

Arthur anticipates a significant shift in the industry when the current digital managers become top executives and key decision-makers. They are well-connected in the industry, they understand content and commerce, and have hands-on experience of how to build successful digital businesses. Many of them are already part of the decision-making machine, but the real impact will be seen when they assume top management roles. Moreover, the digital knowledge does not only transfer within, but also across organisations. A good example of this is the strong community of Burberry alumni, who have assumed senior roles in other organisations. The approximately twenty people who were instrumental in Burberry's digital developments in the early days have now taken on senior roles in other companies and become important digital influencers in digital fashion, moving the industry forward.

To summarise, it is evident that this dissertation provides managerially relevant new concepts that can be employed together with the others (e.g. Lavidge and Steiner, 1961) to manage social media more effectively. This is the case especially in the fashion industry, where digital and social media have altered the way fashion companies communicate with consumers, and market and sell their products. As noted in the earlier chapters, the process of adopting social media in marketing communications requires new tactics and new thinking. Most importantly, the author has highlighted the means to create a consistent social-media strategy and has also illustrated how it is possible to build in practice. The three stages of the hierarchy model and its modifications presented in this study will act as a practical guide for managers when initiating and developing social-media efforts. The proposed conceptual frameworks and examples arising from this research can help managers make sense of the social-media environment and better understand how to design social-media activities and effectively use social media in marketing communications.

9.4 Limitations and directions for further research

All research has limitations that can be pointed out, criticised and brought forth for discussion. A number of the limitations of this study have already been discussed. However, there are some inherent limitations that need to be further explained.

First, since the aim of the research was to understand, explain and describe the process of developing a social-media strategy in one specific industry context, namely the fashion industry, statistical generalisations were not sought. It is acknowledged that the logic of building a social-media strategy might be different in other industries, especially those that are not so focused on aesthetics and visual representations (Workman and Caldwell, 2007). The fashion sector was selected as an industrial environment because only a few studies have been conducted on the impact of social media on the fashion industry (see e.g. Kim and Ko, 2010, 2012; Chu, Kamal and Kim, 2013; Dhaoui, 2014; Kontu and Vecchi, 2014). Additionally, the fashion industry was deemed the ideal industry setting for the study since it is by definition a very visual industry that is consumer-driven and where establishing empathy with consumers is of paramount importance (Venturi, 2011).

Second, the research explored three case studies of fashion companies (Acne Studios, Hunter and Matthew Williamson). The reason why three cases were selected, as opposed to fewer or more, was because one or two cases could be argued to be unique within an industry, while three were deemed to have yielded sufficient information on the process of building a social-media strategy to form a rich case description and an empirically grounded framework. Thus, in the author's opinion, a fourth case was not needed, although it is fully acknowledged that it could have enriched the empirical and theoretical findings. Moreover, the author wanted to find three cases that had recently launched a social-media strategy in order to capture a process that was relatively fresh and which the informants could easily

remember. Therefore, three cases with heterogonous social-media histories were selected.

Third, the reader may ask why the chosen key informants were selected. Yin (2009) notes that key informants are often critical to the success of case-study research. Such persons provide the case-study investigator with insights and can initiate access to corroboratory or contrary sources of evidence. The interviewees can also suggest other persons for further interviews, as well as other sources of evidence. In this research, an open dialogue was carried on from the first interview meeting, and the interviewees provided news and recent developments as the companies' social-media presence evolved during the research. Since the interviewees were well connected within the digital fashion sector, they also suggested other people for further interviews, provided introductions and recommended additional sources of evidence in various formats. For example, the first contact person was the Head of Digital at Matthew Williamson, who then suggested a person to be contacted from Hunter. After some evaluation of the suitability of this person, the author contacted her and asked her to give her view of other informants to be interviewed. In this way, informants who seemed to have the most knowledge of the phenomenon studied were chosen.

Additionally, key informants outside the case were interviewed, and other industry-related material was used to compare and evaluate the similarities and interesting discrepancies in the process of building a social-media strategy. Along with the senior managers of the case companies, altogether twelve additional key-informant interviews were conducted with selected digital experts in the industry to provide further insight into the role of social media as a part of marketing-communications strategy in the fashion industry. The aim of these key informant interviews was two-fold: first, to inform the selection of case-study companies; and second, to validate the themes and findings arising from the case studies. While the experts provided in-depth and valuable insights into the implications of social

media, involving more participants would provide a broader view. All in all, more interviews could have been done, but information relevant for studying the role of social media in marketing communication seemed already to be available for the researcher, and thus further interviews were not conducted.

Fourth, the empirically grounded framework stemming from this research builds on seven factors and their relationships that can be tested in further studies. It needs to be noted that other factors may also play a role, and the exploration of further variables is subject to more research enquiries. For example, this research focused on three social-media platforms – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram – which were deemed the most relevant when the empirical material was collected. Including the recent live-streaming applications such as Snapchat and Periscope might add a new perspective to the framework. It is also acknowledged that the process of developing a social-media strategy is complex and constantly evolving, and it might be difficult to differentiate between the distinct factors and their relationships.

Finally, the rapidly changing area of social media demands methodological adaptability, and the use of these platforms for research requires reflection on existing research paradigms, methodological approaches and ethical issues. As the field continues to emerge, the methodologies, theories and their application are likely to evolve considerably.

