



# **Customer Engagement in Dialogic Co-Creation Activities on Social Media: A Customer-Dominant Study of Chinese Female Fast Fashion Shoppers**

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## Abstract

The increasing level of digitisation and rapid digital technology innovation has led to a fundamental revolution in the fashion industry, significantly reflected in the area of social media marketing (SMM). No longer passive receivers of content, customers now seek opportunities to get involved in various (SMM) activities, particularly in the fashion context. For instance, Chinese fashion shoppers spend less than 0.5% of their online time on the official websites of brands or companies, while 80% of online time is accounted by social networks. Thus, customers are increasingly taking on new social roles in the value co-creation processes by interacting and cooperating with brands and other customers on social networking platforms. One form of value co-creation is dialogic co-creation, which refers to customers sharing information and opinions about products or brands via electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). The aim of this research is to enhance the understanding towards Chinese fast fashion customer engagement behaviours in dialogic co-creation activities relating to international fast fashion brands and other customers on a Chinese social networking site, Sina Weibo.

According to the theory of Customer-Dominant Logic (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015), this research investigates customer logic, customer value formation process and the consequence of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation based on this research context. In the literature review, it identifies the antecedent factors that can reflect customer logic on customer's engagement behaviours and preferences. Consumer expertise and social expertise are considered as two key drivers to influence customer engagement behaviour. Furthermore, it identifies that organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertainment and remuneration are the four popular topics of dialogic co-creation activities in which fashion customers to engage. In addition, customer benefits and customer purchase intention are deemed as the positive outcomes from customer engagement in value formation process on social networking sites.

A mixed method approach (qualitative netnography and quantitative online survey) is employed to explore and test the conceptual framework that outlines the process of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities on a social networking site (SNS). In stage one, a netnographic analysis of 3,000 pieces of both customer-generated and brand-generated comments on Sina Weibo is conducted to confirm the antecedent factors that motivate customer to create and co-create dialogues with international fast fashion brands and other customers on a SNS. Furthermore, through analysing 300 pieces of brand-generated posts, it categorises the different types of social media marketing activities customers engage in for dialogic co-creation on a SNS. In stage two, an online survey is employed to test the conceptual model developed from literature review to validate the relationships among customer logic, customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities and the consequences.

The research findings provide valuable implications for both academia and practice in the field of marketing communication, customer engagement and dialogic co-creation. The tested conceptual model provides a holistic understanding of customer logic, customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities on a SNS and the consequences of such engagement from a customer perspective. The research findings also hold essential implications for the international fashion marketers to understand Chinese customers' online social behaviours and preferences, thereby to facilitate appropriate social media marketing strategies on Chinese social networking platform and assist customer engaging in value formation process.

**Keywords:** Customer-Dominant logic, marketing communication, customer engagement, dialogic co-creation, Chinese fast fashion customers



## **Declaration**

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Research motivation and background

Customer shopping behaviour is changing as a consequence of the influence of social media (Geissinger and Laurell, 2016). In particular, fashion shoppers can now access fashion brands and product information by engaging in a variety of social media marketing activities beyond the traditional marketing channels (Blázquez, 2014; VanMeter *et al.*, 2015). In addition, customers actively create and co-create value by generating content, providing product reviews and interacting with brands and other customers on social media (Schivinski *et al.*, 2016; Laroche *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, it becomes increasingly important to understand how customers engage in these social media marketing activities so as to create the value that may influence their purchase intentions. In order to receive a complete understanding towards Chinese customers' online social behaviours, the current study covers three contemporary marketing areas including social media marketing, customer-dominant logic towards marketing communication and customer engagement in dialogic co-creation.

### 1.1.1 Social media marketing in fashion and Chinese context

Social networking sites (SNSs) have been adopted by numerous companies and brands as an effective marketing communication tool with which to connect a large number of online active and potential customers (Dimitriu and Guesalaga, 2017; Mayshak *et al.*, 2017; Felix *et al.*, 2016; Habibi *et al.*, 2016; Ashley and Tuten, 2015). In China, 38.7% of Chinese enterprises had conducted social media marketing promotions on Chinese social media channels by the end of 2016 (China Internet Network Information Center, 2017). 32.9% of Chinese companies had established a professional team to offer full-time management of the marketing development, operation and maintenance of social media landscapes like microblogs (China Internet Network Information Center, 2017). Wei *et al.* (2015) emphasise that microblogs can generate positive effects for a firm by attracting more potential customers, spreading brand popularity, enhancing the customer's brand awareness, sustaining the customer relationship and improving the customer's brand loyalty. Chinese microblogging platforms such as Sina Weibo provide a great opportunity for both domestic and foreign companies to connect to Chinese customers, as more than 80% of the users in China follow official brand pages on Sina Weibo (Gao and Feng, 2016). Fashion brands in particular have been recognised for garnering much attention by Chinese Sina Weibo users, as Chinese fashion shoppers increasingly shop online and search brand information on this platform (China's Fashion Industry, 2014). The report from China's Fashion Industry (2014) highlights that Sina Weibo is a mature virtual platform which allows both local and global fashion brands to stand out easily among their competitors and resonate with their Chinese customers.

However, the advantages of SNSs have been recognised, in reality, it is not easy for firms to achieve success on Chinese SNSs (Yang *et al.*, 2016; Gao and Feng, 2016). The evidence from the marketing executives' survey indicates that only 15% of marketers acknowledge that they have acquired a positive influence for their

business from this virtual channel (Yang *et al.*, 2016; Tadana, 2014). This is more challenging for global brands. For instance, the British online fashion retailer ASOS exited the highly competitive Chinese market in 2016 after suffering a three-year profit loss (Marketing to China, 2016). One reason for their failure is that they did not fully comprehend the distinctive Chinese online-retailing environment and the shopping preferences and online behaviours of Chinese fashion customers (Marketing to China, 2016). Schweidel and Moe (2014) suggest that brands can use social media to understand their customers by analysing the conversations and activities the customers engage in. Therefore, a number of social media marketing scholars have recognised the need to study and provide effective and practical strategies with which to attract customers to engage in, interact with and contribute their time and knowledge to such online non-transactional activities (Sashi, 2012; Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012; Felix *et al.*, 2016; Claffey and Brady, 2017; Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Lei *et al.*, 2017; Mousavi *et al.*, 2017).

The interactions of brands and customers on social media platforms has been given attention by several marketing scholars who focus on the luxury fashion context. Kim and Ko (2012) and Godey *et al.* (2016) maintain that social media marketing strategies involving word-of-mouth, interaction, entertainment, customisation and trendiness can enhance the level of customer interaction with luxury fashion brands on SNSs. But few studies have focused on the fast fashion context. Sheridan *et al.* (2006) have pointed out that fast fashion is different from luxury fashion, which aims to offer customers the latest trendy clothes in affordable prices. Gabrielli *et al.* (2013) also affirm that the characteristics of fast fashion allow more post-modern customers to express their fashion attitudes and individual lifestyles. Particularly, SNSs are convenient virtual platforms which allow fast fashion brands to produce up-to-date contents that more traditional marketing communications cannot (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). Fast fashion shoppers also utilise SNSs to generate the fashion-related opinions (Geissinger and Laurell, 2016)—especially young Chinese female fast fashion shoppers (PwC, 2016). As their purchasing power and media usage level has gradually been increasing in recent years, their fashion consciousness is more international and sophisticated than before (O’Cass and Siahtiri, 2014). They are most likely to engage in social media marketing activities and co-create value with brands and other customers.

A study of different countries’ online shoppers from PwC (2013) points out that Chinese online shoppers are ahead of their global peers in adopting social media for online consumption. More and more Chinese fast fashion shoppers utilise social media as a product information search engine to enhance convenience and reduce the risk of their online shopping experience (China Fashion Industry, 2014). Duan and Dholakia (2015) emphasise that Sina Weibo has reshaped Chinese customers’ consumption behaviours, as they now actively express their opinions on social media rather than merely receive passive messages from brands and retailers as previously. Another market report explicitly indicates that 55% of Chinese customers would like to engage in online discussions about brands and products with other customers on Sina Weibo (OgilvyOne, 2016). Therefore, scholars must deeply and precisely understand Chinese customers’ social behaviours and preferences regarding

engagement in brand-generated social media activities in such Chinese-style social networking environments.

