FASHION MAGAZINES NO LONGER IN VOGUE? CONSUMER MOTIVATIONS

TO CHOOSE DIGITAL FASHION MEDIA FOR

INFORMATION SEEKING

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Mel and Donna Jones, who have stood by me through thick and thin and have been my biggest supporters. I feel extremely lucky to be their daughter and I thank them for their unconditional love and support. This would not have been possible without them. This thesis is also dedicated to my Nana, Menai Jones (1936-2010). She was my role model, my heart and my friend. I couldn't have asked for a more supportive and loving grandmother. She was thousands of miles away in Wales yet never failed to tell me how proud she was of me no matter how big or small the victory. Therefore, this thesis is in her honor. I hope I would have made her proud.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
FGI	Focus Group Interview
SDT	Self-Determination Theory

ABSTRACT

With the significant advances of information and mobile technology, digital fashion media including fashion blogs and other social media outlets, has become a new, burgeoning source of fashion information acquisition among general consumers, especially millennial consumers. In the meantime, the sales of print fashion magazines, which have long been traditional media for fashion information, have been steadily declining over recent years. In the midst of the rise of new fashion opinion leaders, fashion bloggers or reviewers on social media, why do millennials consumers turn to relying on those fashion opinion leaders rather than reading fashion magazines? These questions remain unanswered given extant research on the motivations of millennial consumers to use digital fashion media for information seeking is extremely limited. In order to address this gap, this study explores millennial consumers' preferences of sources in acquiring fashion information, understand the hidden motivations underlying the behavior, and determine the role of digital fashion media in fashion information seeking. The study is based upon a qualitative method by conducting six focus group interviews with twenty four millennial consumers who are interested in and highly involved in fashion. The results of this study will provide an important timely contribution to a building rigor on theoretical literature on fashion information seeking and functional theory. In addition, by providing the understanding of the readers' behavior and underlying needs, this study will help both traditional media, fashion

magazines, and emerging new media, digital fashion media, utilize this understanding in order to strategically respond to the changes and maintain readership of young consumers.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

While walking into most grocery stores in America, it seems impossible to avoid the strategically placed fashion magazines, glistening in their entire splendor, on the shelves near the cash registers, beckoning for you to pick one up and marvel at the beauty within its pages. Fashion magazines are inviting, colorful and an integral part of the fashion industry in which brands can advertise their products for mass audiences in trustworthy publications. Fashion magazines are not a recent addition to the fashion industry and, in fact, have been quietly assisting the fashion boom for over a century. Harper's Bazaar, launched in 1867, was the first American magazine focused primarily on fashion (Hill, 2007). Shortly after, in 1892, Vogue made its debut and "epitomize[d] women's fashion and style all around the world" (Hill, 2007, p.6). Since the late 19th century, fashion magazines have become commonplace in American society and the premier source of fashion information acquisition for American consumers. That is, until recently. Recent statistics relating to general consumer magazine sales have exposed a decline in the number of single-copy sales and subscriptions in the last few years (Lulofs, 2014). Fashion magazines have not avoided this crisis. In June 2013, single-copy sales of fashion magazines decreased by 10% (Lulofs, 2013) and single-copy sales in June 2014 had decreased by 11.9% (Lulofs, 2014). Sales of individual fashion magazines appear problematic in a similar way. In June 2014, Vogue, InStyle, Vanity Fair, Cosmopolitan, and Glamour saw single-copy sales decrease by 15.9%, 14.6%, 11.8%, 24.8%, and 18.5%, respectively (Lulofs, 2014).

A potential explanation for the decline in print copies of magazine sales could be attributed to consumers downloading digital copies since handheld devices are much more widely circulated among consumers. However, statistics do not verify this potential explanation. In fact, digital sales of fashion magazines have also declined and any increases have been extremely minimal. For example, Harper's Bazaar saw digital sales decrease by 21.9% from August 2014 to August 2015 and Vanity Fair saw an increase in digital sales of just 2% (Brand audience report, 2015). Given these facts, it is plausible that the decrease of fashion magazine readership is due to the rise of an alternate form of free and instant fashion media. Consumers have not merely stopped searching for fashion information. They are going elsewhere. They are going online.

With the significant advances of information and mobile technology, fashion blogging via social media has become a new, burgeoning form of fashion information acquisition among general consumers, especially millennial consumers. Compared to fashion magazines, fashion blogs are a fairly recent phenomena, but no less important in changing the climate of the fashion industry. Blogs are defined by Rocamora (2011) as, "…internet sites on which individuals regularly publish their thoughts on a particular subject" (p. 408). Based on the definition of blogs, fashion blogs refer to internet sites on which individuals can create their own written or visual content on the topic of fashion. Fashion blogs have changed the definition of fashion opinion leadership within the industry. Botkin (2014) argues that fashion media in the twentieth century was dominated by strong female leadership, such as Carmel Snow and Anna Wintour, editors of Harper's Bazaar and Vogue, respectively. Botkin (2014) continues by noting, "fashion was dictated by these tastemakers; women who were more frequently than not part of the

privileged classes" (p. 16). Traditionally, fashion opinion leadership is held by editors, reporters, and journalists in fashion magazines (Polegato & Wall, 1980), individuals with education in fashion and high fashion involvement, (Botkin, 2014) and other areas of traditional media (television, radio, newspapers etc.) (Polegato & Wall, 1980). However, fashion blogs have provided ordinary consumers, with little to no formal education in fashion, the means to become the new fashion opinion leaders and tastemakers of the fashion industry - an opportunity that has only been exemplified by social media. In other words, fashion opinion leadership, groups that are regarded by other people as having an expertise on fashion and, therefore, appropriate source of information, (Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997), is not only reserved for the privileged classes anymore. The commercialization of the Internet in the late 1990s has led to a democratization of fashion media, and social media has aided in allowing consumer opinion to disseminate to wide global audiences. It has been estimated in 1999, "there were about fifty blogs, but by 2005 that number reached 8 million" (Kaye, 2007, p.128). By 2008, this number had risen again to 184 million blogs and 348 million readers (Rocamora, 2011). Pew Research Center (2015) statistics have found that 74% of all Internet users utilize social media in some form. Most of these social media users are between the ages of 18-29 with an 89% social media usage rate (Social networking fact sheet, 2015). This is why this age group will be specifically examined in this study.

Social media and fashion blogs have allowed consumers to engage in information seeking at any time. Information seeking refers to the process of looking up information on a particular topic and includes a variety of sources (Polegato & Wall, 1980); thereby fashion information seeking is defined as the process of looking up information on the

topic of fashion. Social media, referring to "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 & Haenlein, 2010), in particular, provides consumers with an outlet for fashion information seeking. Specifically, utilizing social media, consumers can look up fashion information almost instantaneously and then participate in socializations with friends, family or strangers about their views on the information they received. Social media that consumers most frequently utilize for fashion information are Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, and Twitter (Duggan, 2015). Each allows consumers to actively search for information, post about the information they have found, and interact with other users, if they so choose. Social media is important to analyze as it provides a connecting service to fashion blogs, but also has the potential to limit the follow-through clicks to blogs if the information on social media is considered adequate by the user seeking information. When it comes to an information seeker's perspective, the consumer utilizes social media as the initial step to seek fashion information and often ends up finding fashion blogs through social media. Social media is increasingly utilized by fashion bloggers to draw attention and attract consumers to their fashion blogs and can be used as a tool in which information seekers can access those fashion blogs. Bloggers may post pictures of their outfits on Instagram, for example, then users participating in information seeking find these images and potentially follow through to the fashion blog link. Consumers will see these images whilst information seeking and may choose to expand upon the information they have received so far by using social media to access the actual fashion blog. Due to the complexity of consumer use of these media, and the complementary nature of these

outlets, for this study, fashion blogs and social media will be discussed under the umbrella term, digital fashion media, so as to avoid any confusion as to the effectiveness of both in terms of disseminating fashion information and providing new fashion opinion leadership roles.

Research Rationale

Although academic literature in the field of consumer behavior has recently begun to explore fashion blogs and social media in the midst of the changing fashion media climate, little literature exists on the role of fashion blogs and social media in relation to fashion information seeking behavior. Online consumer behavior is increasingly important in a digitalized world and understanding consumer motivations for all online behavior is of utmost importance. The psychological motivations of consumers to use social media have been researched within the field of fashion (Chen, 2015; Quan-Hasse & Young, 2010; Wolny & Mueller, 2013). However, no studies have been done that specifically focus on fashion information seeking using social media or motivations to use fashion blogs in relation to fashion magazines. As a result, there is a big gap in the literature which needs to explore consumer motivations to use blogs and social media for fashion information seeking and their lack of motivation to read magazines. This study will seek to fill this large gap in research.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to understand the underlying motivations of consumers to choose fashion blogs and social media to acquire fashion information as opposed to traditional forms of media such as fashion magazines. With the declining sales of fashion magazines, the rising power of fashion bloggers, and the astronomical

growth of social media followers, it has become clear that fashion blogs and social media outlets offer something that fashion magazines do not. What exactly motivates consumers to go online instead of reading a magazine? Although, research relating to fashion blogs and social media has gained traction in recent years, the focus is only limited to the perspectives of information givers, such as what motivates fashion bloggers to post information online (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2014), with no studies shedding light on understanding information seekers' underlying motivations to turn to emerging media over traditional fashion magazines. Meanwhile, a multitude of articles exist on the impact of fashion advertising in fashion magazines on consumer body image (Jung & Lee, 2009; Kim & Lennon, 2007; Martin & Gentry, 1997), but there is an extremely large gap in the literature regarding the waning influence of fashion magazines on information seekers, and their relationship to consumers' preference to utilize fashion blogs and social media. This study will seek to fill this research gap and introduce a new area of research in which analysis of consumer motivations to choose fashion blogs and social media for fashion information acquisition over traditional media will be undertaken. The results of this research will provide an important and timely contribution to a building rigor on theoretical literature on fashion information seeking in an ever-changing market. In addition to theoretical contributions, by providing the understanding of readers' behavior and underlying needs, this study will help both traditional media, fashion magazines in particular, and emerging new media – digital fashion media utilize this understanding in order to strategically respond to the changes and attract and maintain readership of young consumers.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information seeking is the process of using a variety of sources to look up information on a particular topic (Polegato & Wall, 1980). Information seeking is important to understand as a component of the consumer decision making process. The consumer decision making process is a multi-stage decision-making model consisting of a sequence of mental stages a consumer experiences whilst making a purchase decision (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). The stages of this process include problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and post-purchase evaluation/outcomes (Darley et al., 2010). The process of information seeking during the 'information search' component of the consumer decision making process involves a consumer researching information about a particular product or service in order to evaluate whether or not they should purchase. The information seeking process is significant as it assists consumers in formulating their opinions about a good or service and this, in turn, determines whether or not a consumer will purchase. The information seeking component of the consumer decision making process is increasingly important as, with the advent of digital fashion media, brands have less autonomy over the information dissemination relating to their brand and this allows consumers to access even more, previously unavailable, information to assist in their decision making process. Therefore, information seeking is a vital component of the consumer decision making process and requires a great deal of understanding in order to adequately provide consumers with the appropriate information needed to make their decisions (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). Information seeking has been studied in relation to other constructs, such

as fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking, and will therefore be discussed in relation to those constructs in this current study.