These concerns form the basis for future research.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Examples of case-studies' content

IMAGE 6.1 SCREEN SHOT FROM ACNE STUDIOS' FACEBOOK FEED ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2014

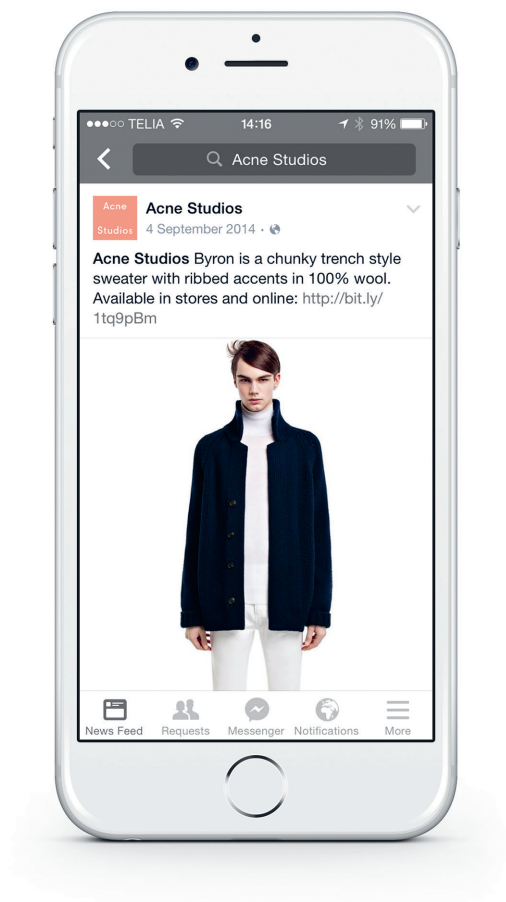


IMAGE 6.2 SCREEN SHOT FROM ACNE STUDIOS' FACEBOOK FEED ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2014



IMAGE 6.3 SCREEN SHOT FROM HUNTER'S FACEBOOK FEED
ON 2 JULY 2014

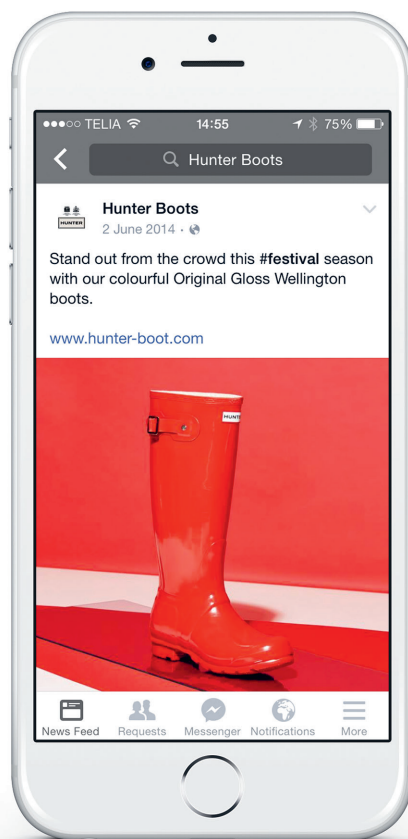


IMAGE 6.4 SCREEN SHOT FROM MATTHEW WILLIAMSON'S
FACEBOOK FEED ON 11 NOVEMBER 2014

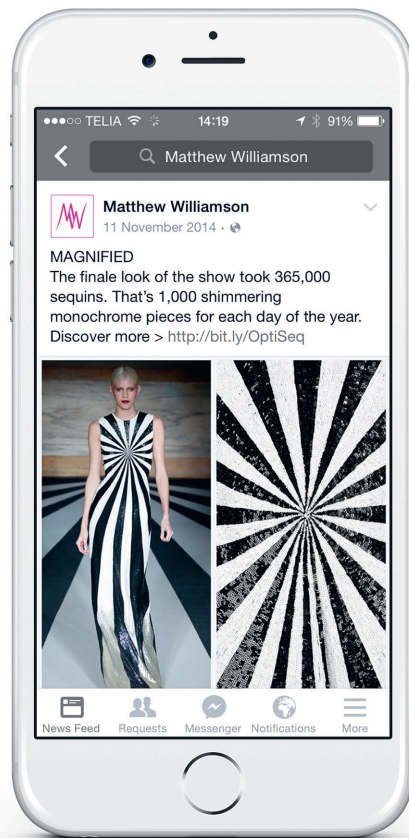


IMAGE 6.5 #OHMW CROWDSOURCING CAMPAIGN
(INSTAGRAM: @MATTHEWWILLIAMSON)

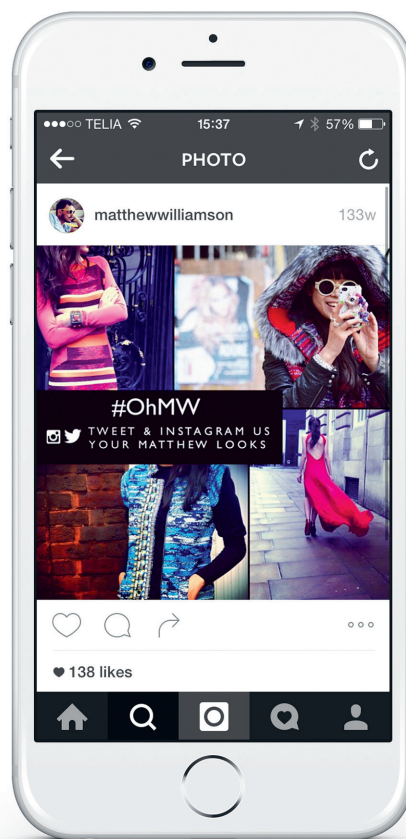


IMAGE 6.6 WINDOW DISPLAY (ABOVE) AND LANDING PAGE
(INSTAGRAM: @MATTHEWILLIAMSON)