### **1.1.2 Customer-Dominant Logic towards marketing communication**

Increasingly, the notion of co-creation, which defines as an active interaction and collaboration between customer and service provider, is highly emphasised and extensively discussed in marketing communication research from the service provider's perspective (Grönroos, 2004; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2008; Ballantyne and Varey, 2006a; Ballantyne and Varey, 2006b; Madhavaram and Hunt, 2008; Payne *et al.*, 2009). In the contemporary fashion world, customers are playing a new social role as the value co-creators by interacting and communicating with brands (Constantinides, 2014). Brands have lost their ability to limit the power of their customers (Zhang *et al.*, 2015; Zhang *et al.*, 2016). What they can do is use modern technologies to facilitate the valuable communication activities or initiate positive customer discussions that fulfil customers' needs for informational and entertaining marketing content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Kim and Ko, 2012; Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Luo *et al.*, 2015). For instance, on the Chinese social networking platform, Sina Weibo, international fast fashion brands such as Uniqlo, H&M and Zara facilitate a rather seamless interactive experience with customers (Chinese Fashion Industry, 2014). Uniqlo provides detailed merchandise information that is consistent to each physical store in mainland China (BCG, 2014). When a customer leave comments to enquire product information, Uniqlo will answer whether this item is still in stock and where the customer can buy it. H&M has created a set of entertaining online games to delight their customers. Customers will interact with other users when they are participating in the games. More importantly, as sustainable fashion products are being considered for fast fashion consumption by the highly educated and ethical Chinese consumers nowadays (Min Kong and Ko, 2017), Zara broadcasts a set of clothing recycling activities on Sina Weibo to encourage customers to become involved and to enhance their environmental consciousness. Brands generate contents or facilitate activities to involve more customers in the customer-to-brand interactions or customer-to-customer discussions.

However, unlike the traditional provider's perspective--which considers only the value be created through the product exchanged, service provided or firm-customer cooperation--a customer-dominant (C-D) perspective sheds light on exploring and understanding insights regarding the customer value formation process in customer dynamic experience, which is not merely concerned with service provided by companies (Heinonen *et al.*, 2013). In other words, this new marketing logic reconsiders the customer's role in the marketing communication experience (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010; Heinonen *et al.*, 2013; Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). Customers are not only the value co-creators but also value creators in their own ecosystem (Finne and Grönroos, 2017). Heinonen and Strandvik (2015) emphasise that customer value emerges from the customer engaging experience. It is not necessary to deliberate on the experience in certain processes, but it may need to motivate a customer to engage in it. They also consider that customer experience

can be a physical engagement process or a mental and imaginary activity by customers.

Based on Heinonen's (2010) argument, Heinonen and Strandvik, (2015) provide a marketing logic paradigm that focuses on the customer sphere and sets up a research agenda for further study of the customer value formation process. This can be done by exploring and addressing the major unclear issues, specifically, (1) what a customer needs for value formation? (2) what customer logics motivate them to engage in the value formation? (3) how customers engage in the value formation process? (4) when and where they engage in this process? (5) and what service providers can offer for customers? Tynan *et al.*, (2014) also suggest that beyond the comprehensive research agenda established by Heinonen and Strandvik (2015), future study can also offer contributions towards identifying other actors or other customers engaged in the value formation process and how this process occurs based on customer-dominant logic.

In order to contribute the valuable research findings to answer these uninvestigated research problems, it is necessary to investigate from the customer's perspective so as to develop a customer-oriented value formation model of customer engagement in marketing communication experiences. Specifically, this thesis is going to understand customer logic, which influences on customers' affective and cognitive behaviours--especially with respect to their preferences towards which marketing communication contents that facilitated by brands and retailers (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). Moreover, this thesis is also going to understand how customers engage in value formation process in a specific research context by identifying the different marketing communication experiences that customers are engaging in value formation. Lastly, this study is going to find out the customer value that emerges from customer engaging in these experiences.

### **1.1.3 Customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities on SNSs**

In the social media environment, dialogic co-creation is the primary activity that customers engage in to create the value (Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016). Hsieh and Hsieh (2015) define dialogic co-creation as a process of learning and communication between customers and companies. Customers can be in full control of the form of the activities they would like to participate in and the type of sources they prefer to use (Finne and Grönroos, 2017). These communicational activities may include contents either from a company's message or from other customers' messages, and may result in value formation for customers (Kuo and Feng, 2013; Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Hollebeek, 2013; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Zhang *et al.*, 2016).

According to previous literature (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Payne *et al.*, 2009; Vargo *et al.*, 2008; Cova and Dall'Aglio, 2009; Calder *et al.*, 2009; Füller *et al.*, 2009; Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b; Gustafsson *et al.*, 2012; Lorenzo-Romero *et al.*, 2014), the association of research in marketing communication and customer value co-creation is not new, but it remains unclear in relation to how customers engage in dialogic co-creation activities so as to form value in a social networking environment.



This is especially true in this thesis context of customers engaging in Chinese social networking platforms. Based on the Customer-Dominant (C-D) logic (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015), before exploring what types of content customers prefer to co-create value, it is necessary to identify the customer logics that motivate customers to engage in the value formation experience. Mahr and Lievens (2012) identify customer knowledge as one antecedent factor that drives customers to engage in the value-creation experience in virtual communities. Barger *et al.* (2016) recognise that customer's social abilities also influence their willingness to engage in social media.

After understanding customer logics regarding engagement in the dialogic co-creation activities of SNSs, the next step is to explore the forms of the activities customers prefer to engage in, as customers are not only multiple information integrators but also are active value creators for themselves (Heinonen *et al.*, 2013). As mentioned before, it is always the customers who decide what interactive contents they want to gain—perhaps from brand-generated contents or customer's word-of-mouth, or from other sources. Therefore, customer value is not only created through direct customer-brand interactions (Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014); it also emerges when customers interact with other users (Bruhn and Schnebelen, 2017) and can even be formed when customers utilise social media content by themselves (Finne and Grönroos, 2017). Although it has been recognised that informational, entertaining and remunerative contents are key forms of brand-generated content on social media that satisfy customers' needs (Azar *et al.*, 2016) and even influence customers' consumption intention (See-To and Ho, 2014), it has not been confirmed that such contents are the same as the types of dialogic co-creation activities that customers engage in.

Finally, in terms of the consequences of customers engaging in dialogic co-creation, customer learning value, social integrative value and hedonic value are identified as the three major dimensions of value that consumers gain by engaging in marketing communication and co-creation activities on social networks (Zhang *et al.*, 2015). The higher their level of active participation in social media marketing activities, the better opportunity customers have to acquire product information, develop relational ties with others, and have a hedonic experience that allows them to enjoy pleasant and relaxed emotions from dialogic co-creation (Chen *et al.*, 2015b). However, brand-generated activities that do not contain useful information or appropriate content may result in value co-destruction (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011). The failure value formation experience may further influence a customer's intention to repurchase this brand and product (Heidenreich *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to consider whether the brand-generated contents are appropriate to spread among customers on social networking platforms (Kumar *et al.*, 2016).

To sum up, the research in this thesis is based on three research areas: social media marketing in fashion and the Chinese context, the customer-dominant logic of marketing communication and customer engagement in dialogic co-creation for value formation on SNSs. This thesis is grounded in the research field of social media marketing. Specifically, the focus of this study is on the scope of effective marketing

communication strategies for international fast fashion brands on Chinese social networks. Furthermore, in terms of marketing communication research, Payne *et al.* (2009) have emphasised the importance of value co-creation between firm and customers based on service-dominant logic. However, the new era of value co-creation requires that firms consider customer perspective so as to facilitate the communication experience for customer value formation (Finne and Grönroos, 2017). Therefore, based on customer-dominant logic (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015), the aim of this study is to investigate, from the customer's view, engaging in dialogic value co-creation activities with brands and other customers in the social networking environment. Thus, this thesis employs customer-dominant logic to address three issues regarding this phenomenon. First, it considers the antecedent factors of customer logic to drive customers to engage in the value formation process. These antecedents of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation on social networking platform encompass the customer's ability and motivations. Second, it aims to recognise the major types or topics of dialogic co-creation activities that customers prefer to engage in in terms of this research context. Lastly, it evaluates the outcomes of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation, including emerging benefits and customer purchase intention.