Fashion Opinion Leadership and Fashion Opinion Seeking

In order to understand consumer information seeking behaviors via digital fashion media, it is necessary to first examine fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. Both these concepts, although different, are closely related and often go hand-in-hand. As the concept of fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking have changed with the increasing digitalization of our world, the information seeking preferences of consumers have also changed in reaction to the changing roles of fashion opinion leaders and fashion opinion seekers. Therefore, an examination of literature regarding fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking will be undertaken.

There have been extensive studies on consumer behavior in terms of fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. Opinion leaders are defined as, "individuals who exert an unequal amount of influence on the decision of others" (Rogers & Cartano, 1962, p.436). Opinion leadership is, as Flynn et al., (1996) argue "predicated on the idea that other people seek and then follow the advice of opinion leaders" (p.138). Fashion opinion leaders have become extremely important in the dissemination of new fashions. The information they share with fellow consumers often influences buying behavior (Goldsmith & Clark, 2007). In fact, fashion opinion leaders create a cycle in which the information they share with consumers may lead consumers to share that information with others, thus becoming a fashion opinion leader themselves (Goldsmith & Clark, 2007). Researchers have attempted to understand the underlying psychological motivations of becoming a fashion opinion leader or seeker (Bertrandias & Goldsmith,

2006). Bertrandias and Goldsmith (2006) analyze behavior using consumer need for uniqueness, which is based upon Snyder and Franklin's (1977) theory of uniqueness, and attention to social comparison information. They found that fashion opinion seekers are less likely to need to emphasize their uniqueness whereas fashion opinion leaders have a greater need for uniqueness and avoid social comparison (Bertrandias & Goldsmith, 1996, pp. 33-36). Johnson and Workman (1993) conducted a study in which they analyzed the need for variety in relation to fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. They found that there is a greater need for variety with fashion opinion leaders than fashion opinion seekers using Hirschman and Adcock's (1978) measure of innovativeness and opinion leadership. In various literature regarding fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking self-monitoring has been well documented as a means of becoming either an opinion leader or seeker depending on motivations within self-monitoring (Lee & Workman, 2013; Rose & Kim, 2011). Self-monitoring is defined by Goldsmith and Clark (2007) as "controlling how to express yourself in social situations for the sake of public appearances" (p. 311). Rose and Kim (2011) determined that self-monitoring was linked to opinion leadership through the motivation of attaining social status, but was not linked to opinion seeking. They argue that the desire to attain social status was important to those who are high self-monitors (Rose & Kim, 2011). In contrast to these findings, Lee and Workman (2013) found no significant relationship between self-monitoring and fashion change agents (leaders, innovators). This suggests this area of opinion leadership research still requires additional studies in order to understand how self-monitoring comes into play in deciding whether or not an individual becomes a fashion opinion leader or seeker.

More importantly, the question has also been raised as to who exactly are fashion opinion leaders amidst the changing climate of the fashion industry. This is referred to as a "crisis of the expert paradigm" (Rocamora, 2012, p.100). This refers to the changing of a consumer's traditional assumptions about where expertise comes from (Rocamora, 2012). As a result of this crisis, "the line between journalist and non-journalist is perpetually blurry and dynamic (Carlson, 2007, p.265). One possible reason for this shift in consumer understanding of expertise may be related to the fact that consumers believe fashion bloggers to be unbiased and impartial when providing information (Vernette, 2004). Fashion magazines, on the other hand, are known to receive monetary incentives from brands in order to promote their products. In line with this, Vernette (2004) determined that opinion leaders were more favorable of advertising in fashion magazines. Therefore, it is plausible that opinion seekers are more than likely reading blogs as their preferred information source due to their increased sensitivity to commercialized advertising and their favor to unbiased information, which is subject to further investigation given there are no empirical studies in this area.

Relationship between Fashion Opinion Leadership and Fashion Information Seeking

Literature in the field of fashion opinion leadership has consistently determined that high levels of fashion information seeking are more commonly attributed to fashion opinion leaders (Schrank & Gilmore, 1973). Bloggers and blog readers are both suggested to score high on fashion opinion leadership and utilize blogs for socialization purposes, but blog readers have a slightly increased motivation to use blogs for information seeking than bloggers (Segev et al., 2012). Fashion opinion leaders have

been found to have a greater number of sources used for information seeking and have

greater frequencies of use for those sources (Polegato & Wall, 1980). The fashion

opinion leaders tended to use clothing worn in public places as an information source as

well as window displays, whereas opinion seekers used more media-based information

sources such as fashion magazines, mail-order catalogs and newspaper advertisements

(Polegato & Wall, 1980). Consumer-dominated sources are used more often than

marketer-dominated sources for both leaders and seekers (Chowdhary, 1989; Polegato &

Wall, 1980), which corroborates with the movement to social media and blogs – both

consumer-dominated sources. Chowdhary (1989) states, "Individuals turn to consumer-

dominated sources to learn more about socially approved styles and to reduce the risk

factor for legitimization of their apparel choices" (p. 54).Younger consumers tend to seek

information more often than older consumers, with females being more prone to

information seeking in both younger and older demographic groups (Chowdhary, 1989).

Interestingly, book readership, television viewership and radio listening had no impact on

fashion leadership in terms of information seeking sources, but fashion magazine

readership was strongly related to this trait (Summers, 1970). The rise of fashion blogs

and social media have now potentially taken the place of fashion magazines as the

information seeking source primarily correlated with opinion leadership traits. In

addition, fashion opinion leaders were found to disseminate information just as often as

they sought information (Summers, 1970). Fashion information seeking appears to be a

quality not just reserved for fashion opinion seekers, but anyone with an active interest in

fashion. However, little research has been done to analyze the information seeking

sources of those holding current fashion opinion leadership. However, one study found

that the most common sources of information or inspiration for blog posts comes from fashion news/trends, everyday life and the blogger's own personal style (Detterbeck et al., 2012). This suggests that fashion information seeking is a cycle in which opinion leaders, like fashion bloggers, seek information from traditional media outlets, disseminate that knowledge through digital media and then, in turn, fashion opinion seekers come to fashion blogs for their information seeking. It must also be noted that millennial consumers are less likely to require in-depth information as the generation is more favorable of speed of search as opposed to quality of information search (Detterbeck et al., 2012) – an important benefit for those consumers to use blogs for information seeking as opposed to fashion magazines.

Information Seeking Through Fashion Blogs

A few studies have analyzed common themes within successful fashion blogs. One such study conducted by Armstrong and McAdams (2011) posed the question, "Are blogs perceived as having the same utility and trustworthiness as are often attributed to traditional media?" (p. 117). A question that is indeed also valid for this particular study. However, their study is only focused on consumer trust of blogs in relation to traditional media and not motivations to use blogs for information seeking in place of traditional media. Their study does, however, provide a useful foundation for this current study. The results of their study determined that opinion seekers, individuals who seek advice and confirmation of their decisions from others, would be more trusting of blog content and those who utilize blogs for information seeking, information seekers, would find blogs more trustworthy than those who use blogs for leisure (Armstrong & McAdams, 2011). This is an important facet of opinion seeking research as the length to which consumers

determine blogs to be trustworthy, in relation to magazines, will help determine their

motivations for choosing one over the other. Why exactly are fashion bloggers deemed

trustworthy? Sedeke and Payal (2013) sought to answer this question in their analysis of

the defining characteristics of the top ranking blogs. They found that trustworthiness was

a very important determinant in whether or not consumers would follow a blogger. In

addition, they found the most popular fashion blogs had a simple layout, similar topics to

mainstream media, and little direct marketing and/or branding. They also noted that

comments left on the blogs from followers were positive and good natured. (Sedeke &

Payal, 2013). It seems that blogs provide a sense of online community where both

opinion leaders and seekers are cordial and considerate to each other and only engage to

discuss shared interests. Following a blog creates a sense of community in the sense that

the consumer can "regularly find a bit more information about [the blogger's] life, the

moments and events that punctuate it" (Rocamora, 2011, p.412). McQuarrie and Phillips

(2014) also analyzed the characteristics of ten fashion blogs and found that bloggers did

not identify with any particular subculture but were completely individualistic, became

more distant from their followers in communication as their popularity grew, their body

of work became more professional looking as their popularity grew and, if they became

influential, they often became subject to fashion party invites or merchandise testing (pp.

142-151). McQuarrie and Phillips (2014) mention these characteristics of bloggers as

ways in which they acquire cultural capital. Cultural capital theory argues that one's

position in a society is not necessarily static or linked to social status, but can be changed

and cultural capital can be amassed from cultural domains (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2014).