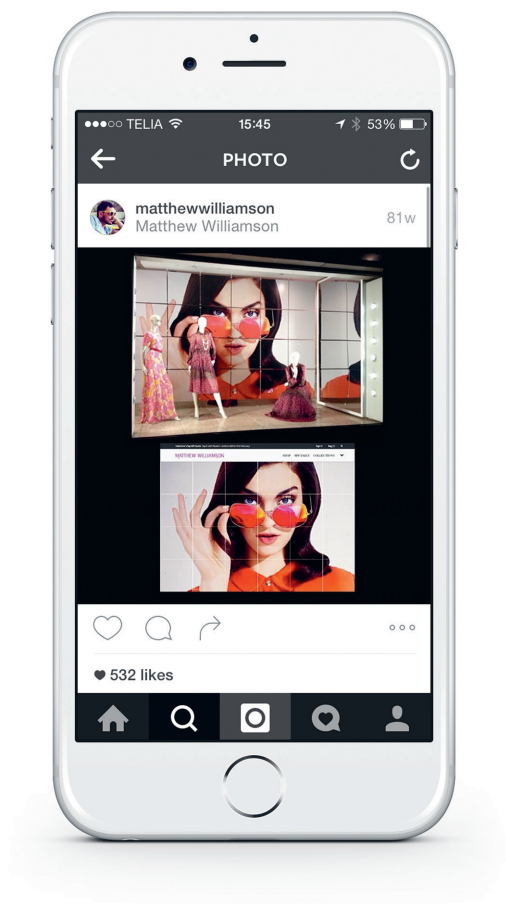
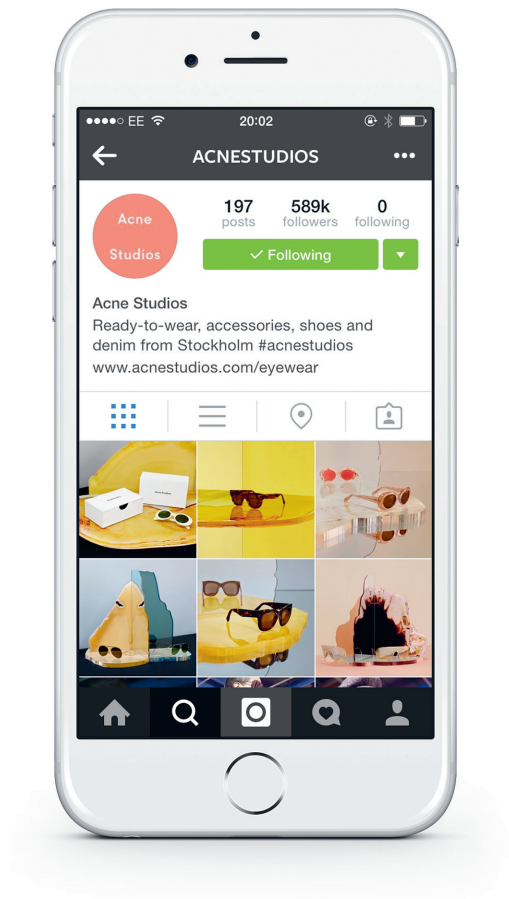


IMAGE 7.1 SCREEN SHOT FROM ACNE STUDIOS' INSTAGRAM FEED ON 15 APRIL 2015



Appendix 2 List of interviewees

1. CASE-STUDY INFORMANTS

KEY INFORMANT	ROLE	COMPANY
Rosanna Falconer	Head of Digital	Matthew Williamson (formerly at BFC)
Jesper Kling	Head of PR	Acne Studios (founder of Jung PR Agency)
Jenny Lau	Social Media Manager	Acne Studios (formerly at Harvey Nichols)
Michelle Sadlier	Global Social Media Manager	Hunter (formerly at Net-a-Porter)
Will Ryan	Founder	Electric Lab (Web design for Matthew Williamson)

2. KEY INFORMANTS

KEY INFORMANT	ROLE	COMPANY
Rachel Arthur	Global Senior Editor	WGSN
Jonathan Chippindale	CEO	Holition
Emily Fleuriot	Editor-in-Chief	Sunshine
Ceci Joannou	Founder and Editor-in-Chief	Brand + Commercial
Konstantinos Lazarou	Marketing Manager	Stella McCartney
Carl Martin	Head of Digital Partnerships	Burberry
Johannes Reponen	Founder and Editor-in-Chief	Address Journal
Will Ryan	Founder	Electric Labs
Natalie Thng	SVP Digital and CRM	Temperley London
Tevi Tuakli	Digital Strategist	Joule

Appendix 3 Information sheet

My name is Hanna Kontu. I am a PhD Student and Associate Lecturer at London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London. My research project examines the role of digital and social media in the fashion industry.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project. Before you decide to take part it is important that you understand the nature of the project and your involvement. Please read this information sheet carefully before giving your consent. You are welcome to discuss this with others; likewise, please ask me if you would like clarification or more information.

About the research project

Despite the myriad of digital and social media, the question of the state of fashion in the digital context remains largely unexplored, especially with regards to the particularities of fashion management, which have posed a challenge in adopting digital technologies in the sector over the past two decades.

The academic literature on social media is still in its early stages and there is limited evidence of its potential as a strategic marketing tool. Furthermore, the connections between social media and fashion remain unexplored, with relatively little academic research on the applications of social media in the fashion context. Through a series of case studies and key-informant interviews, I am examining the use of social media in the fashion industry. The aim is to provide a critical assessment of the strategic value of social media for fashion brands and its broader implications to the field of fashion marketing.

Why me?

I am asking you to participate because I respect your expertise and contribution in this field. Interviewees represent a broad scope of professionals, including marketing professionals, digital professionals and academics. I believe your experience and knowledge will assist me in compiling valuable information about the relatively undocumented use of social media in the fashion industry.

Scope of the interview

I would like to conduct an informal interview with you that will last approximately one hour. It will be scheduled at your convenience and will take place at a quiet location. The interview will consist of a general discussion about the role of digital and social media in the fashion industry that may lead to more questions about your perspective and experience in the field, including innovative digital projects you have been involved in. Your interview will be recorded.