## 1.2 The target research respondents

An essential point must to be specified in advance: Most marketing studies exchange the terms *customer* and *consumer* in their texts, as they concerned only about the consumption subject; however, this thesis uses only the term *customer*, as it is not restricted to consumers who have transactional relationships with one specific brand but also represents the potential online shoppers on social networking sites.

In terms of the research objects, in order to investigate customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities for value formation in the social networking environment, **young Chinese female fast fashion customers have been selected as the target respondents in this study.** The following justifications for choosing this research target objects prove that this is a unique research context worthy of deep investigation.

First, the Chinese fast fashion market has experienced rapid growth in recent decades (PwC, 2016), as Chinese fashion shoppers are increasingly sophisticated and search for brands and products that cater to their evolving fashion sense and needs (Li and Fung, 2014; Chinese Fashion Industry, 2014). Today, fast fashion clothing is a popular shopping category for the young, Chinese female consumer group aged 24 to 35 with higher income and good education (PwC, 2016). Such customers like to shop for global fast fashion brands, and they position these brands as “affordable luxury” so as to satisfy the demands of buying the stylish and trendy products that they have seen from the international fashion shows as soon as possible (Jin *et al.*, 2012; China Business Review, 2014).

Second and more importantly, the above described demographic is also most likely to engage in social media and interact with brands and other customers (BCG, 2014).

China has the largest social media population in the world; it reported 730 million online users at the end of 2016 (PwC, 2017). Even the citizens of lower-tier Chinese cities increasingly use online communication technologies in their daily lives. The statistics from a BCG (2014) report point out 16 million inhabitants of tier 3 and 4 cities use Sina Weibo (a Chinese popular microblog). In addition, 91% of these online users state that they have visited a social media platform in the last six months and spend approximately an hour a day on social networking sites. Moreover, BCG research (2014) shows that most Chinese online users regard browsing social media websites and social interaction on the virtual platform as their favourite things to do after work or during holidays, as they provide much relaxation and enjoyment.

According to the BCG (2014) report, 60% of regular Chinese online consumers say that social media has become the primary and most important information source regarding products, services and brands. This report has also found that Chinese online shoppers spend an average of less than 0.5% of their total online time, or just a few minutes per week, checking information from the official websites of companies and brands. This differs from the practices typical of consumers from western countries (BCG, 2014). KPMG's report (2015) points out that Chinese consumers rely more on social interaction and less on advertising than those in Western countries. 90% of the respondents said that interactions with brands on Sina Weibo had driven them to buy more (KPMG, 2015). Through the social networking platform, Chinese customers can meet different people, interact with their friends and other customers, engage in a brand's online activities, gain information regarding products and services and exchange purchase experiences—all of which makes their shopping experiences more interesting and influences their further purchase intention (Wang *et al.*, 2012; Goodrich *et al.*, 2014; Chan and Yazdanifard, 2014; Godey *et al.*, 2016; Kasabov, 2016; Erkan and Evans, 2016a).

From their comparative study of Chinese and French consumers, Xu-Priour *et al.* (2014) also prove that, compared to French consumers, Chinese shoppers are more prone to purchase a product if it is recommended on a social networking platform. They are also more likely to select the brands or products that have been recommended by their friends on social media. Xu-Priour *et al.* (2014) conclude that these differences are rooted in the cultures that influence the consumers' preferences regarding social media interactions and shopping behaviours. Wang (2012) claims that Chinese customers, due to their collectivistic cultural background, pay much attention to others' opinions and value their social interactions on social networking platforms. They are also influenced by their social groups and seek to fulfil their wishes when making buying decisions. Furthermore, the social networking accounts run by celebrities attract much more interest from Chinese social media users, who seek to learn new ideas and read the leading opinions of their favourite idols and celebrities (BCG, 2014). However, Kasanov (2016) argues that Chinese online consumers seek economic and utilitarian value rather than entertainment or social benefits by using the social networking platform, Sina Weibo. According to these arguments—given the distinctiveness of Chinese customers' logic, preferences and behaviours towards dialogic co-creation through information sharing, knowledge learning and conversation among brands and other users on social

networking sites—this thesis should focus on the Chinese context to contribute more valuable and dynamic findings regarding customer value formation.

Third, as the Chinese government has forbidden the use of Western social media—including Facebook (from 2008), Twitter (from 2009), Instagram (from 2014)—in mainland China, Sina Weibo is the first Chinese-style microblogging site to satisfy most Chinese online users' needs for social networking (Zhang *et al.*, 2015; Luo *et al.*, 2015). Based on the latest statistics from the China Internet Network Information Centre (2016), there are 532 million Sina Weibo users so far. Therefore, this thesis chooses Sina Weibo, the leading Chinese microblogging site and one of the global social networking platforms (Nguyen *et al.*, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2015; Yuan *et al.*, 2016), to investigate both how Chinese social media users engage in and create value via conversation and content co-creation and to determine how public posts on Sina Weibo can attract and initiate customer engagement.

Fourth, an increasing number of international fast fashion brands and retailers such as Zara, H&M and Topshop have created their own social networking accounts, posted product advertisements or broadcast fashion information through this emerging medium (Barnes, 2013; China Business Review, 2014). A new competitive landscape for social media marketing and promotions is developing, and brands are contending to position themselves to gain a competitive edge (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Moreover, although Sina Weibo provides an excellent platform for foreign brands to foster relationships with Chinese customers, negative brand comments spread easily, which impacts a brand's reputation and influences potential consumer value formation (Echeverri and Skalen, 2011) and purchase decisions (De Vries *et al.*, 2017). Managers must understand how consumers respond to negative brand publicity (Zou and Li, 2016).

Therefore, as the landscape of social networking in China is distinctive, by investigating how Chinese fast fashion shoppers engage in dialogic co-creation among brands and other users for value formation on Sina Weibo, this thesis can provide the marketing knowledge foreign brands need to orient their innovative consumer engagement mechanisms towards local markets (Sheth, 2011).

### **1.3 Research aim and objectives**

**The aim of this study is to use Customer-Dominant Logic to investigate female fast fashion customer engagement in dialogic co-creation and value formation on a Chinese social media platform**

Specifically, three major issues (antecedents, activities, outcomes) of dialogic co-creation from the customer perspective are considered to explore and investigate customer engagement in value formation through information received and creative content-generated on the international fast fashion brand pages of the Chinese social networking platform, Sina Weibo. The following six research objectives help this study achieve the research aim.

**Research objectives:**

- 1. To review the literature on social media marketing in fast fashion and Chinese context, and to understand the Chinese fast fashion shoppers' social interactions on a Chinese social networking site**
- 2. To review the literature regarding customer-dominant logic and existing models of customer engagement in value formation in the social media environment by considering antecedents, activities and outcomes**
- 3. To identify, via netnographic study, the antecedents which drive customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities for customer value formation on a Chinese social networking site**
- 4. To identify, via netnographic study, the major types of dialogic co-creation activities that involve customer-brand interactions and customer-customer interactions for customer value formation on a Chinese social networking site**
- 5. To establish and test the relationships between the identified antecedent factors that motivate customers to engage in dialogic co-creation and the different types of dialogic co-creation activities on a Chinese social networking site**
- 6. To establish and examine the relationships regarding customer engagement in major types of dialogic co-creation activities and the outcomes in terms of perceived customer benefits and customer purchase intention**
- 7. To extend the understandings of Customer-Dominant Logic by empirically establishing a more comprehensive set of attributes in a research context**

#### **1.4 Overview of research methods**

The research methods selected in this study are based on the philosophical belief of epistemology, which emphasise the researcher's view in terms of what constitutes the accepted knowledge in the reality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Furthermore, the research philosophy of post-positivism is selected to guide the data collection process. Post-positivism emphasises the importance of bringing theory and practice together (Ryan, 2006). Post-positivism allows researchers to apply mixed methods including exploratory qualitative methods and subsequent quantitative methods to obtain a complete picture of the phenomenon (Hackley, 2003).