In this case, a fashion blogger is merely another consumer when they start out. As time

goes on and their popularity grows, they amass cultural capital through industry contacts, the amount of followers they have, and the places they travel for work etc. Pedroni (2014) expands upon this theory in his argument that bloggers have to be able to transform themselves into brands. This would be done through their acquisition of cultural capital. He also presents the argument that magazines (traditional media) and fashion blogs often relate to each other through collaboration and/or antagonism but their best opportunities would come from a mutually beneficial collaboration (Pedroni, 2014). For bloggers this collaboration would provide them with access to both social and symbolic capital through the conversion of their cultural capital into these two other forms (Pedroni, 2014). For magazines, it would multiply their social and symbolic capital, which he denotes as audience and legitimation, respectively, and create a fresh new voice for their publishing (Pedroni, 2014). There are many ways in which fashion magazines could utilize the capital and growing power of fashion blogs to attract and maintain their audiences but they seem to be reluctant to do so. The power of bloggers is increasing and fashion brands are taking notice. Marianna Hewitt recently wrote an article for Harper's Bazaar in which she described her role as a fashion blogger. She explains,

"At the end of the whole week, I will post an overall fashion week post on my blog, but I'm not updating daily. Other ways to cover NYFW is by working with different brands and media outlets to collaborate. This season, I did Instagram takeovers for The Zoe Report and Bluefly to share my days at fashion week, and I'm doing a series of blog posts for E! and Macy's leading up to their fashion shows" (Hewitt, 2015).

It is important to note how integral a part of the fashion system fashion blogs have become. They have "broken down the historical monopoly of the fashion magazines in disseminating fashion" (Engholm & Hansen-Hansen, 2013, p. 150). The breaking down of the historical monopoly has allowed fashion blogs to become important sources of information seeking within the last decade. At the same time, social media usage has also increased exponentially. Therefore, it is imperative to analyze the role of information seeking through social media as an increasing number of millennial consumers are turning to social media for information than ever before (How millennials use and control media, 2016).

Information Seeking Through Social Media

Digitalization, including the penetration of social media into consumption, is a rather hot topic in academic literature focused on consumer behavior, as a great deal of consumers look to social media for shopping information and prefer to purchase online. In fact, total e-commerce sales in the United States for 2015 were $341 billion, an increase of 14.6% from the previous year (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2016). In light of digital fashion media, Crewe (2012) asks, "How might conventional fashion spaces (cities, stores, magazines, designer firms, shows) compete, coexist, or coalesce with digitally mediated space?" (p. 760). She argues that "emergent digitally mediated communication practices are remediating and refashioning existing cultural forms of signification like magazines and photography" (p. 761). Digital fashion media is changing the way in which fashion information is disseminated, and the impact on traditional media is becoming profound. In fact, fashion brands are increasingly looking to consumer comments on social media in order to assess and readjust their marketing

strategies (Wolny & Mueller, 2013). This tactic comes as the number of brand mentions on social media outlets, such as Twitter, have been steadily increasing, with an increase in brand mentions from 2011-2012 of 113% (Wolny & Mueller, 2013). Fashion brands are beginning to view these fashion bloggers utilizing digital fashion media as the new journalists and fashion influencers, and the number of agencies offering to represent them as their popularity grows exemplifies the growing power of the digitalization of fashion media (Mohr, 2013). Pham (2011) is in agreement with her statement, "despite the relatively small number of fashion-themed blogs in the blogosphere, their impact on the fashion media complex and the larger fashion world is undeniable" (p. 11).

An example of the growing role of fashion bloggers in the fashion industry, through their use of digital fashion media, can be understood through a few of the top fashion bloggers. Chiara Ferragni, founder of The Blonde Salad, has three million Instagram followers and was named to an expert panel that determined the shortlist for the LVMH Prize 2015 (Sherman, 2015). Kristina Bazan of Kayture has 1.1 million likes on Facebook and has worked with prestigious fashion brands such as Louis Vuitton, Hugo Boss and Piaget (Sherman, 2015). Julia Engel of Girl Meets Glam has a huge following on social media and provides opportunities for followers of her social media outlets to shop affiliate links on her blog (Sherman, 2015). Social media has become a tool in which fashion bloggers can extend their influence and then accentuate that influence in order to attain more opportunities with fashion brands. Although Marie Claire has taken note of the power of bloggers with their collaboration with Nicolette Mason and Lucky Magazine's cover stars, bloggers Chiara Ferragni, Zanita Whittington and Nicole Warne, magazines have, again, been much slower than brands to recognize

the potential for collaboration with traditional fashion media leaders and digital fashion media leaders (Sherman, 2015).

Social media has provided consumers with increased opportunity to access information and many consumers use social media for this purpose. With the influence of traditional media declining and the influence of new media increasing, it has become evident that digital fashion media is offering consumers something that traditional media is not. Therefore, it is important to understand the motivations of millennial consumers to utilize digital fashion media for information seeking and to understand why this particular demographic is moving further away from traditional media.

CHAPTER III

EXPECTED DOMAINS

Based on the literature review, the following domains were expected as possible

motivations for consumers to choose digital fashion media as their fashion information

acquisition tool. These expected domains are subject to confirmation, revision of deletion

through the following qualitative investigation and the finalized domains will be further

discussed in the results section.

1. Opportunity for Socialization – Consumers are increasingly social. They have

been found to enjoy using shopping as an opportunity for socialization (Kang & Park-

Poaps, 2011) so it can be expected that they will enjoy the increased opportunity for

socialization over digital fashion media, whether that includes voicing their own opinions

or supporting/disagreeing with others. Social media was invented so people could

connect with each other and be social in a completely different way to which they were

used to. Digital fashion media provides a safe place for consumers to express their

desires, opinions and ideas and to receive input on those at the same time. Digital fashion

media also provides a place for both opinion leaders and seekers to fulfill their needs –

opinion leaders can share their ideas, and opinion seekers can seek advice and

information to aid them in their decisions. Digital fashion media allows consumers to

share their opinions without fear of peer judgement.

2. Personalization: The opportunity for personalization is expected to be a

motivation to use digital fashion media as opposed to fashion magazines. Fashion

magazines employ a certain format with certain topics decided upon by important

industry figures. Blogs and social media, on the other hand, allow the consumer to type in

exactly what they are looking for and cater the information medium to their own preferences. A user of Pinterest can, for example, type in 'Blazer' and link to a blog showing different ways in which to wear a blazer. A magazine may not include a section on this topic and leave the consumer feeling disappointed.

3. Instant Gratification: This domain is framed by the Uses and Gratification Theory developed by Katz & Blumler (1974). The main premise of this theory is the focus on what people do with media as opposed to the influence or impact of the media on the individual (Quan-Hasse & Young, 2010). The ability to search for information through a blog and/or blogger's social media page, and receive the fashion information they were looking for instantaneously, is proposed to be a motivating factor to use fashion blogs.

4. Trust: As previously discussed, research has determined that consumers who utilize fashion blogs as a means for fashion information acquisition will find bloggers more trustworthy than those who use blogs for leisure (Armstrong & McAdams, 2011). Trust has been found to be the most influential factor for intent to revisit a blog as well as to adopt product recommendations from bloggers (Cheng & Fang, 2015). Given the fact that the sample to be interviewed are expected to have a high level of information seeking tendencies, we can expect that blogger trust will be a motivation for these consumers to use fashion blogs as their preferred fashion information source.

5. Peer Influence: This domain is framed by the self-monitoring model by Rose & Kim (2011). This model argues that the need to self-monitor leads an individual to either become an opinion leader or seeker. The motivation to self-monitor and the consumer's particular reason to self-monitor will affect the degree to which they utilize fashion blogs

as a means of self-monitoring. In addition, the fact that blogs are a relatively new form of media and popular with millennial consumers may influence a young consumer's choice to also become a blog reader. Social comparison is also a feasible exemplification of peer influence. Consumers are prone to engage in social comparison and may use blogs in an attempt to compare and gain acceptance from peers (Sun & Guo, 2013).

6. Collection: Blog use provides consumers a way in which to digitally hoard information, whether it is their own thoughts and original content or other content. Belk (2008) argues that consumers use digital media to store information in order to achieve three goals: digital clutter, narratives of the self and digital cues to a sense of the past. Social media outlets like Pinterest, for example, allow users to digitally store information once it has been sought on their own personal pin boards which are named and catered to a particular aspect of the user's life. A consumer can go back and revisit old boards and relive old memories. The same goes for Facebook with their new 'On This Day' application that allows users to see what they posted on the same day in the past. Digital fashion media allows for collection of memories and provides users with an opportunity to revisit the past whenever they want.

Based on the discussion of the expected domains, an initial conceptual model was devised (See Figure 1).

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the research purpose, given little empirical studies conducted on this new area of research, a qualitative method was used. Focus group interviews (FGI's) were conducted in order to deeply understand the underlying motivations of consumers to use digital fashion media for information acquisition in place of fashion magazines.

Institutional Review Board Requirements

An IRB exemption was granted (Exemption No.: EXP2015H707207G) as this research study posed minimal risk to human participants (See Appendix A). Questions asked to participants do not refer to any aspect of their private lives and are highly unlikely to cause any offense or discomfort. Questions such as, "Which social media applications do you use most often?" and "How often would you say you purchase fashion magazines?" were the type of questions asked. The exemption status was granted under Category 2.

Participants

Since most of the users of social media are between the ages of 18 and 29 (Social networking fact sheet, 2015) and the millennial demographic is said to range from ages 18 to 33 (Millennials in adulthood, 2014), millennial consumers between the ages of 18-33 were interviewed. According to the Pew Research Center, millennials are individuals who were born between the years 1981 and 1997 (Fry, 2015). Focus group interviews were limited to females within this particular demographic as they have been determined to utilize social media more than their male counterparts (Social networking fact sheet, 2015). Females are more likely interested and involved in fashion. Regarding opinion

leadership, Summers (1970) states, "Young women seem to dominate in fashion…" (p.178). Therefore, females were considered the most appropriate sample in this study given their high social media usage rate and their opinion leadership in fashion. It is recommended for interviews to start with human subjects who are more engaged in the area of interest because they are more likely to be willing to participate and disclose their opinions and motivations, as well as feel comfortable discussing the topic with likeminded individuals (Lawrence, 2013). Specifically, recruiting was conducted in both undergraduate and graduate fashion merchandising classes at Texas State University as students in these classes are more likely to be interested in fashion in general and more involved in fashion information seeking, and were therefore, more likely to actively participate in the focus group interviews for this research. Six FGI groups were conducted with a total of twenty-four participants, thereby four participants per group on average. All participants were female and 50% were Caucasian, 29.2% Hispanic, 16.6% African-American, and 4.2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, respectively. The median participant age was 21. The majors represented by the student included 58% Fashion Merchandising majors, 12.5% were Interior Design, 8.3% were Marketing, 4.2% were Sociology and, finally 16.6% were graduate Merchandising and Consumer Studies majors. The classifications represented by the participants included 35.7% seniors, 20.8% Master level graduate students, 16.6% sophomores, 12.5% freshman and 12.5% juniors. The median household income was under $30,000 a year.