Confidentiality

The data from your interview will be confidential and solely accessed by me. The interview will be transcribed and information will be stored in a secure location. Material from your interview may be discussed with my supervisors at London College of Fashion: Alessandra Vecchi, my director of studies; and Tony Kent, my secondary supervisor. Your interview material will not be released to any other party. No personal data will be kept on you, with the exception of contact details and job title for the duration of the project. At the completion of the research project, I will destroy any physical and electronic data files pertaining to your participation in the research. Research data sets may be retained for future research papers and other academic applications.

Following your interview, you will be asked to select one of three levels of ‘identification’ on the attached consent form. During the course of the project, you are welcome to change what level of identification you are comfortable with, and I will double check with you before the project is published.

Intended results of the project

This research project will take form of a written dissertation. I hope that its findings will contribute to the understanding of the strategic value of social media for fashion brands and to the broader field of fashion marketing.

Concerns

You may withdraw from the project at any time, at no disadvantage to yourself. There is no level of compulsion in this project. If you have any concerns about the project or your participation in it, please contact me immediately. You can reach me at h.kontu@fashion.arts.ac.uk. You are also welcome to learn more about participants’ rights by contacting the Research Office at the University of the Arts London, 1 Granary Square, King’s Cross, London N1C 4AA, +44 (0) 207 514 9389, researchegrees@arts.ac.uk.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to working with you.

Hanna Kontu
PhD Student and Associate Lecturer
London College of Fashion
University of the Arts London

Appendix 4 Participant consent form

You are being invited to take part in a research project by PhD Student and Associate Lecturer Hanna Kontu from London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London.

Please read the accompanying information sheet carefully before giving your consent. You are welcome to discuss this with others; likewise please ask if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

Set forth below, please find the different aspects of the project for which your consent is sought:

Activity consents

I understand that I have given my consent to be interviewed by the researcher Hanna Kontu to discuss the role of digital and social media in the fashion industry, as outlined in the accompanying information sheet. I understand and have had explained to me any risks associated with this activity.

For this, I wish to be identified in any publication or dissemination as follows (please tick one):

I may be identified by name and company or affiliation (where applicable)

I wish to be identified only generically
(e.g. marketing manager at a London-based fashion company)

I wish to be anonymous with no indication of company or affiliation
(e.g. fashion marketing professional, key informant) —

I understand that I can revise this consent in writing or email at any point, that such a request will be acknowledged and attached as a codicil to this consent form, and that it will be double-checked prior to any form of publication or dissemination.

Data consents

I understand that the interview will be recorded and related material being used within the project and its publication and dissemination. The data from the interview will be confidential. I also understand that no personal data will be kept on me, with the exception of contact details and job title for the duration of the project. Research data sets may be retained for future research papers and other academic applications.

Statements of understanding

I have been informed about the research project in which I have been asked to take part. What is involved and why it is being done has been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions.

Right of withdrawal

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the

project at any time without disadvantage to myself and without having to give any reason.

Statement of consent

I hereby fully and freely consent to participation in the research project, which has been fully explained to me.

Participant's name (in block capitals):

Participant's signature and Date:

Researcher 's name (in block capitals):

Researcher's signature and Date:

Contact

If you have any enquires about the project or your participation in it, you can contact the researcher at h.kontu@fashion.arts.ac.uk. Should feel you need external advice you can contact the Research Office at the University of the Arts London, 1 Granary Square, King's Cross, London N1C 4AA, +44 (0) 207 514 9389, researchdegrees@arts.ac.uk.

Thank you for your participation and support of this research project.

Hanna Kontu

PhD Student and Associate Lecturer

London College of Fashion

University of the Arts London

Appendix 5 Questions for case-study interviews

- 1 How do you work with social media? Who is involved and how is your team organised?
- 2 What are the main objectives of your social-media strategy? How do you measure the effectiveness of social media? Should social media always directly drive sales?
- 3 Which social-media platforms do you focus on at (COMPANY NAME)? Do you consider some platforms more critical than others? Why?
- 4 How do you work with content strategy? Who is involved in content creation? How do you create compelling digital content that people want to share (i.e. how do you make your content travel)?
- 5 How would you describe the relationship between the social-media strategy and the overall marketing strategy? How do these two work together? Or is it all about digital marketing now?
- 6 What do you think about the relationship between online, in-store and mobile? How do these three channels work together? Who does this well?
- 7 What would you consider as the most promising new platforms and emerging technologies at the moment?
- 8 Looking at the industry today, how would you describe fashion brands’

approach to social media – experimental, operational or strategic? Who is at the forefront of the digital revolution?

- 9 If you had to give advice about the strategic use of social media to three types of companies – one emerging, one mature, one declining – what would that be?
- 10 How would you describe the role of social media in marketing communications in the fashion industry? How do you see the future?

Appendix 6 Questions for key-informant interviews

- 1 What are the most innovative digital projects you have been involved in?
- 2 What do you consider as the key motivations for fashion brands to engage with social media? How do you think fashion brands should measure the effectiveness of social media? Should social media always directly drive sales?
- 3 What are the most important social-media platforms for fashion brands at the moment? Do you consider some platforms more critical than others? Why?
- 4 How do you create compelling digital content that people want to share? How do you make your content travel?
- 5 How would you describe the relationship between the social-media strategy and the overall marketing strategy? How do these two work together? Or is it all about digital marketing now?
- 6 What do you think about the relationship between online, in-store and mobile? How do these three channels work together? Who does this well?
- 7 What would you consider the most promising new platforms and emerging technologies at the moment?
- 8 Looking at the industry today, how would you describe fashion brands’

approach to social media – experimental, operational or strategic? Who is at the forefront of the digital revolution?