According to post-positivism, the empirical research was conducted in two stages. First, a qualitative study, netnography (Kozinets, 2012), is chosen to gain an understanding of customers' who engage in the brand-generated activities of international fast fashion and who interact with peers and brands on the Chinese social networking platform, Sina Weibo. This approach is particularly appropriate in the first phase of this study, as there is currently a lack of understanding of the phenomenon of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo. This phenomenon therefore needs to be explored in more depth. Specifically, by observing selected international fast fashion brand pages on Sina Weibo and by analysing customers' comments and conversations on these pages, this study aims (1), to understand customer logics that motivate them to engage in dialogic co-creation with brands and other customers on Sina Weibo, (2) to develop a template of major types of customer logics that reflect their motivations towards engaging in dialogic co-creation on Sina Weibo, (3) to identify the main topics of dialogic co-creation activities that customers prefer to engage in on Sina Weibo, (4) to develop a template of specific components for the different types of dialogic co-creation activities that are facilitated by international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo.

In addition to netnographic study, a quantitative method has been considered in marketing communication and consumer behaviour research in the last decade. This method is used to confirm the findings of a literature review and qualitative study (Royo-Vela and Casamassima, 2010; Chan and Li, 2010; Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Gebauer *et al.*, 2013; Park and Kim, 2014). Therefore, a self-administrated online survey is subsequently conducted to test the survey constructs identified from the literature review and to confirm the conceptual framework used to understand the relationships between customer logics and customer engagement in dialogic co-creation, dialogic co-creation engagement and the outcomes. The precise aims of second stage are, (1) to test the influence of customer logics considered as antecedent factors of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation, and (2) to examine the impact of different dialogic co-creation activities on customers' perceived benefit and purchase intention.

#### **1.4.1 Data collection approaches**

In terms of the netnographic study, employing purposive sampling, as suggested by Kozinets (2012), the objects for this phase include the brand-generated posts, brand-generated comments and customer-generated comments from these posts on selected international fast fashion brands Sina Weibo. The timeframe used to collect the netnographic data was between 1 September of 2016 and 1 March of 2017. This six-month period covers the important Chinese festivals that may inspire special social media marketing activities facilitated by brands on Sina Weibo. It includes the National Holiday (1 October to 7 October), Single Day (11 November, a Chinese online shopping day that is like Black Friday), Double Twelve Day (12 December is another online shopping day), Christmas (25 December), New Year holidays (1 January to 3 January) and the Chinese spring festival. Therefore, 300 hot posts from three international fast fashion brands (Uniqlo, Zara and H&M) and 100 hot posts from each brand were collected during the specified timeframe. The system automatically lists the top-100 hot posts (i.e., posts that obtained the most

comments during the specific period on the brand's homepage). Thus, the 300 hot posts collected from the three selected brands indicate the popularity of the dialogic co-creation activities that customers engage in. Furthermore, 3,000 user-generated comments and brand-generated comments relating to these posts were also collected, as were the top 10 comments from each collected brand posts. The data collection includes direct screen captures of textual and graphical posts from the selected international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo as well as observed and copied customer-generated comments from the brand's posts.

Towards the second stage, before the final version of online survey was released, a pre-test was conducted during June of 2017 among the students and experts from the University of Manchester. 30 Chinese postgraduate students, 10 Chinese PhD students and five experts who focus on marketing and consumer behaviour research were consulted to ensure the accuracy of the contents and the wording of the questionnaire. Next, an invitation for the online survey with the survey link was posted on the researcher's Sina Weibo homepage. The invitation was also attached under several brand posts from selected international fast fashion brands (Uniqlo, H&M, and ZARA). As a pilot test is required to evaluate the reliability of the measurement items and to conduct the exploratory factor analysis, purposive and snowball sampling strategies were used to contact 76 target respondents from 1 August, 2017, to 31 August, 2017. The survey respondents were mainland Chinese, female, fast fashion customers between the ages of 25 and 34. Second, they follow one of the selected international fast fashion brands (Zara, H&M and Uniqlo) on Sina Weibo. Third, they have experience interacting with fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo and are willing to share their experiences. 60 valid surveys were collected at this stage. Subsequently, the same sampling strategies were used to collect 400 valid responses from 1 September to 31 December, 2017. Finally, 496 surveys were received, of which 401 are valid responses.

#### **1.4.2 Data analytical approaches**

The netnographic data (300 brand-generated posts and 3,000 related brand or customer-generated comments) was analysed by the method of template analysis (Brooks and King, 2014; Brooks *et al.*, 2015). The template analysis aimed to develop the themes via hierarchical coding and paralleled coding of the textual data (Brooks and King, 2014). First, using preliminary coding, the collected 300 brand-generated hot posts were classified based on literature review into different categories according to the topic of each dialogic co-creation activity. This coding strategy was also used to address the 3,000 comments, as these comments may reveal the customer logics of engaging in dialogic co-creation. Second, the contents of each brand-generated post were analysed to identify the sub-topic of the dialogic co-creation activities. For instance, the contents of the organic e-WOM include information regarding product information (prices, quality and variety), online/physical store shopping experiences (transaction, delivery and service) and the brand's notoriety. The same method is used to deal with the 3,000 selected comments in order to understand and identify the variety of antecedent factors that influence customers to engage in dialogic co-creation on Sina Weibo. The initial template that developed from the literature review was revised and refined during

conducting the template analysis. Finally, after the netnographic data analysis, a new template was developed to conclude the topics and sub-topics of the popular dialogic co-creation activities of customers engaging in Chinese SNS, Sina Weibo, as well as the antecedent factors and sub-factors that influence customer engaging in these activities.

In terms of the quantitative data, the SPSS 23.0 and SPSS-AMOS 23.0 software were both employed to analyse the quantitative data. the structural equation modelling (SEM) technique was chosen to rigorously test a set of hypotheses about the relationships among the survey constructs. Prior to developing the SEM, three types of data analysis were conducted to construct a final structural path diagram that confirms the hypothesised relationships between antecedent factors and customer engagement in different dialogic co-creation activities, customer engaging in dialogic co-creation and its outcomes. First, exploration data analysis (EDA) was used to check the normality of the original data, including the respondent rate and the missing data. Second, exploration factor analysis (EFA) was used in next step to identify the underlying measurement items in the data set and to reduce the less-relevant items. Based on the results of the EFA, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted as the last step to confirm the relationships between the survey constructs and to gain the robust measurement model.

## **1.5 Structure of thesis**

The current thesis is presented in ten chapters. The first chapter begins with a basic introduction to the research motivation, research background, research aim and objectives. It also offers a brief discussion of the research methods regarding data collection and data analysis.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 provide a review of the literature in terms of social media marketing, C-D logic, and customer engagement in value formation on social networking platforms. Chapter 2 illustrates the concept of social media marketing and its application in the fashion context. Chapter 2 also exhibits the application of social media marketing on Chinese social networking platforms and discusses the Chinese fashion shoppers' online social behaviours regarding engaging in a variety of interactive and communicational activities. Based on this review, a research gap is identified, which requires the researcher to focus on the customer's perspective to understand customer engagement behaviour with respect to a series of social media marketing activities on the distinctive Chinese social networking platform.

Chapter 3 reviews the marketing theory of customer-dominant logic and the existing models of customer engagement in the value-formation process. The C-D logic considers customer logic as an antecedent factor that can be used to evaluate customer motivations towards engaging in value formation. It also emphasises the value-formation activities embedded in customers' daily lives and social groups, and it considers the outcomes of these activities. Chapter 3 also identifies research gaps based on previous models and thereby justifies the building of a new research



framework that can explain customer engagement in the social networking environment from a customer's perspective.

Chapter 4 develops the conceptual framework of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation for value formation on social networking sites. It discusses and defines the survey constructs with respect to customer logic (consumer expertise and social expertise), dialogic co-creation activities (organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertainment and remuneration), customer received benefits (utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal benefits) and customer purchase intention.

Chapter 5 establishes and hypothesises the relationships between customer logics and customer engagement in dialogic co-creation; different types of dialogic co-creation activities and the outcomes of customer engaging in these activities. In terms of customer logics, it proposes that the antecedent factor of consumer expertise has positive effect on customer engaging in organic e-WOM and amplified e-WOM. Moreover, the antecedent factor of social expertise has positive influence on customer engaging in organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertaining and remunerative activities. In addition, it hypothesises that the different type of dialogic co-creation activities (organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertainment, remuneration) have positive effect on perceiving customer benefits and influencing customer purchase intention.