Post-FGI Participant Validation

After the main interviews and discussions were finished, each participant was given a short questionnaire in order to validate the eligibility of participants for this

study. Five scales, including opinion leadership, opinion seeking, fashion involvement, digital media involvement and fashion information seeking were utilized. It was expected that the participants in the FGI's would be highly involved in social media, interested in fashion, and engage in high levels of fashion information seeking. Therefore, the five scales were considered adequate measures of these behaviors.

The results of the post FGI validation survey determined that the participants of the focus groups scored high on all of the measures included in the survey, with the highest mean scores being in fashion involvement and digital media involvement, thus validating the specific recruitment. The reliability for each measure was above .70 suggesting measure reliability and the mean for each measure was significantly above the median of 2.5. Thus, the very specific recruitment was the appropriate action to take in order to include participants with the desired involvement characteristics (See Table 1).

Procedure

Fellowship funding was approved for this study therefore monetary incentives were used for recruiting participants in return for their participation and time in the FGI's. Each participant received a $25 gift card to Target once they had completed the focus group and the post-FGI validation survey. Participants were instructed to print, date and sign a gift card log form to ensure they had received a gift card and in order to provide documentation to us that an incentive was given. Each focus group lasted an hour and fifteen minutes on average, including a consent form and post-FGI validation survey. Each focus group was recorded using a Sony digital audio recorder (ICD-PX333) and an iPad for backup. Participants were made aware that they would be recorded, prior to the focus group interviews beginning, as well as the fact that their responses would be

transcribed using pseudonyms and that their responses would not be used outside of this study per IRB requirements. They were then asked to sign a consent form to pledge either consent or non-consent to continue with the interview. Every participant pledged their consent. The interview began once all signatures had been completed.

Data Collection

The interviews began with some generic questions about fashion such as 'what are your favorite fashion brands?' to ease participants into the interview prior to the scripted questions being asked. Questions followed a specific format with social media-related questions asked first, followed by fashion blog-related questions, fashion magazine-related questions, and then wrap-up and scenario questions, respectively. Although questions were prepared beforehand, additional questions were added on the basis of how much or little information was offered on the prepared questions. For example, "Which social media application would you say is the best to look up fashion information?" was a planned question. The respondents said both Instagram and Pinterest. Therefore, an additional question that was not prepared beforehand was, "what's the difference between those two?" In order to ensure the quality of FGI questions, an external expert, a faculty member in a different university who has expertise in qualitative research methods including FGIs, reviewed the FGI questionnaire before the sessions began. The expert was rewarded with a small monetary incentive for her time, and the FGI questions and flow were revised accordingly.

Once all the focus groups were completed, and data were downloaded in MP3 format, transcription could begin. Data were transcribed by hand via a laptop computer and took eighteen hours total. Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was initially

chosen to assist in conducting content analysis. However, given that expected domains were in place prior to the focus group interviews, thematic analysis was chosen as the most appropriate data analysis method to analyze the qualitative data. Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative method, most often used in psychology, which identifies, analyzes and reports patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2008). We followed the recommended six key phases of thematic analysis, as well as clear guidelines to achieve careful analysis within each phase (c.f., Braun & Clarke, 2008).

Phase 1: Familiarize yourself with the data – This was achieved through eighteen hours of transcription. Throughout the process of completing transcriptions of the six focus groups, clear patterns began to emerge which were then noted next to the respective quotations. Transcription completed by the researcher is considered extremely important in thematic analysis. It is considered "a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology" (Bird, 2005, p.227). The transcripts were then read several times. Phrases such as 'like' and 'um' were partially eliminated if they hindered the ease of reading.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes - The data were re-read and notations were made around statements that occurred frequently. Whenever a participant would cite money or price, for example, 'price consciousness' was written next to their statement, and it was highlighted. Even though specific domains were predicted prior to analysis, these were ignored while coding so as to not bias the data analysis. The data were read as it appeared without preconceptions.

Phase 3: Searching for themes – once notations were made around the statements, broader themes were looked at. Participants mentioned how they like a blogger to be like

them. This was considered to fall under the broader theme of relatability, as were other similar statements.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes – once these themes were drawn up from the data, it became clear that two of the expected domains were no longer applicable: opportunity for socialization and peer influence. Participants stated that they did not socialize on social media, and they had not been referred to social media nor had they referred anyone to social media, with the exception of about two participants. It was not enough to categorize it as a significant theme so it was thrown out. However, two emergent themes (visual information and gratuitous information) were found while reviewing. In order to eliminate any inadvertent bias, themes were revisited several times while coding.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes – Theme names were changed a few times during the analysis. Initially, themes were named in a non-cohesive manner. Some may be named on behalf of the consumer motivation, i.e., 'price consciousness,' while others were named after things digital media offers, i.e., 'instant gratification.' It was then decided that the themes/domains would be named as responses found in digital fashion media to the motivations of consumers. A consumer motivation is to generate their own content. Digital fashion media provides this through the theme 'search autonomy.' During this process, themes were placed in a table alongside a conceptual definition, theoretical support and quotes from participants that best exemplify their motivations within the respective themes.

Phase 6: Produce the report - The final stage was conducted by first writing up the results organized by theme and embedding participant quotes within the theme narrative. Participant quotations are explained further to emphasize how this sample population can

be used to examine the millennial population at large. Theoretical support and previous studies are also provided. Implications for fashion magazines and digital media are discussed following the thematic analysis.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Emergent Consumer Motivations to Choose Digital Fashion Media

While engaging in thematic analysis of the focus group interview transcriptions it became evident that a couple of the expected domains (opportunity for socialization and peer influence) were not significant motivations for millennial female consumers to utilize digital fashion media for information seeking. Therefore, peer influence and opportunity for socialization will not be discussed further and were eliminated from the conceptual model. While disregarding two expected domains, two additional emergent domains provided clear motivations for millennial consumers to utilize digital fashion media: visual inspiration and gratuitous information. Therefore, a new updated conceptual model was created based on the results (See Figure 2).These two newly emergent domains will be discussed at length, along with the additional four predicted domains, as they provide clear solutions to the motivations of millennial female consumers to utilize digital fashion media for information seeking.

Search Autonomy

With the advent of the Internet and social media, consumers have become accustomed to the growing opportunity of being completely in control of their own informational intake. Throughout the course of the focus group interviews participants regularly cited their preference of using digital fashion media for information seeking due to their ability to have search autonomy. Search autonomy is the ability of the consumer to search for information without any limitations, and to have complete freedom over the information they are able to acquire. This definition is derived from the definition of

autonomy orientation provided by Wang and Li (2014), which describes autonomy orientation as the "degree to which people tend to behave in a self-determined way" (p.244). People with a higher level of autonomy often have a higher level of choice in their behaviors (Wang & Li, 2014). Participants spoke openly about their appreciation for the amount of information one could acquire through digital fashion media, in particular social media, and their ability to search for information as broadly or specifically as they so choose without any limitations. Wang and Li (2014) explored the need for consumers to produce user-generated content via social media, focusing specifically on Facebook, and found that consumers with low levels of autonomy orientation were still able to enjoy the amount of choices available with user-generated content.

Self-determination theory (SDT) can explain the positive effects of search autonomy. Self-determination theory describes how an individual's psychological needs support the individual's autonomous motivations which, in the case of Wang and Li's study, support the motivation for consumer's to produce user-generated content (Wang and Li, 2014). This theory also serves as a theoretical foundation for this emergent domain as the degree to which participants have search autonomy through their use of digital fashion media can, in turn, affect their level of self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination theory consists of three needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT, while examining these three facets of consumer psychological needs, also examines how certain social environments may be antagonistic to these three needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In this current study, all social media applications were discussed, as well as fashion blogs, and search autonomy was an emergent theme that was applicable to all

forms of social media although Pinterest was regularly cited as the most autonomous digital fashion media application. Social media, Pinterest in particular, enhance the autonomy of the consumer through their avoidance of search limitations and, in turn, enhance the 'autonomy' need of the self-determination theory. Participants noted that one of their motivations for avoiding fashion magazines and utilizing digital fashion media for information seeking was due to the fact that they are not comfortable with information being delineated to them on their behalf. Scarlett was in favor of using digital fashion media for this specific reason.

"I like fashion magazines but on Pinterest it's better because when you search for what you like they will give you it"

Here, she notes that social media – Pinterest – completely caters to the search preference of the consumer. She can type in whatever she wants and receive that information as opposed to fashion magazines where the consumer is presented with information and has to dissect it themselves to find what interests them. Sofia also noted the ability of digital fashion media to provide consumers with complete autonomy over their search and then provide relevant information to the respective consumer.

"You can put 'I want something for a party and heels' and everything is working for you and what you want"

Another participant who praised the autonomous search abilities was Taylor.

"I have an outfit. I'll type it in, and if I find an outfit that I like I can scroll down and they'll have related pins to that so its multiple ideas from one thing"

In addition to agreeing with a vast majority of the focus group participants on search autonomy, she also emphasized that information is also provided to consumers by

digital fashion media on the basis of their previous searches. A consumer might type in 'black dress, red heels' and find information and two days later see related items that are specifically catered to their individual preferences. Although, this information is chosen on their behalf, much like magazines, it doesn't feel like it infringes upon their autonomy as it is categorically based upon their preferences and previous search terms.

In relation to this, participants regularly noted that they are not in favor of sponsored posts on social media applications like Instagram, for example. They noted that these sponsored posts often have nothing to do with their current content nor their preferences or previous searches. These sponsored posts may not be appreciated because they infringe upon their autonomy and control of what content appears on their Instagram page.

"... I don't like how now they have sponsored ads on your newsfeed and I hate that. Facebook used to do that and I got annoyed and how they [Instagram] do that. I don't want to see those sponsored ads. I want to see my friends' pictures."

Freya here argues that she wants to see information she has specifically agreed upon seeing in her newsfeed and not anything additional. Search autonomy was a very important motivation for participants to use digital fashion media over fashion magazines but, with advertising now reaching social media, consumers are feeling a little less autonomous.