- 9 If you had to give advice about the strategic use of social media to three types of companies – one emerging, one mature, one declining – what would that be?
- 10 How would you describe the role of social media in marketing communications in the fashion industry? How do you see the future?

Appendix 7 Example of a transcribed interview text

The purpose of this appendix is to give an example of an interview text and to illustrate how the author has employed the interview material in building the case studies and in developing the presented framework. The highlighted passages (bold) and themes (*italic*) were marked up on the transcript during the analysis process.

The example text presents the first 30 minutes of a case-study interview. It was chosen to represent all interview texts and their analysis, and many of the facts presented in it are used in the case-study descriptions. Some parts of the original text, indicated with an asterisk, are omitted here for confidentiality reasons. For the same reason, all the names of the companies and people mentioned in the original text have also been omitted. Letter A indicates the interviewer, letter B indicates the interviewee and letter X indicates the case-company name.

Background

- A: Could you start by telling briefly about your background and your previous role?
- B: Yes
- A: And then when you joined X
- B: Yeh
- A: So
- B: I have worked specifically in social media for about five years now
- A: Yes
- B: And I think that's quite mature for the industry itself

A: Yeh

B: And um when I started um, I joined a sort of small agency in London and at that time social media wasn't really being represented by the big digital agencies

A: No

B: And there were still a lot of specialists um tiny social media agencies

A: Yeh

B: Um and I started as a community manager um and I remember that at the time you know we still really had to sell in social media as a paid for service

A: Yeh

B: To brands and they weren't even really thinking about setting up their own Facebook pages or you know so

A: Yeh

B: You know is this something that we should start doing um so I started as a community manager. I then moved um into a bigger ad agency that had a social media specialism unit and I was a planner so doing more creative and strategy um working with quite big, big named brands there um and all the while I've been focusing on fashion clients, so starting with Jimmy Choo then Next, the high street brand

A: Yeh

B: And having, then having done I think three years in social I saw the opportunity to go in-house because at that time I knew that was the direction, that was the right one to take because a lot of brands were now starting to hire their own teams and it would just be a smart move

A: Yeh

B: And also to escape the agency world

A: Yeh

B: Which I didn't really like um so I sort of pursued the fashion angle and went to Harvey Nichols

A: Yeh

B: Um and again there I was a social media manager very much a sort of one woman team um overseeing I guess lots of different people in their roles but ultimately I was accountable for social media. Um that in turn I did about a year and a half there

A: Yeh

B: Then I moved to X. And I chose X because, I guess I applied um, I saw this role on the website and I applied because it's one of my favourite brands and also um Harvey Nichols was quite different in that it's a multi brand retailer

A: Oh yeh, yeh

B: and it was so crazy

A: Yeh

B: Um you know we were actually representing about seven hundred different brands and um from a marketing and press perspective it was very hard so I wanted to go properly brand side and this one tapped you know

A: Yeh, storytelling and everything

B: Yes, exactly

A: I understand that completely. And so I guess we can go more in detail, just jump into your role at X right away then

B: Yeh

Main steps in developing social-media strategy

A: So you have a very strong visual expression and a solid presence across a range of platforms by now, so how do you work with digital strategy and social media here? So who is involved?

B: Yeh

A: And how do is your team organised?

B: Yeh. I would say that um we are not a very digital first company

A: Yeh

B: And, you know whatever social and digital kind of um innovations we've done have happened quite recently. We are very much lead by product, you know, product is our number one kind of starting point. We'd never um, well I would say there are quite a few brands out there who actually lead with you know the PR idea or the, you know, the marketing concept but for us it always comes from the collection and

A: Um

B: So from the collection or from the product we set a brief and um quite often this goes to um I guess um the head of brand or marketing

A: Um

B: And um we will create a campaign around it, this collection or this, um often it's like an ad campaign

A: Yeh

B: Or um you know we might decide to create a video around something but it will be through the singular content expression which goes around the product um and I, to be honest I think now more than ever we have digital and social at the forefront but in the past it has sort of been the last minute add on

A: Um

B: Which is like, 'OK now we shot the ad campaign, how do we do it on Facebook, how do we do it on?'

A: Yeh exactly

B: Yeh, spray the layer on top

A: Yeh

B: Um I think now we're very much trying to lead with um, 'OK here's the product what's the PR story going to be and what, what do you think will um make the most noise on social media?'

- A: Yeh
- B: And we start to work in that way
- A: Oh yeh
- B: So when we start to concept campaigns we also think, 'Ok how's this going to work on social media?'
- A: Yeh

Content

- B: But it's still very much led from um a think image perspective. As you say **it's a very visual brand and um we don't um I mean all our content is super super kind of signed off**
- A: Yeh
- B: And um **we don't work with anything other than the campaign imagery and assets**
- A: Yeh, yeh exactly like no last minute Instagrams
- B: No, no
- A: From the studio
- B: **No, no filters no nothing**
- A: Yeh, exactly. Um so when I met Jesper in March
- B: Yeh
- A: When you had just been appointed, probably just first weeks in
- B: Yes, yeh
- A: He was then saying that X was in away, um I don't know if that's the right way to put it, but like 'rediscovering the potential of social media'
- B: Yeh, yeh
- A: While it's not been 'digital first' as you say
- B: Yeh, yeh

Main steps in developing social-media strategy

A: So what do you think rolling out a digital strategy means?