Chapter 6 discusses the research philosophy, research paradigm and research methods that applied in this study. First of all, the representative research philosophical stances including ontology, epistemology and axiology and the major philosophical paradigms including the positivism, constructivism interpretivism and pragmatism are introduced and discussed. Then it justifies that this study holds epistemological pragmatist viewpoint to design the research methods. The pragmatist viewpoint allows researcher to design mixed research methods to address a set of different research questions (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). The data collection process and data analysis methods of qualitative (netnographic) and quantitative (online survey) studies are outlined precisely in this chapter as well.

Chapter 7 presents the findings of the qualitative netnographic study and the two developed-templates based on the findings. The first template identifies the antecedent factors that reflect customer logic to drive Chinese customers engaging in the dialogic co-creation activities with international fast fashion brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. In addition to the consumer expertise and social expertise, there are other factors and sub-factors that influence on customer engagement. The second template concludes the major types and sub-topics of dialogic co-creation activities that Chinese fast fashion shoppers prefer to engage in on Sina Weibo.

Chapter 8 elaborately outlines the process of data analysis and results in quantitative study (the main survey). The conceptual model that established based on literature review (chapter 5) and the proposed relationships between the survey constructs are tested through structural equation modelling. First, the data preparation and

data normality and reliability test of the main survey are demonstrated. Then, the demographic profile of the main survey is presented. Subsequently, both EFA and CFA are conducted to receive a rigorous and precise factorial structure. In addition, the construct reliability and validity test are conducted to ensure the validity of the remained constructs. Based on the results of EFA and CFA in main survey study, the structural path model is presented. Finally, a set of hypotheses are tested and the potential relationships between the constructs are identified in re-modified model.

Chapter 9 integrates the whole research findings towards literature review, qualitative study and quantitative study and provides the detailed discussions based on each piece of research objective. Subsequently, an overall conceptual model combined qualitative and quantitative findings is presented.

Chapter 10 draws a conclusion of the present study and points out the contributions towards knowledge, methodology and practice. Based on the contributions, it discusses the theoretical and practical implications. In addition, it also outlines the limitations and recommendations for the future study.

## Chapter 2 Social Media Marketing in Fashion and Chinese Context

### 2.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to gain an understanding of the concept of social media marketing and its applications in fashion and Chinese context. First, it will review the general concept of social media marketing (in Section 2.2). Social media marketing is considered as a more effective way for brands to promote products and services, to maintain public relations and to facilitate customer communicational activities compared to the marketing strategies applied via traditional channels (Castronovo and Huang, 2012; Constantinides *et al.*, 2010). Among these functions, marketing communication is one of the essential dimension for social media marketing (Nair and Subramaniam, 2012), as it allows brands to interact with customers on a personal level. It enables brands to obtain almost inexhaustible views from their customers in terms of their products and services (Constantinides *et al.*, 2010). Beyond illustrating the definition of social media marketing, this section will discuss the specific characteristics and applications of social media marketing towards fashion brands.

Second, it will further explore the social media marketing applied in Chinese online environment (in Section 2.3). Felix *et al.* (2016) suggest that according to different markets and customers, it requires brands to develop the distinctive social media marketing strategies, which can satisfy their customers' needs. Erkan and Evans (2016) demonstrate that brands are keen to engage in social networking platforms nowadays, as they want to find out what are the interesting topics that customers talking about. Then, they will generate the interesting topics to facilitate the next round of customer interactions. However, it is also a challenge for brands to select the appropriate and meaningful contents if they do not understand the Chinese customers' preferences on social media (Luo *et al.*, 2015).

Accordingly, the next section (Section 2.3) will provide an understanding of Chinese fashion shoppers' online social behaviours. Social media has altered fashion shoppers' consumption habits by offering them with the new channels of searching information, buying products and assessing the purchase experiences (Dimitriu and Guesalaga, 2017). Specially, the Chinese fashion shoppers, who are not only passive followers on social media, but also are the active content-producers and consumers. They rely on the information from Chinese social media rather than from official brand websites. The development of social media and the distinctive Chinese customers' consumption habits encourage scholars to put efforts on studying social media marketing and understanding Chinese fashion shoppers online social behaviours (Zhu and Chen, 2015), in order to provide valuable implications for fashion brands and social media marketers (Kim and Ko, 2012; Shen and Bissell, 2013; Park and Kim, 2015).

Lastly, a conclusion will be drawn based on above sections, followed by the justification of further exploration from customer perspective to understand customer engagement in social media marketing activities (Section 2.4).

## **2.2 General concept of social media marketing**

Social media marketing is deemed as an instrument that can integrate the traditional marketing functions such as product promotion, advertising on a new engaging media by facilitating different activities and generating various contents on social media (Malthouse *et al.*, 2013; Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Ashley and Tuten, 2015). Some scholars also consider social media marketing as an influential marketing approach, which can diffuse information, share contents, build relationship and stick with customers (Cheung and Lee, 2010; Kim and Ko, 2012; Chang *et al.*, 2015). Marketing via social media is more powerful compared to previous marketing channels such as magazines, radio and TV, as it transforms the traditional single-way communication into multi-way communication (Berthon *et al.*, 2012). Specifically, the brand-generated messages on social networks can induce customers' enthusiastic communication and even change their attitudes and influence on their purchase-decision making (Constantinides 2014; Godey *et al.*, 2016).

However, although social media marketing enables companies and brands spread messages easily and have conversations with customers without time and geographical restriction, it requires marketers to put efforts on studying which type of contents can attract more online users to like and comment on the brand-generated posts actively and share brand information spontaneously with their friends and peers (Chang *et al.*, 2015). Receiving customer engagement and positive interactions in social media marketing activities are deemed as a paramount outcome to evaluate whether the brand gain success in social media environment. Therefore, increasing number of marketing researches focus on how to engage customer in brands' social media marketing activities (e.g., Wei *et al.*, 2015; Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Tafesse 2016; Islam and Rahman, 2016). Other scholars have demonstrated the essential role of brands to facilitate marketing communication strategies from different aspects and involve customers in social media marketing activities (e.g., Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Habibi *et al.*, 2014; Yang *et al.*, 2016). Specifically, Yang *et al.*, (2016) investigate the effect of three forms of customer engagement (responsiveness, affiliation and conversation) regarding the search engine advertising. on social networking platforms. Hollebeek *et al.* (2014) validate the positive influence of three dimensions of customer engagement (activation, affection and cognitive processing) on customer-brand relationship. Additionally, there are other forms of customer engagement have been studied including implementing electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) (e.g., Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014; Severi *et al.*, 2014; Erkan and Evans, 2016b); customer engagement on virtual brand communities (Habibi *et al.*, 2014; Luo *et al.*, 2015; Verhagen *et al.*, 2015); developing brand pages on social networks (e.g., De Vries *et al.*, 2012; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; Luarn *et al.*, 2015). Despite these general forms of brand and customer engagement on social media, the following sub-sections will review the marketing communication strategies that designed and facilitated by fashion brands and retailers.

### **2.2.1 Characteristics of social media marketing in fashion context**

The fashion brands and retailers both in high street and luxury sectors have been recognised as the high involvement context in networking, tweeting and blogging on social media (Kim and Ko, 2012; Ko and Megehee, 2012; Wolny and Mueller, 2013). Facilitating social media marketing (SMM) activities become vital for brands to improve their current performance compared to their counterparts (Chan and Guillet, 2011). It is suggested that there are five critical factors (Relate, Attract, Engage, Retain and Learn), which can lead to the success of social media marketing in the Kierzkowski *et al.* (1996) SMM framework. However, compared to the general social media marketing strategies implemented in other business contexts, there are particular characteristics of SMM that applied in fashion context.

First, fashion brands on social media usually personify as a real person who has unique characteristics to attract users to follow them (Sheth and Kim, 2018). Fashion brands are no longer playing the role as the official accounts to release product information but deemed as customer's reference group member to influence customer's attitudes and consumption preferences (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). From one side, fashion brands intensively interact with their customers to deliver the brand-generated contents. From another sides, fashion brands show their caring for customers which indicates that they consider customers as friends.