<p align="center">Virtual Storage</p>

Virtual Storage was a predicted domain formerly known as 'Collection'. The virtual storage motivation refers to the ability of a consumer to save information digitally. This relates to the concept of dematerialization (Belk, 2008) in which possessions are

"largely invisible and immaterial until we choose to call them forth" (p.478). This concept is a facet of the 'Extended Self' in which Belk (1988) posits that "knowingly or unknowing, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as an extension of ourselves" (p.139). Information can become a kind of digital artifact as consumers can now save their information searches and findings and, therefore, this information may become an extended representation of them, their opinions, and their interests when they are able to virtually store information for a long time. Throughout the course of the focus groups, virtual storage was cited many times, and mostly all related to Pinterest.

"Every time I tried to save anything, like recipes or anything, it gets lost in the thousands of pictures and screenshots and stuff so it's better to have it in one place"

Here, Rachel acknowledges the struggle of a millennial. Faced with so much information that they have had the autonomy to choose, it becomes more necessary to store this information for future reference. Jennifer also acknowledges this ability:

"If you see something you like you can just put it on your own board and look at it later so you don't have to screenshot it or try to go figure out what it was and save it"

Social media applications like Pinterest provide their users with the ability to virtually store this information and return to it at a later date, should they see fit. Consumers have limited storage in tangible objects, such as phones, computers and bookshelves, so it becomes almost necessary to store the large amounts of information we seek in a seemingly infinite virtual capacity. Belk (2008) argues that using digital media as a representation of the extended self leads to 'digital clutter', "With physical possessions we only have so much room to store things, but given the now inexpensive cost of digital storage and the efficiency of digital searches, there is little incentive to

discard digital possessions" (p. 489). With social media burgeoning after the date of this publication, digital storage is no longer inexpensive, it is free, and favored by many individuals who seek to eliminate physical clutter and contribute towards their digital clutter.

Belk also argues that the extended self in a digital world contributes to distributed memory. Distributed memory allows consumers to use digital space as a way to recollect memories or define their past. "… Such search engines and social media also help us remember other people, emotions and events of significance in our lives" (Belk, 2008, p.488).

"I'll forget and then I'll go back and be like, 'oh yeah!"

One of the FGI participants, Jessica, liked the element of virtual storage using Pinterest because it reminds her of information she looked at previously and her interests at a specific moment in time. Participants often cited the ability to remind themselves of information or images they saved at a certain point in time was one of the aspects they enjoyed about virtual storage via social media applications such as Pinterest. When asked if they liked the aspect of informational collection via digital fashion media, participants responded:

"I love that!" - Nina

"… So you can go back and look at it." – Taylor

<u>Instant Gratification</u>

A domain, which was predicted prior to the focus group interviews, was the use of digital fashion media for information seeking due to the opportunity for instant gratification. In each focus group the words 'quick' and 'easy' came up time and time

again when referring to digital fashion media. Instant gratification is the expectation of an individual that they will receive information quickly and easily and achieve a great deal of satisfaction from the speed and effectiveness of the information acquired. This definition was based upon the Uses and Gratification Theory (Katz & Blumer, 1974) which focuses on how an individual has specific needs and uses media to satisfy those needs. The core premise is what the media can do for the individual as opposed to media's influence on the individual (Quan-Hasse &Young, 2010). In the case of this study, digital fashion media grants users the opportunity to find information quickly and easily. The instantaneous aspect of social media was heavily praised by the participants.

"… but with Pinterest, like she said, if you're looking for a specific thing it comes up immediately" – Kimberly.

"Everything online is at your fingertips. It's so much easier" – Alexa

Kimberly and Alexa, respectively, both acknowledge the instantaneous aspect of digital fashion media and how easy it is to access information almost as soon as you type it in the search bar. Speed has become a requirement in almost every aspect of our lives, especially millennials who always seem to be on the move. Maddie Grant explains, "Millennials grew up in an app-based world where if the app you've chosen doesn't do exactly what you want in maybe the first five or ten minutes, you dump it and go find another one – because you can. They have only known a world where high-speed is normal" (Grant, 2015). Millennials expect speed and they expect their information will be given to them within a matter of seconds. They expect that technology will be easy to use; after all, they were the first generation to really adapt to and grow up in the age of the Internet and social media. Millennials are more connected to technology than any

other generation before them. They feel their connection is what makes their generation unique and they have unparalleled access to information through technology which previous generations, who also went through technological booms, did not (The Council of Economic Advisors, 2014).

"It has everything on there. You just search and it's there." – Scarlett

"You can find whatever it is that you're looking for. It's just easy." – Leslie

"It's just so simple and easy." – Rhiannon

Consumers feel gratified when they are able to access information quickly and easily. Scarlett, Leslie and Rhiannon, respectively, each note that social media is extensive and it is fast and easy and that is what they like about utilizing it for fashion information seeking. The potential reason for this motivation to use digital fashion media is, as previously mentioned, millennial consumers are busy. They argue they do not have enough time to read content and to wait long periods of time for information. Leslie and Taylor discuss their routine for using social media:

"My main social media is Instagram, which is quicker before the teacher starts talking. I'm not going to read an article. I don't have ten minutes."

When asked what it would take to go through social media to access a fashion blog, one participant answered:

"Okay, I love looking at pictures so I guess mine would be, you know, how they post one picture on social media but on their blog… [they have more] so I'll look at that but it's if I have a lot of time on my hands."

Participants are not looking for extensive written content. They are looking for information that is quick and easily accessible while they carry on with their daily

activities. There was a clear pattern of the frequency of millennial digital fashion media usage – all day, several times a day. Participants in every focus group discussed their use of digital fashion media throughout the day, in between classes, when they wake up, and when they go to sleep. They do not allocate a specific time for information seeking, they incorporate it into their daily routine whenever there are a spare few minutes and this explains their need for instant gratification. According to Katz and Blumer's uses and gratifications theory (1974), what the media does for the individual is important and, in this case, the media allows consumers to accrue information instantly without interrupting their everyday schedules.

<div align="center">Visual Inspiration</div>

In regards to instant gratification, participants determined that they do not have enough time in their day to sit and read written content, thus their penchant for digital fashion media over fashion magazines. A possible reason for this lies in their preference for the mode of communication that information is commonly presented to them – visually. This comes from the lack of time in their day to sit down and read but also from years of interaction with primarily visual modes of communication such as television, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram and other social media applications. Participants regularly use digital fashion media to gain visual fashion information and to use those visual information cues for inspiration. Participants would rather have visual representations of information than written content. This concept relates to informational motivations of artists, outlined in Cobbledick (1996), which determined that artists sought five areas of information: inspiration, specific visual image needs, technical knowledge related to art-making, marketing and career guidance, and current trends and events. Expanding upon

this, Lo and Chu (2015) also analyzed how digital media addresses students' information-seeking needs and found that "in the digital age, the Internet is integral to art and design students' practices and is often the first resource consulted when looking for either information or inspiration" (p.115). This use of visual elements for information seeking was discussed by many of the participants.

"You can get ideas, inspiration from other people. See what everyone else is doing, what's in right now"

"It's like having an inspiration board everywhere"

Tori and Rhiannon, respectively, admit their use of digital fashion media for inspiration seeking. Although social media applications like Pinterest and Polyvore are literal inspiration boards, participants find inspiration just from viewing images. Millennials do not feel the need to read any written content to find inspiration. They, in a lot of cases, prefer to skip over any written content and focus on images, even when browsing predominately printed modes of communication.

"Even when I'm reading a magazine I'm not really reading it but I'm looking at the pictures. I like to be able to see the story through the image"- Melissa

"The image talks more than words so I think that's enough to see the image for me personally"- Sofia

"I guess we just like seeing things more than sitting and reading it"- Rhiannon

Melissa refers to the fact that she continues to seek visual inspiration even when reading a magazine, which is predominately written content. Her honed ability to extract the story from the image does not require her to read the written content that explains the imagery. Sofia was in agreement. She would most likely agree with the ubiquitous

saying, 'A picture is worth a thousand words' as her statement refers to the fact that millennial consumers can see an image, and gain inspiration and information from that respective image, without any additional content needed. Rhiannon argues that millennials like seeing more than reading which may, again, stem from the need for speed that millennials have and the fact that their busy lifestyles have made them accustomed to extracting information from images very quickly as opposed to sitting and reading something.

<div align="center">Gratuitous Information</div>

Millennials have had a difficult time in recent years, given the economic recession, with financial instability as well as a high rate of unemployment and underemployment (Koeppel, 2015). As a result, millennials appear to be more price conscious than ever before. Digital fashion media provides these price conscious consumers with gratuitous information. Millennial consumers no longer want to pay for information so digital fashion media provides them with exactly what they need in the midst of an unstable economic climate. Morgan sums it up in the simplest terms:

"I'm not going to pay for something if I can get it for free online"

Millennial consumers are less likely to pay for magazines when they can receive similar, if not the exact same, information online. Iyer and Eastman (2010) analyzed price consciousness as a factor in the decline of mall shopping amongst consumers. They argued that the fashion conscious consumers would also be price conscious and this was supported by their survey results. Consumers who tend to have higher fashion leadership tendencies seem to be more price conscious, much like the participants of this study. Lichtenstein et al., (1993) also analyzed price consciousness as a consumer price

perception construct along with value consciousness, coupon proneness, sale proneness, price mavenism, price-quality schema, and prestige security, respectively. They defined price consciousness as "the degree to which the consumer focuses exclusively on paying low prices" (Lichtenstein et al., 1993, p.235). In the case of this current study, price consciousness refers to the need for consumers to have gratuitous information.

Many of the participants cited that they used to purchase and/or subscribe to magazines when they were in high school but as they got older they became more price conscious and no longer wanted to pay for information anymore. At the same time, social media flourished during their teenage years.