B: Yeh, I think it's so unique in that **digital now touches every point of a business**

A: Yeh

B: **And it's not something that exists in its own silo**

A: Yeh

B: Um so I mean to that extent I think **when you roll out a strategy it's actually about imbedding it within the business**

A: Yeh

B: More than anything

A: Yeh

B: **So it's about looking at all the different departments, you know, the ecommerce platform, the retail experience**

A: Yeh

B: **The product itself, um the marketing, the PR, um you know even the way in which we behave as employees or the way in which we share information and then it's about bringing, looking at ways in which digital can enhance**

A: Um

B: **The business, either from a, like a productivity and ROI perspective or from a customer experience perspective**

A: Yeh

B: Um, I mean I'm working on um, this is tangential, I working on project at the moment which has to do with CRM and we're starting to do exactly that, which is um I think you know like work shopping with all the different stakeholders in the business to actually see what they want out of this concept, this idea

A: Um

B: Which is so fresh to us

A: Yeh

B: And I think that's what you need to do with any digital strategy

A: Yeh

B: Is to actually get stakeholders on board because otherwise they can very much see you as separate

A: Yeh

B: To the needs of the business

A: Yeh

B: Whereas now it's you know, it's one and the same

A: Yeh

B: It's not how um, it's not just you know how are we driving PR in, in the print world, it's how we drive PR overall

A: Yeh

B: and how does, you know, digital impact that, so um I don't know if that answers your question?

A: Yeh, yeh no it does.

B: Yeh, yeh

A: So looking back to these six months in your new role, how would you describe the major steps in rolling out your social media strategy?

B: Yep um the major steps so I think um the first step is always to kind of absorb the brand

A: Yeh

B: And absorb the culture and um for me the first few months were definitely about observation um and you know observing the way in which we behave and the values that we have a business and um you know you are not able to create any digital strategy without um fully understanding what your brand values are

A: Yeh

B: Um more concrete stuff I would say that um data um and sort of data has always been a friend of mine

A: Yeh

Community

B: So um being able to actually look at statistics from um so like historical traffic and sales that have been driven from our social media and looking at the behaviours of the way in which our community um behaves so I think Facebook is the best thing for this. We have very large Facebook community, we've been able to identify you know, where the most of our fans are from

A: Yeh

B: What kind of demographics they are, what kind of content they um like the most and to be able pick out like I guess a profile from that

A: Yeh

B: And construct a social, construct the um social fan for X

A: Yeh

Discussion about leaders in digital fashion

B: That was really helpful um in putting together the strategy and I think. Also um here at X we really benchmark ourselves against super high-end luxury brands.

A: Um

B: Um you know, not many people would put us in the same bracket as Prada, Chanel, Miu Miu, Givenchy or Balenciaga, but those are the brands that we benchmark ourselves against. We don't care about the Swedish brands; we don't care about contemporary mid-range brands.

A: Yeh

B: So part of my initial strategy as well was to really look at what those competitors are doing and cherry pick the best case studies and examples of how they excel in digital. And to try and bring that in to an argument, backed up by data and my observations, to present this sort of full social

media strategy, which I did about two months in um to the key stakeholders here.

A: Yeh

B: And that is now the backbone of our social media strategy.

A: Yeh, yeh

B: Um, anything else? No I think um it's kind of yeh I guess the other thing is that as a brand we are probably quite reluctant to be the more innovative ones, you know, we're never going to be the Burberry who have, who want to make headlines for digital innovation

A: Yeh

B: We're not going to be the first to do anything; we're not going to invest lots of money into technology

A: Yeh

B: For the sake of it, but um there's always been a feeling that 'OK if Prada has done it we can do it'

A: Yeh, yeh

B: So that even informed our strategy down to the more tactical level

A: Yeh

B: So you know 'should we share, should we be posting this kind of imagery on our Facebook page' or 'which channel should we be choosing for what kind of content'. There we really looked to those competitors um to set the tone for us

A: Yeh, and just on that um I was going to come back to that later

B: Um

A: but when you say 'cherry picking the best ones'

B: Yes

Further discussion about leaders in digital fashion

A: Who do you think, in terms of luxury fashion, who do you think are

excelling in the space?

B: Yeh

A: Who do you think are the best examples?

B: I mean for me it's obviously still Burberry um I know everyone drops this one out

A: Yeh

B: But for a very good reason

A: Yeh

B: Um they have managed to take um a very elevated concept, a very luxurious brand and really democratise it but still own the brand

A: Yeh

B: Which is incredible because um you've seen, I mean I can't think of any examples, but that can go so wrong

A: Yeh

B: You know

A: Yeh, no, no

B: So you know to be able to speak to their aspirational customer

A: Yeh

B: Almost on a one to one level and without selling out is really quite something and I you know I do really admire the digital initiatives they've taken

A: Yeh

B: And it's given them so much back, you know the fact that they have Google eating out of their hands now

A: Yeh

B: Um and they're probably able to do most of that stuff for free

A: Yeh, yeh

B: Because it's the Burberry name and also it does amazing things with Google

A: Yeh

B: Um so I'd say it's them and then um who else do I really respect um I guess

um we all like to talk about **Miu Miu**

A: Yeh

Discussion about influencers

B: Because um maybe from an image point of view, you know, we love the fact that **they're so strategic in the way they present the collections so um they work with exactly the right ambassadors, they have the perfect kind of curated um show, curated front row, um they work with those ambassadors to ensure that they also leverage their digital channels and that's the kind of thing we want to work towards. I'd say we don't have a very strategic approach to influencers at the moment**

A: Um

B: Um **which is a shame because as a brand we have so much leverage**

A: Oh yeh

B: Um and I know a lot of people would love to be that kind of ambassador

A: Um, um

B: For X

A: Yeh

B: Um, who else? I guess it's like **a lot of the high street retail brands are doing so well um but we don't really want to benchmark against them**

A: No, no

B: And their activations are something we'd never think about but you know I think like Asos and Topshop are really killing it as well

A: Yes, they've done an amazing job, and like completely opposite to Burberry

B: Yes

A: trying to bring the luxury brand

B: Exactly

A: To the consumer, so they've kind of done the other way around

B: Elevating the cheap promotions

Discussion about objectives and motivations

A: Well yes, kind of um. So back to X then. What are the main objectives of your digital strategy?