In addition, fashion brands usually utilise different ways to involve customers in discussion (Wolny and Mueller, 2013). Kasabov *et al.*, (2016) claim that customers are more positively towards the information shared by their friends and peers or their idols than the information received passively from official channels. Particularly, e-WOM has been identified as one of the most important social media marketing activities that fashion brands need to facilitate among their customers (Kim and Ko, 2012; Halvorsen *et al.*, 2013). As customers are desire for the valuable and reliable product information on social media (Chu and Kim, 2011), they consider the product description from an individual customer is more trustworthy. Moreover, the user-generated contents incline to be immensely persuasive, as customers thought people who post the reviews are based on their real experience (Wolny and Mueller, 2013). However, as increasing number of social media users are employed by the fashion brands to write the positive reviews on social networking platforms, when readers realise that the content-generated by the customers who have been paid, they may lose their trust on this brand as well as the information from this brand page on social networking sites (Munzel, 2016).

Furthermore, the visual contents, in particular the brand-related images and videos, have been emphasised by luxury brands on social media, since it generates an aesthetic effect to catch customer's eyes (Halvorsen *et al.*, 2013) and provides hedonic value to entertain their customers (Tynan *et al.*, 2010). Currently, the explosive rise of visual media platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram have been applied by the fashion brands (Kontu and Vecchi, 2014). The global fast fashion

brands such as H&M, Topshop, Forever21 have gained the most successful on these visual social media platforms (Mintel, 2017).

Apart from these characteristics of SMM towards fashion brands, Kim and Ko (2012) also examine the effect of social media marketing activities that facilitated by luxury fashion brands on customer equity. The results showed that the activities of e-WOM, interaction and entertainment gain higher attention by customers compared to the topics of trendiness and customisation. Based on this review, it concludes that the characteristics of SMM strategies towards fashion context focus on intensive interacting with customers by different forms to fulfil customers' physical and mental needs.

However, most of the recent studies regarding fashion marketing focus on the context of luxury brands (Kim and Ko, 2012; Ko and Mepehee, 2012; Chu *et al.*, 2013; Godey *et al.*, 2016; Ko *et al.*, 2016). Compared to luxury fashion, fast fashion reflects the emerging and fashionable trend effectively, which requires brands to update their product information frequently on social media (Rickman and Cosenza, 2007; Barnes, 2013). Furthermore, nowadays, fast fashion retailers pay more attention on product's sustainability than previously (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012), which may reflect on their generated social contents on social media (Jang *et al.*, 2012). Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) indicate that the green fashion knowledge will be both co-produced and co-consumed between the brand and customers on online community, so that to improve customer's environmental consciousness. In addition, the fast fashion consumption still enjoy highly growth in last 10 years (Jang *et al.*, 2012; Gabrielli *et al.*, 2013), especially in Chinese fashion market (Chinese Fashion Industry, 2014). Therefore, the different attributes of fast fashion require scholars to study the social media marketing strategies suit to this business context. This thesis will focus on the business context of fast fashion, which can provide implications for fast fashion brands regarding how to effectively generate the social contents and attract more customers to get involved in discussion and active interaction.

### **2.2.2 Application of social media marketing in fashion context**

According to the existing studies (Heinonen, 2011; Kim and Ko, 2012; Kulmala *et al.*, 2013; Ashley and Tuten, 2015), one of the most useful application of social media marketing towards fashion brands is to set up a customer-involved brand page on social networking platforms. Despite the developing trend towards visual social media, social networking sites remain not only the most established and developed online communication platforms but also the most extensively used by fashion brands and online fashion shoppers (Mohammadpour *et al.*, 2014). For instance, the well-known international fast fashion brands, such as Zara and H&M, regularly release new products' information and broadcast the fashion trend on different social networking channels daily (Chang and Fan, 2017). A consumer research released by DEI Worldwide (2014) claims that more than 70% of fashion customers have searched and browsed the fashion product information from a brand page on different social networking platforms; 45% of the respondents said they have engaged in e-WOM on different brand pages on social network platforms; 60% of

these respondents said they would pass the useful product information to their friends online; and nearly 50% of these customers admitted that the purchase decisions they made are based on the information from the brand pages they browsed on social media.

Tafesse (2015) mention that the brand page on social networking sites considered as an interactive and dedicated virtual platform that enable brands to achieve the purpose of marketing communication. Through the multiple interactional ways including like, comment, share or drop a private message to a brand on its brand page, can co-create an instant customer experience on social networks (Tafesse, 2016). Moreover, online users who browse the brand pages on social networking platforms not only focus on the regular information released by the brands but also are interested in reading other customer's comments, discussions and product reviews (Zaglia, 2013).

In terms of a brand page on social networking platforms, the major and important element is the brand-generated posts, which influence on the level and frequency of customer engagement and interaction with the fashion brands (Gensler *et al.*, 2013). Chang and Fan (2017) emphasise that the appealing and sharable posts that generated by the fashion brands on social media not only can show their brand image but also encourage customers to interact with brands. Some empirical studies have proved that through the brand posts on social media can strengthen brand-customer relationship (Gensler *et al.*, 2013); enhance customers' brand awareness (Taecharungroj, 2016); broadcast brand stories and fashion knowledge (Kim *et al.*, 2015); and simulate customers' purchase intention (Kim and Ko, 2012). The contents of brand post can be categorised into different themes in terms of brand and customers' interactions (Kim *et al.*, 2015). However, most of the customers only regularly check out the brand posts but not participate in the interaction if they thought this is not an interesting topic for them (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). In order to deal with customers' indifference and obtain attention on the brand posts, marketers need to generate the contents that can elicit strong emotions for customers (Chen *et al.*, 2015; Lee *et al.*, 2012a). Therefore, in addition to facilitate interaction with customers on social media, fashion brands need to create interesting social media marketing activities and various themes to attract customers (Rishika *et al.*, 2013; Alves *et al.*, 2016).

According to the literature review, most of the studies related to identifying the different topics and themes of social media marketing activities have focused on the western social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest) (Kim and Ko, 2012; Godey *et al.*, 2016; Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Felix *et al.*, 2017; Akar and Topçu, 2011). As the western social media platforms have been banned on mainland China. In order to provide valuable implications for international fast fashion brands to engage on Chinese social media platforms. It requires scholars to put efforts on understanding the characteristics of Chinese social media. In addition, it also requires scholars to explore and identify the social media marketing activities that are popular among Chinese fast fashion shoppers on Chinese social media and the

social media marketing strategies that are appropriate to be applied on this landscape.

### **2.3 Social media marketing applied on Chinese social media**

In China, with the development of Web 3.0, the application of social media marketing not only yields an interactive effect on connecting customers, but also plays an important role in assisting customer to purchase product directly through the social networking platforms like Sina Weibo (Fotiadis and Stylos, 2017; Zhang *et al.*, 2016). Specifically, in order to enter the Chinese online retailing market, both domestic and global fashion brands have launched their online stores on Chinese popular E-commerce platform, Tmall, to provide a convenient online shopping channel for Chinese fashion shoppers (FUNG BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE, 2016). Sina Weibo have collaborated with the E-commerce sites such as Taobao and Tmall since 2013, when customers see the items from the brand pages on Sina Weibo, they can directly click the button to purchase it online (Li *et al.*, 2013). Andzulis *et al.* (2012) indicate that social networking sites can integrate the marketing channel and sales channel in some cases in future. Therefore, this unique function on social networking platform that connect to the actual purchase process will influence on brand's online retailing and future sales (Renko and Druzijanic, 2014).