"I don't really subscribe to anything anymore because I don't want to pay for it"

"It was easier to just click the link than spend money on the subscription"

"There's a lot of content with magazines but the con is you have to pay for it"

With the realization that gratuitous information was available Kimberly decided that she was not going to subscribe to magazines any longer. This was a common thread throughout the various focus group discussions. These consumers seemed to be excited about magazines and willing to pay for the information they provide but, when they found out they could get the same information online, their loyalty to magazines was swiftly realigned to digital media. Lara discussed how much easier it was to go to an online website or social media for information rather than spending money on magazine subscriptions and waiting for the respective magazine to arrive in your mailbox. Again, the instant gratification domain is applicable since ease of use and price consciousness seem to be related. Why would a millennial go to the store and pay money for information or pay money and wait for delivery if he/she can just click for information in

just a few seconds? As Morgan mentioned, there is a lot of content in magazines, of which most participants were favorable to regardless of if they read it or not, but they are not willing to pay for that information anymore. The instantaneous aspect of digital fashion media, coupled with the gratuitous information it provides to consumers, ensures that it outcompetes magazines in an increasingly unstable economic climate with a demographic who prefers to use technology and who have become accustomed to information at their fingertips without a price tag.

<div align="center">Authenticity</div>

Armstrong and McAdams (2011) conducted a study in which they analyzed consumer trust of blogs in regards to information seeking. They determined that consumers who use blogs for information seeking will find them more trustworthy than traditional media. For the purposes of this current study, trust is defined as an individual's confidence in the information they receive and the source of that information. This definition is derived from Wang, Min and Han's (2016) definition of trust. Participants noted that although they use digital fashion media for information seeking, they mostly browse and avoid going in with a specific intent yet, unlike Armstrong and McAdam's study, they still seemed to trust bloggers more. When planning out their purchases, millennial consumers seek out consumer reviews through social media applications like YouTube in order to gage how the product works for other consumers.

"I ordered shoes. They seemed really sketchy. I looked on YouTube – people had ordered and reviewed and I felt more chill about it because I was super nervous"

"I always go in there [YouTube] before I buy a product and watch the reviews"

Freya and Scarlett use social media as a tool to determine whether or not products are trustworthy and, in turn, put their trust in the blogger reviewing the product. The participants felt a lot more comfortable in having a fellow consumer, in this case a fashion blogger, review a product prior to them purchasing. This domain obviously supports one of the fundamental motivations for information seeking – consumers seek information before making a purchase because the information helps the consumer's entire decision making process, better compare alternatives, make better decisions, and become more satisfied with their purchase afterwards (Cheng-Hao et al., 2015; Haubl & Trifts, 2000).

Then, why do the consumers trust these bloggers so much? It came down to two major reasons: They are moving towards an anti-commercial mindset, and they can relate far better to fashion bloggers than corporate entities.

Throughout the course of the focus groups, participants regularly claimed that they trust fashion bloggers more so than magazines because the information they provide, in most cases, is unbiased and not driven by corporate entities seeking to increase their products' profit and visibility. There seems to be a great deal of distrust between these millennial consumers and corporations or commercial entities, especially in terms of the information they are given. When asked who she trusts more, Melissa replied:

"Probably her [the blogger] because she's not a big corporate company. She's more of a person."

Melissa refers to the fact that she's "more of a person" as opposed to a seemingly distant entity which provides information to consumers on behalf of a third party who may be paying them to promote certain brands and products. The concept of being "a

person" or "real" came up time and time again throughout the focus groups which relates to the concept of being relatable, which was a determinant of trust between blogger and consumer.

"Bloggers are real. They're people like us"

"I feel like I could relate to her more. Even though she's super high fashion, she's still a regular person"

"The blogger is more real"

"She's still down to earth. That's what I like. I don't want you to be all commercial"

Freya, Melissa, and Nina, respectively, maintain their trust in the blogger through how relatable they find them to be. Bloggers are considered trustworthy because they are not tied to affiliate corporations in any way. The information they provide, although perhaps not factual, is trusted because it comes from their opinion, which may resemble the opinion of the consumer. Nina talks about her desire for bloggers to avoid commercializing themselves through brand sponsorships or paid advertisements. In fact, many participants stressed this opinion. Tori wanted to avoid affiliate ties altogether, not just paid sponsorships.

"I would want to get information, not from someone with [a] fashion background, but someone like me who's just as passionate about what they're doing"

The key phrase here is "like me". Consumers' distrust of corporations can be eliminated through digital media and fellow consumers who share information. There is no pre-requisite to be a fashion opinion leader on digital fashion media and consumers appreciate that. Consumers want more personalized information, whether that means

search autonomy as discussed previously, or just a deeper connection to the information source. It provides them with trust in the information they are receiving.

The Six Motivational Domains in relation to Functional Theory

Although each of these domains are each important individual motivations to utilize digital fashion media for information seeking, they also relate to each other and can be discussed more expansively as exemplifications of the functions of Daniel Katz' Functional Theory (1960). Katz's (1960) theory posits that any given attitude serves one or more distinct personality functions: Adjustment, Ego Defense, Value Expression, and Knowledge. Daugherty et al., (2008) argue that the theory states that, "attitudes serve various motivations depending on the purpose, such that one's behavior becomes a function of their attitude toward that behavior" (as cited in O'Keefe, 2002).

<u>Adjustment</u>

Adjustment refers to the more utilitarian behaviors regarding the needs and aspirations of consumers. According to Katz (1960), the dynamics of adjustment are "maximizing external rewards and minimizing punishment" (p.192). The domains Search Autonomy, Gratuitous Information, and Instant Gratification are elements of this function. A condition of this function is to create better paths for satisfaction. In the case of search autonomy and instant gratification, digital fashion media provides a better path to satisfaction through the instantaneous and autonomous aspect that allows users to access information of their choosing in an extremely timely manner, thus maximizing the rewards – in this case, the information they were seeking. In addition, Gratuitous Information serves as an exemplification of the Adjustment function, as digital fashion media provides consumers with infinite amount information for free, thus providing a

better path to satisfaction. The need for information on products, trends, etc., is a utilitarian need and the fact that it is being served not only instantaneously but also gratuitously is a clear representation of the Adjustment function of attitudes. Not only does digital fashion media provide consumers with information for free but it also helps them shop in a more utilitarian manner by allowing them to be more price conscious:

"If I like something but it's too expensive I will be looking a few days later to see if they have discounts or something. I wait for the right moment" – Gabriella

By providing an extensive amount of information, that the consumer chose, the consumer can now see prices, compare them, and then create new needs and new levels of aspiration, as the Adjustment function determines, and plan their purchases more carefully to satisfy their needs more efficiently.

<div align="center">Ego Defense</div>

The dynamics of ego defense are to protect against internal conflict and external dangers with the condition of developing self-insight (Katz, 1960). The way in which this function can be recognized is through the Authenticity domain. Consumers avoid threats and external dangers through their acceptance of information given to them by trusted consumers, i.e., fashion bloggers. Their distrust of commercialized bloggers and corporations eliminates the external danger of receiving information that is deemed to be biased. The fact that participants gravitated towards bloggers that had the same tastes and preferences as them eliminates the internal conflict of reconciling information they receive with their own beliefs, opinions and preferences. They already match up. The fact that participants stated that they deliberately seek out fashion bloggers with the same taste as them which would be their ego defense function of attitudes. A specific statement

from Rhiannon explains exactly how ego defense manifests itself in the Authenticity

motivation of digital fashion media utilization:

"If your target audience is a certain audience and that's how you got there, I feel

like you should keep... I unfollowed her when she started posting only high end things. I

couldn't afford them anymore"

Rhiannon's ego defense function came into play with her unfollowing of the

blogger who became more commercial. By unfollowing her and not accepting the new

information that the blogger is presenting, she eliminates the internal conflict of knowing

she cannot afford the new content the blogger is posting as well as the unwelcome

feelings that go along with that. Search autonomy can also be considered an aspect of ego

defense too as, according to Katz (1960); an arousal condition is use of authoritarian

suggestion. The ability to have complete autonomy over searches in digital fashion

media, as opposed to information given to you in magazines, eliminates threats and

contributes to ego defense.

<div align="center">Value Expression</div>

Value expression is the expression of an individual's self-concept and values. It is

the need for "maintaining self-identity, enhancing favorable self-image, self-expression

and self-determination" (Katz 1960, p. 192). One of the arousal conditions is the appeal

of an individual to reassert self-image. This function is exemplified through the domains

Virtual Storage, Authenticity and Visual Inspiration, respectively. The Virtual Storage

motivation appeases value expression as it allows the consumer to effectively collect their

opinions, beliefs, ideas and hopes onto virtual inspiration boards and, through this, they

are asserting their self-image. As Belk (2008) noted, it becomes an extended self. The

<div align="center">45</div>

collection of information that they store virtually is an exemplification of themselves in a digital capacity. Another arousal condition of Value Expression is ambiguities which threaten self-concept. Self-concept refers to an individual's belief about themselves, their personal attributes and what the self is (Baumeister, 1999). Authenticity, again, reasserts self-concept through the consumer choice of accepting information from a blogger they trust because of the blogger similarity to themselves. By deliberately choosing someone they believe they can trust, because they have the same opinions and preferences as them, the consumer reasserts their beliefs about themselves and this contributes to the Value Expression function of attitudes. The Visual Inspiration motivation also contributes to the Value Expression function of attitudes. As consumers utilize digital fashion media, and its extensive information, as a source of information, they are reasserting their self-image. Using digital fashion media as a tool for inspiration seeking allows consumers to see what other people are doing and who they are in relation to those trends. It can contribute to a greater understanding of the self and thus becomes a Value Expressive function of attitudes.