B: Well **we have a nice little one liner**

A: OK

B: Um which um came out of this kind of strategic discussion which is um I can't remember what it is, how embarrassing is that? It's a vision, no, it was a seductive dialogue, **visually seductive dialogue with our community**

A: Um, that's nice

B: Is that right? Oh my God I can't believe I've forgotten this. It had seductive and dialogue in it um so you know the

A: Um

B: **Seduction is this mystery element that we are very keen to maintain as a brand. We have always been about maintaining that mystique. We think it's very important**

A: Yeh

B: **We're not going to go all out Burberry on people. You know, 'Hey guys come and engage with us'. We would never do that**

A: Yeh

B: **So dialogue because we're trying to push it from this one-way conversation to two, which we haven't quite done yet. So that in part has to do with the reluctance to let go. Let go of control**

A: Yeh

B: **But that is our overarching strategy.**

A: Yeh

B: **And I think for me, in anything we do in social, if it doesn't meet that criteria, we don't do it**

A: Yeh, yeh. And in more tangible, concrete

B: Yeh, of course, um so

A: While being seductive and while being um

B: Yes exactly

A: Um

Community growth

B: So when it comes to KPIs so it's **firstly it's obviously community growth**

A: Yeh

B: Um but you know for me that's always a tricky one because our community will grow um but we try and put, I mean **we're still looking at our KPI's at the moment**

A: Um

B: And **trying to extract a value from them** so yes the community is growing but maybe we look at it um from a more targeted um point of view so each season we're going to set more targeted KPIs than just you know, 'grow the community by 3%'

A: Yeh

B: So we're going to start trying to grow it in specific segments, so for example, 'Asia is a huge market, let's try and grown the Japan community on Facebook by * percent'

A: Yeh

B: Using these activations

A: Um

B: 'Let's try and grow US because that's also a big growth market for us'

A: Um

B: 'Let's try and grow the growth rate not the growth, the whole growth figure itself'

A: Yeh

B: Um and then the same goes for ecommerce um we track what we can in terms of sales and traffic

A: Yeh

B: Obviously um **it's a very broken attribution model so you know social media might drive one to three percent of traffic and sales but we don't see all the other traffic and sales it drives offline or on multi device which is so common nowadays**

A: Yeh

Awareness

B: Um so for me you know that's a KPI in itself **but I would also rather track awareness**

A: Yeh

B: And um I think um this is one of the things we've started doing which is um so for every show that we, that takes place um I'll do a kind of a **digital roundup and we have a monitoring tool that tells us, you know, how many mentions, who mentioned us um most influential kind of um bloggers and media that's covered us online and,** and then we can compare on a campaign to campaign basis

A: Yeh, yeh exactly

B: Yeh, **and we do that as well for product launches,** so we'll, every season we will set maybe three or four key commercial products that we want to push and um for each of those I will have a sort of monitoring campaign to see how much buzz we are creating, you know what the reactions are online and we've actually **successfully measured um the launch of a new shoe and we saw that with absolutely no other kind of marketing support** um it was a number one selling shoe for like a whole month or two months which is unusual because normally it's always the pistol boot

A: Yeh, yeh, yeh

B: It has been forever the pistol boot and once we launched this we did a whole blogger campaign, we did a press campaign, we did a social media

campaign and it was the number one boot purchase

A: That's fantastic

B: Yes, so we were very pleased with that

A: Congratulations!

B: **So that's tangible ROI um from the PR department, which is traditionally quite fluffy you know**

A: Yeh

B: Um in terms of um yeh

Customer service on social media

A: And would things like um, say customer service or customer insight or

B: Yes so I think it's tangential because um so we do **have a very good online customer services team and they actually look after all our Facebook and um it's mostly Facebook it's not anything else um customer enquiries so I know they monitor that themselves and they have their own rating system for how quickly they respond**

A: Yeh

B: **So I'm very confident that the customer service part is being left to them**

A: Yeh, that's fantastic

B: Yes, I think it's absolutely crucial

A: Yeh

B: Um and we don't have the volume right now so we might have a few enquiries every day but one day it might be that we require a whole team to deal with

A: Yeh

Omni-channel approach

B: Um you know the social channel um people use social channels as a main

customer service portal and I think you know **that is the Omni channel approach that we're striving for um anyway**

A: Yeh

B: **Which is that I think customers should be able to contact us where they want and how they want and when they want**

Customer service on social media

A: Yeh, yeh you definitely see more and more people writing

B: Yeh, yeh

A: Um it's so easy to write on Facebook

B: Yeh

A: Even ridiculous questions you know it might be information that is right there in the post

B: Yeh, yeh but you've got to answer it

A: Yeh it's just silly you know you post something like 'this is our new boot in black and brown leather'

B: Yeh

A: And then they go like

B: 'What colour?'

A: Yeh what colour do you have?

B: Yes yes

A: And you still have to do that

B: Yes

A: As it has lowered um definitely lowered the barrier for people to shout at brands

B: Yeh

A: Oh relating to that congratulations on a well handled critique about thin models

B: Oh God we haven't, we're still um we're still handling it

A: Oh yeh?

B: It's still going crazy

A: Really?

B: Did you see the response?

A: Yeh, well I saw the comment on Facebook and your answer to that

B: We put it together and

A: I thought it was a really good one

B: It is difficult because you don't want to go back on any creative decisions you've made. All you can say really is: 'We've taken on your feedback for the future'.

A: Yeh

B: There was a huge article in the Norwegian media that sparked us. And now there's this woman who's taken it on herself to campaign against us, but we're not sure what she's trying to do, because she has set up this 'Anti X' Facebook page.