Due to this advantage on Sina Weibo, it brings extra value for companies. Accordingly, an increasing number of brands are seeking their opportunities to engage with Chinese customers on Sina Weibo (McKinsey, 2012). However, companies, especially the foreign brands that eager to utilise Chinese social media to enter Chinese online retailing market should understand the distinctive online landscape and different types of Chinese online users' preferences (Gao and Feng, 2016). Based on McKinsey marketing report (2012), there are three major challenges that foreign companies are struggling for engaging in Chinese social media environment. First, foreign marketers are not familiar with the variety of Chinese social media channels and lack of management skills to connect to their target customers in this dynamic online environment. For instance, Sina Weibo users tend to be present on online public environment by posting product reviews, sharing their opinions towards latest products and services, and criticising the public issues, while Wechat (an another Chinese social networking platform) users prefer sharing their daily life privately without exposing to public. Second, the traditional social media marketing strategies are not suitable to attract Chinese customers. Although an influential social media campaign will enhance the customer's brand awareness and increase customer's intention to purchase this brand (Chung *et al.*, 2016; Kumar *et al.*, 2010), Chinese customers are always skeptical towards the information from formal authority and organisation. The statistic from McKinsey consumer survey (2012) report that 66% of Chinese consumers claim they follow the suggestions and recommendations from the opinion leaders on social media when they purchase a product. Third, the social media knowledge and marketing strategies generated from existing research are not specific and feasible towards Chinese social media landscape (Chiu and Silverman, 2012).



### 2.3.1 Microblogging of Sina Weibo

Among variety types of Chinese social media channels, microblogs are one of the leading social networking sties that utilised by a lot of Chinese online users, as it allows users to express their opinions freely and publically in online environment (Li and Du, 2014; Duan and Dholakia, 2015). Compared to other microblogging services (e.g., Sohu, Tencent), Sina Weibo, a hybrid of western social media Facebook and Twitter, enjoys the most prevailing in China, which attracts 340 million active users monthly (China Daily, 2017). The active users' level of Sina Weibo is higher than Twitter. Moreover, there are 100 million pieces of weibo posts generated and released every day (China Daily, 2017). Sina Weibo has similar functions to Twitter (See Figure 2.1).

Basically, it is strict in the word count of the post, which only allows users to generate 140 characters in each post. In terms of the Sina Weibo post, the contents can include texts, pictures, music, video, graphical emotions and website links (Liang *et al.*, 2011). If users want special people to read their post, they can use the function of "@username" to mention those users in their post. If users want to join the public discussion, they can hashtag the topic in their post. Duan and Dholakia, (2015) point out that there are 65% of the posts have been reposted by Sina Weibo users, while only 35% of the posts on Twitter have been shared. Zhang and Pentina (2012) indicate Chinese online users prefer learning and gaining information through the reposts. Moreover, there are verified users on Sina Weibo, who usually are the celebrities, organisations or opinion leaders of certain industry. If the user's account got the official approval, there is a "V" sign on their profile.

These characteristics of Sina Weibo allow it to be considered as not only a social networking tool for ordinary users but also a marketing tool for brands and companies (Guo and Feng, 2016). Some marketing scholars try to understand the users' behaviours on Sina Weibo. For instance, Chen *et al.* (2013) recognise that Sina Weibo users prefer to follow people who are the same or higher social level than themselves, but less likely to pay attention to the users who are at lower social level. Contrarily, the same kind of user's behaviour did not find in Twitter's users. Hu *et al.*, (2012) reveal that the posting behaviours are affected by Sina Weibo users' identity factors. For example, user's followers on Sina Weibo mostly are his/her friends who live in the same city, and who are admired by him/her in real life. Later, Ma *et al.*, (2017) investigate the selfie takers' sharing behaviours on Sina Weibo and provide a unique implication for marketers to develop communication strategies towards Chinese consumers. Kim *et al.*, (2017) evaluate the quality of user-generate contents in terms of tourist information on Sina Weibo. Duan and Dholakia (2015) explore the influence of Sina Weibo posts on reshaping Chinese consumers' value. However, even though fashion is recognised as one of the hot topic on Sina Weibo (Li *et al.*, 2016), very few of the previous study has focused on online users' behaviours towards interaction with fashion brands on Sina Weibo, which is the focus of this thesis.

Figure 2.1: A screenshot of user's home page on Sina Weibo



Source: WCG World, 2014

### 2.3.2 Application of social media marketing on Sina Weibo

Due to the popularity of Sina Weibo for Chinese fashion shoppers, brands are putting their efforts on connecting with Chinese customers who consider Sina Weibo as an important and reliable source of brand and product information (Zhang *et al.*, 2015). In terms of the survey findings from KPMG (2015), Sina Weibo is evaluated as giving the best performance, not only for local Chinese brands, but also for western fashion brands in contacting their target customers on this platform. The local fashion brands like Shanghai Tang, Vivienne Tang and Shang Xie and the foreign fast fashion brands like ZARA, H&M, TOPSHOP have already engaged in this platform. With a high application of Sina Weibo for Chinese social media users, this social networking site has become the core of the marketing communication channel for global fashion retailers and marketers to contact directly and speedily with their target Chinese consumers (Chinese Fashion Industry, 2014). More importantly, Sina Weibo allows the foreign brands who desire to enter the Chinese online retail market to spend relatively lower costs than using other traditional media (Gensler *et al.*, 2013; FUNG BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE, 2016).

The core element for fashion brands to facilitate social media marketing on Sina Weibo is to generate interesting and appropriate contents that including images, videos and links (Zhang *et al.*, 2015). Duan and Dholakia (2015) reveal that the multi-themes contents are the most popular contents that have received higher attention on Sina Weibo compared to the pure-text posts. Zhang *et al.*, (2012) found that the marketing topics such as product development, product promotion, customer

service and customer support are the important topics to attract follower's attention. Moreover, the contextual of the post is another vital factor on predicting popularity of the post. For instance, the skincare brand Clinique launched an entertaining drama series called Sufei's Diary on Sina Weibo, which have been viewed 21 million times by Sina Weibo users. The contextual of this drama was related to female's skincare, but it did not advertise the product directly in this video. In other words, Chinese customers prefer receiving brand information by an entertaining way, rather than by a commercial perspective.

According to McKinsey Research Report (2012), Clinique's brand popularity towards Chinese consumers have been increased 27% after this drama series broadcasted on Sina Weibo. Although Clinique has got success on Sina Weibo, there are some issues caused by other brands that should not be ignored. Wang (2016) mention that if a brand is involved in a crisis, this negative news can be spreaded among customers timely on social media. For instance, when a customer made a comment on H&M brand post on Sina Weibo to complain that she saw a mouse in H&M's physical store. After this comment has been left in the post in few minutes, thousands of negative comments have been posted by other customers to complain about the service and product quality about this brand. In order to avoid the online brand crisis and generate positive effect from the social media marketing strategies, fashion marketers need to understand Sina Weibo users' and fashion shoppers' online social behaviours, so that can produce appropriate contents for their customers (Song *et al.*, 2012).

## **2.4 Chinese online fast fashion shoppers**

With the easy-to-buy function and the instant interaction function on Sina Weibo, Chinese online fast fashion shoppers are increasingly utilising this social networking platform and online shopping site to search their desired products, to communicate with brands, to receive advice from other shoppers, to make purchase decision, and to post product reviews (KPMG, 2014). In other word, online social shopping becomes a staple part of life for Chinese fast fashion customers. It emphasises that the social interactions with brands and other shoppers on SNSs become crucial during their online shopping process. Kang *et al.*, (2014) indicate that consumer's individual characteristics are the essential factor that influences on their online social behaviours. Dennis *et al.* (2010) confirm that the price-consciousness consumers who prefer buying lower price or discount products have higher engagement on SNSs, as they want to gain the sales information or make the purchase comparisons to ensure they spend the money worthily. However, there is another type of consumers who pursue well-known international brands, as they thought the better reputation of a brand represents the higher quality of its product. This type of consumers would like to hear from other online shoppers' opinions about a brand's reputation on SNSs (Kang *et al.*, 2014).

Moreover, the fashion-oriented consumers who enjoy buying trendy products would like to seek fashion leaders' opinions on SNSs and follow their suggestions on making purchase decisions (Mowen *et al.*, 2007). In addition, the hedonic-oriented

consumers who can gain a recreational shopping experience when they explore different shopping channels (both online and offline) would like to search fashion and brand information online and offline regularly (Kim and Eastin, 2011). Cowart and Goldsmith (2007) found that this type of consumers has higher frequency of online apparel shopping. They spend more time on social networking site and cost more money on online consumption. Kang *et al.*, (2014) delineate there is a type of consumers who always lack of confidence to make buying-decisions among the multiple of available choices. When consumers are unable to do analysis by themselves, they would like to seek opinions from their friends and other shoppers on SNSs. Based on others' product reviews, they can reduce the risk and confusion towards purchase-decision making. Dennis *et al.* (2010) hold the same view and they claim that the useful information on social networking sites encourages young female fashion shoppers to engage in this virtual social platform.