<div align="center">Knowledge</div>

Finally, the last function of attitude in Katz' (1960) theory is Knowledge. The function requirement is the "need for understanding, for meaningful cognitive organization, for consistency and clarity" (Katz, 1960, p.192). The domains of Virtual Storage, Instant Gratification and Visual Inspiration can exemplify this function. Virtual storage serves the need for cognitive organization but in a digital manner. Consumers can use digital fashion media as a way to store their information and inspiration. When they create boards, which are designed to store specific information, whether that might be

fashion or recipes or interior design, they are storing knowledge in a way that maintains consistency and clarity. It provides more meaningful information about a problem because a user can easily go to where their information is stored, should they find themselves facing the same problem again. Visual Inspiration provides consumers with knowledge that they extract themselves from images. Since consumers are increasingly visual, the information they receive from images can perhaps afford them more clarity than written content might. Lastly, Instant Gratification serves the Knowledge function as it provides information to consumers almost instantaneously and very easily. Consumers have the opportunity to have more understanding on a given topic because the information is so fast and easily accessible. Information through digital fashion media is likely to be more timely and up-to-date. This will eliminate the threat of informational ambiguity. Consumers have the opportunity to have a much greater understanding of information through digital media and to expand their knowledge function at the same time.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Implications

The current study on the underlying motivations for millennial consumers to utilize digital fashion media for information seeking provides additional understanding to the information search component of the consumer decision making process. This is an important theoretical contribution as the information search component of the consumer decision making process is essential in establishing a consumer's opinions on whether to purchase a product. During this phase, the consumer informs themselves about a particular product or service in order to evaluate if it will satisfy their wants and needs (Darley et al., 2010). By providing information on the consumer motivations to utilize digital fashion media for information seeking, this study sheds more light on the information search component of the millennial consumer decision making process specifically in the context of digital fashion media. Understanding the motivations of consumers during their information search phase can illuminate the changing motivations of consumers in an increasingly digitalized world and provide further insight into the role of the information search phase and its impact on the purchase decisions of consumers. It also contributes to the building rigor of theoretical literature on fashion information seeking in conjunction with fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. In addition, this study examines the applicability of functional theory, which has been predominately used in the field of sociology, to consumer studies. This study also adds to the limited extant literature on consumer behavior in fashion blogging, as well as social media, and provides greater depth on consumer behavior relating to fashion magazines

given a great deal of current information in this particular area has only been limited to advertising and its effects on body image.

Implications for Fashion Magazines

The focus group interviews divulged an aversion to fashion magazines from millennial consumers. Most, if not all, of the participants preferred using digital fashion media for information seeking as opposed to print media. However, fashion magazines were not disliked and consumers seemed eager to use fashion magazines for information seeking should some changes be made. Millennials are the largest demographic in the United States and, therefore, it is becoming increasingly important that businesses and media alike know how to target this demographic. Millennials are difficult to target, however. They have $200 billion dollars in buying power but they tend to flit from one thing to the next, as we have seen with the movement from print media to digital media (Schawbel, 2015). Therefore, the following implications would prove extremely useful to magazines attempting to compete in an increasingly digitized world.

1. Consumers often purchase on the basis of who is on the cover.

Millennial consumers interviewed in the focus groups tended to purchase magazines based on the celebrity or public figure on the cover and not so much based on the content within the magazine. Some participants may flip through the magazine to see the content if they are undecided about the cover but most use the cover as a determinant of whether or not they would like to purchase the magazine.

"I feel like the first impression you get is who's on the cover so if it's someone I'm super interested in I'll probably go ahead and grab it and if I'm not super interested I'll look at what articles are inside and that might swing me to buy it" – Amelia

This presents an opportunity for fashion magazines to engage further with millennial consumers. Millennial consumers are an extremely technologically savvy generation and tend to use digital media more than any other demographic (Council of Economic Advisors, 2014). This implication is related to the visual inspiration motivation of consumers. Consumers pay careful attention to visual cues and like to seek inspiration from these visual elements. Given that they tend to avoid purchasing magazines unless the cover catches their eye, magazines should pay careful attention to the individuals' millennial consumers prefer and cater a portion of their magazine covers to these individuals.

"The last magazine I purchased had Blake Lively on the cover and I absolutely love her so I felt it was worth it. That was the last one I bought" - Josephine

"It's definitely who's on the cover… there's actually been a Vogue I've skipped because I don't really care for the person" - Rhiannon

The cover of magazines provides ample opportunity for publishers to really commit to attracting millennials with their cover star, their content and the aesthetic of the cover. One participant mentioned her love of the Marie Antoinette-inspired Vogue cover with Kirsten Dunst. Although it was ten years ago, she remembers that particular cover because the striking visual complexity of the cover appealed to her visual preferences. Again, there is an opportunity here for the cover to appeal to millennial consumers through their penchant for visual information. Understanding the motivations of millennial consumers to use digital fashion media can provide useful insights to print media. Visual information is important to millennials and magazines have ample

opportunity to address that motivation and use it to their advantage given the immense amount of creative resources they have.

2. Consumers want a variety of content in their magazines, not just fashion.

Many consumers grow tired with the same old information. When digital fashion media provides consumers with extensive informational opportunities, they expect it from other media too. Participants wanted fashion magazines to expand their content to more than just fashion. They appreciated health information, career advice, much like Cobbledick's (1996) findings with other creative students, and stories about people contributing positively to the world. These expectations are not unwarranted from this particular demographic. Millennials, as previously mentioned, are price conscious having been directly affected by a poor economy, increasing tuition rates and unemployment. They value career advice. In addition, they value, more than any other demographic, transparency and social responsibility (Schawbel, 2015). They want to read about these topics in magazines because they are applicable to the needs of their generation. This relates to the motivations search autonomy and instant gratification. Consumers want information that is relevant to them and easy to access which provides them with a quick and easy fix to their needs and informational preferences.

"I would say they have interviews with celebrities and that intrigues me but if they had interviews with people who really make a difference or do something super interesting… I feel like our generation or the whole world is so focused on celebrities and so you have the same people on the covers. I know someone who's done something interesting isn't as well known to sell a cover but maybe inside the magazine that could

feature more interesting people and knowledge of careers or something. I think that

would be interesting"- Morgan

"I like to read stuff, like in Marie Claire, they always have stuff that's educational – some woman who went to Asia and did this amazing thing – or something like that. Something that's powerful or affecting humanity. I like to read articles like that more. I like fashion, obviously, but I like that more as a visual thing" - Melissa

"My favorite is Elle because they have lots of stuff about women and careers and stuff like that" - Morgan

Some magazines already provide these kinds of topics, such as Elle and Cosmopolitan, which was the favorite magazine for this demographic, but many other magazines do not provide this information to what could potentially be their biggest consumer segment. Participants showed great appreciation to those magazines that do produce this type of content but felt it could be expanded upon further. Millennials want transparency. They believe in social justice and use media platforms to express this (Schawbel, 2015). President Obama recently made a speech about the power of digital media and civic engagement because the millennial generation is extremely outspoken about social responsibility, social justice, racial justice, etc., on digital media platforms (Rhodan, 2016). Millennials use digital media to show support or outcry for societal problems and they want these same stories told in their magazines too.

3. Consumers dislike advertising unless it pertains to the aesthetic of the magazine.

A major point of contention for millennial consumers was the amount of advertising fashion magazines contained. There was an understanding as to why the

advertising is included but it was not very appreciated. Participants often complained of the interruption it presented to content or just the sheer amount of time they would waste before they got to the written content.

"Maybe because the ad is on the side [online] so if I don't want to pay attention I can just mind my own business but in the magazine I have to turn like 20 pages to actually get some content" - Tori

"It pushed me away. I remember when InStyle got so bad that I literally stopped buying it" - Melissa

"I think that's why I don't shop for magazines. I'll look through an entire magazine and only like two items or one article so the rest is a waste" – Josephine

However, participants were much more accepting of advertising in magazines when the advertising was in keeping with the overall aesthetic of the magazine. Participants mentioned how perfume advertisements are not as annoying and distracting to them because they typically imitate the style of the respective magazine they're placed in.

"Con would definitely be the ads. Every other page is an ad and you're trying to look at dresses and there's a Nike ad and that's not what I'm looking for… Like, a perfume ad… it'll be pretty but not an ad about ointment or something. That was in my magazine this morning, that's why I said that" - Jennifer

"That's another good thing about Vogue – they usually do advertisements that are relevant to that magazine… but if you look at Cosmo, there's ads for random stuff that doesn't really pertain" - Rhiannon

There is an opportunity for magazines to be much more selective about the advertisements they include within their pages and appeal to the search autonomy and authenticity motivations of consumers. Consumers don't want to feel like their informational access is being infringed upon by advertising, especially those that do not have any relation to the other content, and dislike the general nature of commercialization, preferring a more authentic information experience. Although advertisements are a great source of revenue for magazines, the sheer amount of advertisements, as well as ones that do not connect with the rest of the content, drives consumers away from purchasing magazine. As social media is increasing the amount of advertising on their applications, it is an appropriate time for print media to think about their advertising in order to claim consumers who may be drifting away from social media.

4. Consumers want incentives to subscribe to magazines.

As previously mentioned, millennial consumers are suffering through an unstable economic climate and find solace in the gratuitous information that digital fashion media provides. However, they would prefer to read magazines were there not a fee for the information. Many participants stated that they would be more inclined to read magazines were there an incentive. A lot more businesses are offering freebies to consumers in exchange for their continued business, such as Sephora and Ulta, and many consumers are also favoring sample boxes like Birch Box. Participants stated that perhaps a lipstick discussed in the magazine could be included with the magazine as a sample. Another participant argued coupons to some of the stores included in the magazine would also be useful. A growing number of millennial consumers are a lot more careful with their

money and require discount prices or incentives for their loyalty and this may be something fashion magazines need to pay attention to should they want to increase the readership of this particular demographic.

5. Consumers want prices that match their demographic.

Millennial consumers are very aware of their economic situation but nevertheless like to gain inspiration from high fashion in magazines despite not being able to afford the items. Therefore, participants were extremely happy with magazines which included cheaper alternatives to high fashion brands. Millennials like to imitate the high fashion trends and keep in style but cannot afford to pay extortionate prices. These types of content provide an excellent solution to this problem. Participants mentioned that some magazines did do this but not often enough.

"I like how it shows you the high fashion but 'we can recreate it for you and you can get it for this much'" – Amelia

"I like them online and I've run across some that do a list of top performing mascara or something like that because I've seen, not Vogue, but Elle or somebody have cheaper brands for top performing mascaras" – Lauren

Including more of these types of brand and price comparisons could provide fashion magazines with an excellent way to tap into the millennial consumer segment and appeal to their motivation for gratuitous information as well as instant gratification. After all, they are the largest demographic in the United States and most of them are using digital fashion media rather than magazines.

Implications for Digital Fashion Media

1. Selective advertising

Perhaps one of the only downsides, according to consumers, of utilizing digital fashion media for information seeking was the increasing amount of advertising appearing on social media sites. Besides the opportunity for gratuitous information, another reason millennial consumers are swayed towards digital media is to escape the pages of advertising in magazines. Now that social media is including sponsored posts, millennial consumers are becoming disgruntled.