A: Oh

B: And she got 400 fans in one day, of which we were really worried about. She keeps posting these unrelated articles like 'this and this model died of anorexia'. We made the strategic decision to ask our CEO to reach out to her. He emailed her with a response, a really you know sensible and constructive response, but she didn't post that response to her community. So she's just out there to bait us for no reason. Despite us seeking resolution.'

A: Oh I missed the whole thing. Ok, I just saw this comment on Facebook

B: I will send it to you

A: Yeh

B: It's still going on

A: Well that just, I mean you're not the first brand being attacked by that critique

B: No

A: But that's just like yeh

B: But it just shows how important social media is
A: Yeh, no exactly
B: Yeh
A: And that you're putting yourself out there responding to all kinds of feedback
B: Oh, yeh

Measuring social media

A: Well then um how do you measure the effectiveness of your social media? And do you think social media should always ultimately drive sales?
B: I would love it to always drive sales but you know every social media person says it's very much um I think your brand awareness is, is the first port of call just because of the nature of that audience it is, it is going to be a lower spending sort of aspirational audience
A: Yeh
B: They're not necessarily going to immediately shop with you but it's this long term effect of getting in the visibility in the, in the sort of line of sight of someone who might one day be a customer of yours and um
A: Yeh
B: Sorry what's the question? How do we measure?
A: Yeh
B: Um well there are only the ways in which we can measure which are, which is buzz you know so number of mentions online. We can look at sentiment but I don't, I use one tool called 'Brand Watch'
A: Um
B: Um and that gives me mentions of key words, um it gives me sentiment which I don't trust um because it's very hard to do automated sentiment
A: Yeh
B: Um it will give us um more importantly I think it's to do with um media

coverage (26:00) and Jesper may have mentioned this but we only care about being featured in the right kind of media

A: Um

B: So on a similar level we only, I guess when we work with the bloggers, which I do, we only care about being seen on the bloggers we deem are the right bloggers

A: Yeh

B: Um and I guess that's a good way for us to measure as well

A: Yeh

B: Because for us again it's not just about the circulation because circulation doesn't tell you the sales that are being driven but because we're such a visual brand and we're so protective about our positioning within the luxury world it's all about media positioning um so we want to be featured in the pop magazines, you know the Tank, the i-D, the Dazed, the Gentlewoman or the AnOther Magazine and maybe we don't care so much about, I don't know Marie Claire

A: Yeh

B: But Marie Claire and Grazia are the ones who drive the sales (27:00)

A: Yeh, yeh

B: Um so we work towards this pyramid

A: Yeh, yeh

B: I guess

Channel strategy

A: Good um so which social media platforms do you focus on at X and do you consider some platforms more important than others?

B: Yeh. We have, we have a channel strategy and this is very much again based on data

A: Um

B: We obviously focus most on Facebook where we have our biggest community, um slightly bigger than Instagram. It's our most commerce friendly platform. It's still where we see most of our traffic and our sales coming from and because of the data that Facebook gives you they can be very in-depth analytics. We can drill down and we can actually do a lot of very targeted campaigns. We can send a message to just our Japanese segment if that's what we want. Or we can target like gender. (28:00)

A: Yeh

B: So we actually tailor our content so that it's much more commerce focused on Facebook and we also do our localised activations there. Instagram we see as almost like our brand channel; it's where we put the highest level of content. So for Instagram we only ever share campaign imagery, show imagery, and if you look at the feed it's actually a very beautiful narrative. So we never put product images there, we never put um flat model shots that we use on our website. I think for us Instagram is very much about storytelling. And that's where we get the most engagement. We can't track sales, but it's where you get all the 'likes' and you get the comments.

A: Yeh

B: (29:00) I don't know if you know about Facebook algorithms, but they are showing less and less of your content to less and less of your fans. It's a very, um, it's a crowded market place. So there's more brands fighting for space and Facebook are also trying to get you to pay for that more and more

A: Yeh

B: We don't have that problem with Instagram yet so that's very valuable from an engagement point of view.

A: Yeh

B: And then Twitter we see as very much a way to um enhance the press that we receive. We also use it for commerce but we also use it to share all the um top tier press that we get so it's very much about connecting with

influences and um because you know that's where all the top tier media and the bloggers and celebrities are so if anyone does engage with us um we always make sure that we mention them or we tweet them or something like that

A: Yeh

B: Um

A: So that's more conversational kind of targeted

B: It's, yeh I mean we're still not doing the conversation um I think that's another thing is like how do you converse as a brand.

(30:00)

Appendix 8 Theme development

KEY THEMES (7)	SECOND READING (15)	FIRST READING (56)
Social-media strategy	Social-media strategy	Creating social-media strategy Key stages in development Constituent factors
	Best practice	Best practice Bench-marking Leaders in digital fashion Burberry
	Digital strategy	Digital strategy Omnichannel Measuring Motivations
Motivations	Objectives and motivations	Objectives Goals
	Awareness	Brand awareness Product awareness Word-of-mouth Advocacy
	Engagement	Engagement Reach Community growth Dialogue Insight discovery Customer relationship management
	Commerce	Lead generation

		Purchase
		Sales
		E-commerce
		Customer service
Organisational structures	Key appointments	Key appointments
		Social-media manager
		Strategic resources
	Organisational structures	Organisational structures
		Organisational changes
		Digital culture
Brand characteristics	Brand characteristics	Brand characteristics
		Brand values
		Brand repositioning
Platform characteristics	Platform characteristics	Platform characteristics
		Emerging platforms
		Changing algorithms
	Social-media platforms	Facebook
		Twitter
		Instagram
		Pinterest
		Snapchat
		Youtube
Channel strategy	Channel strategy	Channel strategy
		Tailoring content to platforms
		Partnerships with platforms
Content	Content	Content creation
		Content strategy
		Visual storytelling
	User-generated content	User-generated content
		Influencers
		Co-creation
		Crowdsourcing

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