When referring to Instagram: *"It's really simple but I don't like how now they have sponsored ads on your newsfeed and I hate that. Facebook used to do that and I got annoyed and now Instagram do that. I don't want to see those sponsored ads, I want to see my friends pictures" – Freya*

Digital media and social media applications should attempt to limit their advertising, however limiting advertising sponsors would not be a realistic solution for many digital media businesses because such sponsorship is one of the reasons users can get free or-low cost information from such media. Therefore, a more realistic approach would be to incorporate efforts to cater advertising specifically to the needs of the consumers. Many participants complained about 'random' advertisements that had nothing to do with the rest of their content. Should the advertisements blend more seamlessly into the consumer's content, they would more than likely be less antagonistic towards advertising via digital media.

2. Maintain and/or increase interactivity

Millennial consumers appreciate the ability to be more interactive with digital fashion media. Digital fashion media has provided many ways in which consumers can feel as if they are partaking in an event such as Facebook Live, where consumers can watch a runway show via a fashion blogger or designer, and Snapchat, where they can look behind-the-scenes, and preview upcoming trends and designs. Participants were extremely excited about the more personal aspect of digital fashion media that is slowly becoming the norm. Increasing the opportunity for interactivity with fashion brands, bloggers and designers via digital media will continue to excite millennial consumers and increase digital media usage for many years to come.

Implication Focus

Phrases relating to the instant gratification motivation were most frequently used during the course of the focus group interviews; therefore both fashion magazines and digital fashion media should pay careful attention to implications relating to this particular motivation as there is a large opportunity for both media to increase their future readership through attentiveness to this particular motivation.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Millennial participants are an important demographic but a difficult one to target. They have many needs and wants and it becomes almost impossible to appease all the different segments of the population at one time. However, digital fashion media appears to be connecting well with millennial consumers and generating ways in which these consumers can satisfy both their utilitarian and hedonic needs. Digital fashion media provides millennial consumers with gratuitous information which limits their economic burdens, search autonomy so that they may not be limited in scope of information, authenticity through fashion opinion leaders that appeal to their self-concept, virtual storage so that their information lives on without tangibly infiltrating their lives, instant gratification to assist in the frantic nature of their lives, and visual inspiration so that, even on a busy day, their information needs are met through imagery and visual components. Millennials want information. They want it fast. And they want it from people like them. Digital fashion media provides all this and more. In fact, digital fashion media exemplifies a clear resolution to all of a millennial's motivations so well that some consumers do not see a way in which they could go back to a time prior to digital media usage. Future generations will have grown up with an expansive amount of information available to them due to digital fashion media and will, therefore, be more confident and comfortable with their purchase decisions as they have not had to figure it out as they go along like previous generations. Future generations will also become even more acclimatized to instant information than the millennials so the future of media may

change as we know it. Although the future implications of digital fashion media are uncertain, one thing is for sure- it works for millennials and it is here to stay.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study recruited females for focus group interview participation intentionally. Based on the facts that females utilize social media more than males (Social networking fact sheet, 2015) and have shown higher levels of involvement and interest in fashion (O'Cass, 2000), we could ensure participants were articulate in the focus group interviews. For future research, males should be included so as to examine any broader motivations that may not have been captured in this current study. Although males do not exemplify as high levels of fashion involvement as females (O'Cass, 2000), their use of social media might generate some interesting results in regards to their information seeking motivations and preferences. In addition, another potential limitation was the fact that data were coded using only one coder. In many studies, coding is conducted by many individuals in an attempt to eliminate any potential bias. In this study, although only one coder was used, bias was eliminated through ignoring the initial conceptual model of expected domains prepared beforehand and modifying the model to fit the themes which emerged throughout the course of data transcription and coding as discussed by Miles and Huberman (1994). A final limitation of this study is the fact that media in general and, specifically, digital fashion media is a dynamically changing environment and many of the emergent motivations of this study may change in relation to the changing dynamics. It is therefore necessary to continue to foster this area of research and analyze changing patterns in the motivations of consumers in their information seeking behaviors in relation to this fast-paced ever-changing environment.

Future research should expand upon the current study by conducting quantitative research to analyze statistical relationships between consumer information seeking motivations and their use of digital fashion media and traditional media. This statistical analysis would provide further insight into motivations underlying information seeking behavior of consumers in an increasingly digitalized world. Furthermore, future research should analyze the motivations of non-students to utilize digital fashion media for information seeking. Given they are in a completely different environment from students, their information seeking motivations and online behavior may be completely different from students and they may be motivated by different needs. Also, Generation Z will potentially overtake the millennials soon in terms of buying power and media usage; therefore studies that continue this particular research topic with a focus on this emerging demographic will be necessary. In addition, future research should analyze the impact of consumer demographics on the nature of information seeking via digital fashion media and whether or not the choice of a consumer to follow a specific blogger relates primarily to their preference for the respective blogger's style or perhaps, instead, cultural or ethnic relatedness.

APPENDIX SECTION

Table 1: Post-FGI Participant Validation Measures

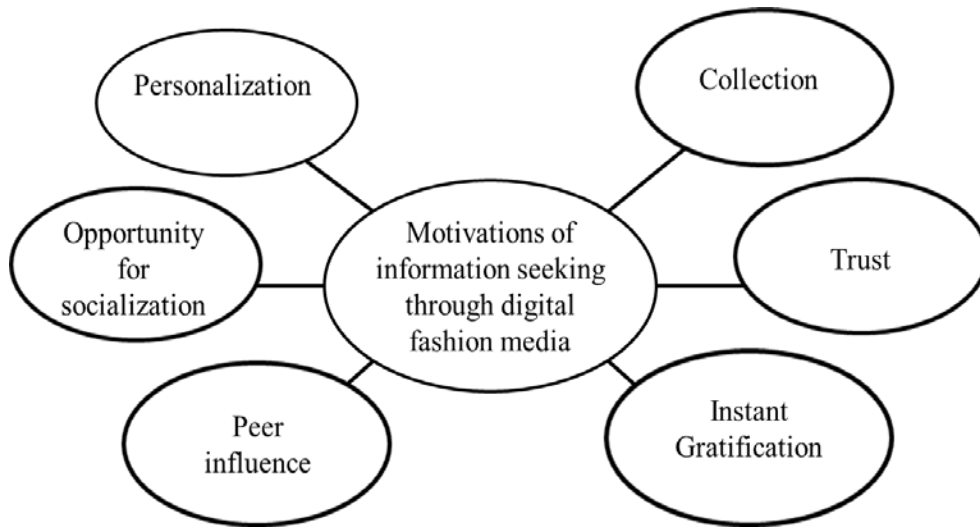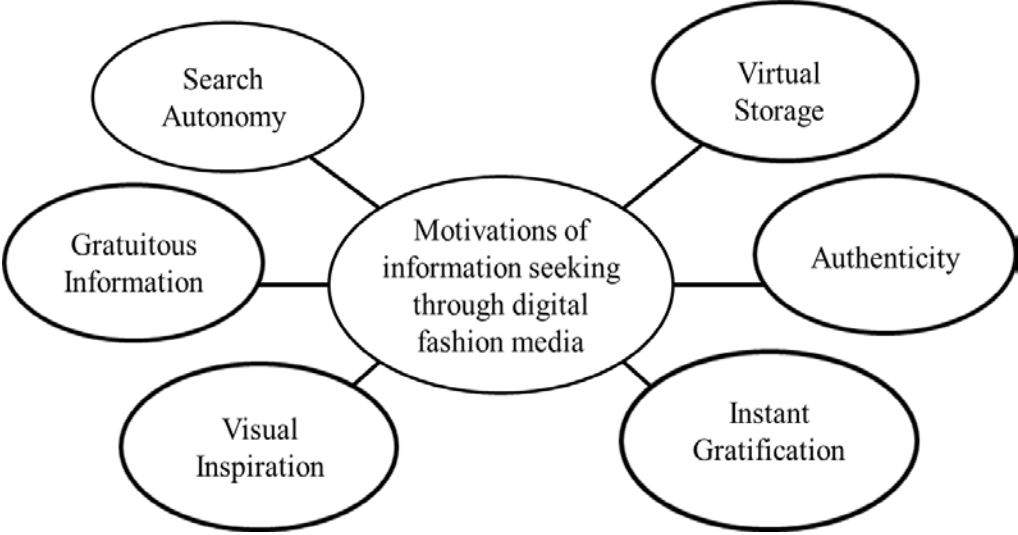| Variable Name	Items	Citation	*a*	Mean	SD
Opinion Leadership	1. My opinion on [fashion products] seems to count with other people. 2. When they choose [fashion products], other people turn to me for advice. 3. Other people come to me for advice about choosing [fashion products]. 4. People that I know pick [fashion products] based on what I have told them. 5. I often persuade other people to buy the [fashion products] I like. 6. I often influence people's opinions about [fashion products].	Flynn et al., 1996	.894	3.917	.661
Opinion Seeking	1. When I consider buying [fashion products], I ask other people for advice. 2. I don't need to talk to others before I buy [fashion products].(R) 3. I rarely ask other people what [fashion products] to buy.(R) 4. I like to get others' opinions before I buy [fashion products]. 5. I feel more comfortable buying [fashion products] when I have gotten other people's opinions on it. 6. When choosing [fashion products], other people's opinions are important to me.	Flynn et al., 1996	.863	3.215	.433
Fashion Involvement	important --- unimportant means a lot to me --- means nothing to me interested --- uninterested	Zaichowsky, 1985	.779	4.653	.387
Digital Media Involvement	important --- unimportant means a lot to me ---- means nothing to me interested --- uninterested	Zaichowsky, 1985	.893	4.472	.460
Fashion Information Seeking	A. I often seek out information regarding which clothes I buy. B. I spend a lot of time seeking information about clothing fashions. C. I usually spend time seeking information on what brands of clothes to buy.	Reynolds & Darden, 1971	.772	3.986	.745

Figure 1: Initial Conceptual Model of Expected Domains

Figure 2: Revised Conceptual Model of Final Domains

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Institutional Review Board

Request For Exemption

Certificate of Approval

Applicant: Aimee Nicole Jones

Request Number : EXP2015H707207G

Date of Approval: 10/09/15

_____
Assistant Vice President for Research
and Federal Relations

_____
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Figure 3: IRB Exemption Form

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