However, as not all the online shoppers are alike, the above discussions from the marketing scholars are not purely focusing on Chinese fast fashion shoppers. Chinese fast fashion shoppers have their distinct roles and behaviours towards engaging in SNSs. The following sub-sections will focus on exploring Chinese fast fashion shoppers' online social behaviours on Chinese SNSs.

#### **2.4.1 Active roles of Chinese fast fashion customers on Chinese SNSs**

It is important to identify the different roles that Chinese fast fashion shoppers are playing on Chinese social networking sites, so that the fashion brands can target their customers and facilitate appropriate social media marketing strategies towards different segments' customers (Labrecque, 2014; Chang *et al.*, 2015). According to McKinsey Research Report (2012), there are five major roles that Chinese fast fashion customers are acting on Chinese SNSs. They are social enthusiasts, resenders, readers, opinionated users and inactive users respectively.

The first type of users act as social enthusiasts who devote a large portion of their leisure time on maintaining their social relations on SNSs. This segment of users accounts for 15% of total social networking users. They spend the most of time (approximately 69 minutes per day) on interacting and communicating with their friends on social networks compared to other types of consumers (46 minutes per day for the overall average). 68% of social enthusiasts said they update their daily lives on SNSs, while averagely 41% of the other types of social networking users do the same. Social enthusiasts also state that they really care about the number of followers they got on SNSs and they emphasise that their friends on SNSs are considered as the important reference groups to them. The report (McKinsey, 2012) also point out this type of consumers usually are brand's supporters. They are willing to search and learn about the brands and products on SNSs. They are also willing to share their recent purchase reviews with their friends on SNSs. In terms of demographic information, this type of users is majorly living in Tier 1 and they have higher educational level and younger than the average users

The second role of consumers is called resenders, which also accounts for 15% of total social networking users (McKinsey, 2012). The main characteristic of this segment users is they actively comment and repost brand's or others' posts but do not generate original contents on SNSs. This type of consumers mention that they would like to promote themselves and attract more followers through reposting funny and interesting posts. They are recognised as brand's friends, as 69% of resenders said they will buy the products when they see the posts on social networking sites every month. The resenders' purchase intention is higher than the social enthusiasts. However, most of this type users come from lower tier cities and have lower incomes and lower educational level compared to social enthusiasts.

The third kind of consumers is identified as general readers, which occupies the majority of the total respondents (nearly 50%) (McKinsey, 2012). This type of consumers is very less to engage in posting, commenting or reposting but more usually to read the posts generated by others on SNSs. Although they spend averagely 55 minutes on social media, typically they just read the posts from a number of their following on microblogs. They are also recognised as the brand-friendly users as they hold neutral attitude towards brand's advertising on social media and they would like to follow brand's page like other segments' consumers. However, they are more easily to be influenced by fashion bloggers when these bloggers positively talk about the product on SNSs.

The fourth type of consumers are opinionated users on SNSs, which occupies about 14% of total participants on SNSs (McKinsey, 2012). This type of consumers may become a brand's enemy if they express the negative opinions towards a brand and a product. Moreover, they do not like to see the brand-related advertisements on SNSs. They would post the unsatisfied shopping experiences on SNSs and suggest other consumers to boycott this brand either. This type of consumers spends less on online social shopping than other segments' consumers. The last type of consumers are the inactive users who do not follow fashion brands on SNSs and do not discuss fashion-related topic in a positive way on SNSs.

Bases on this customer segmentation, it is proposed that the active roles of Chinese fast fashion consumers may be the social enthusiasts, resenders and opinionated users. Fashion brands still need to explore how customers' online social behaviours influence on customers' online consumption habits.

#### **2.4.2 Chinese fast fashion customers' social behaviours on Chinese SNSs**

Relevant literature indicates that the social interactions on SNSs can influence Chinese customers' online shopping behaviour (Wang *et al.*, 2012; Yan *et al.*, 2016; Zhu *et al.*, 2016). Wang *et al.*, (2012) found that Chinese online shoppers would like to talk about their consumption experiences with their peers on SNSs. In addition, other users-generated product reviews greatly impact on their attitudes and purchase intention toward products and services. Specifically, the influence of social interactions on customer attitudes and purchase decision-making through three processes including modelling, reinforcement and peer interaction (Lueg and Finney,

2007). At the beginning, when a peer from the customer's reference group has bought a product from a certain brand, this situation constitutes a modelling process to influence the customer to purchase from the same brand or even buy the same product. Furthermore, peer pressure also reinforces customer's intention to purchase the same product, as they do not want to be excluded by their reference group. Finally, the peer communications, discussions and suggestions related to the positive product review on SNSs exert further impact on customer buying decision-making. In summary, according to this influence process, customer from knowing about the brand and product to adopting the new product is through the peer interaction. The more frequent of online social interaction and discussion with their peers about the shopping topic, the higher intention for customers to purchase the product (Wang *et al.*, 2012).

However, Cheung *et al.*, (2009) mention that Chinese customers pay more attention to other users-generated product reviews on social media. Based on the figures they provided, 91% of respondents from a survey said they will check the online reviews or other users-generated contents on social media before buying a new product or service. 46% of respondents said other customers' comments will directly influence on their purchase decision-making. Yan *et al.*, (2016) argue that customer will reduce their purchase anxiety if they read numerous of user-generated reviews toward that product, as they thought this item has been purchased by many other consumers, they do not want to have the same item.

Moreover, except for social interactions with peers and other customers, communication with opinion leader is also an important dimension of customer online social interaction (Chu and Choi, 2011). They explain that opinion leadership reflects an individual online user's ability and willingness to share information. In a fashion context, Shephard *et al.*, (2014) illustrate that a fashion opinion leader is considered as fashion information spreaders, fashion product narrator, as well as customers' helpful friends. Fashion opinion leader aims to spread fashion awareness to the ordinary customers (who are not always focus on fashion brands and products) and to contribute to the product information diffusion. They usually are relied by consumers who would like to follow the latest fashion trend early.

In addition, Chinese customers are not only satisfied with gaining product information through the social interactions on SNSs, but also desire for co-creating more benefits with brands through engaging in a variety of social media activities (Luo *et al.*, 2015; Yang and Li, 2016). Initially, Schau *et al.*, (2009) systematically categorise four themes including social networking, online brand community engagement, brand impression management and brand use to co-create value between brand and customers. They mention that through the co-creation process like information sharing, brand culture broadcasting, consumption assistance providing to effectively enhance customers understanding toward the brand. Later, Lee and van Dolen (2015) put forward to provide several innovative co-creation strategies that consumers would like to participate in, including providing co-design online platforms, utilising customers' creative ideas towards product innovation. Although these co-creation activities do not relate to fashion context, these

suggestions provide a new view to understand Chinese customers' online social behaviours. It also requires future research to consider from customer perspective and gain more valuable understandings towards customer engagement behaviour on social media marketing activities.

## **2.5 Summary**

Social media becomes essential in fashion marketing, as customers are interested in social interaction on digital platforms, especially engaging in a set of social media marketing activities that facilitated by fashion brands (Kontu and Vecchi, 2014). However, the large number of the Chinese fashion shoppers on social media also brings the new challenges for fashion brands to effectively initiate and manage customer engagement in social media marketing activities. Social media is empowering customers and redefine their innovative roles as the active value creators and co-creators of brand information (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011). For instance, on social networking platforms, customers search and exchange brand and product-related information, share their shopping experiences and product reviews, evaluate their perception of the brand and generate the fashion-related content on their own social media page (Davis *et al.*, 2014; Smith *et al.*, 2012). These phenomena are summarised as the customer value formation process by Gummerus, (2013) and Rihova *et al.*, (2013). They emphasise that customers are able to construct and amplify their own social experience on social media, while brands and retailers only serve as the value facilitator. Value formation in these circumstances can be deemed as controlled primarily by customers.

Furthermore, Chinese customers expect to gain responses to each comment they made on the brand post. Therefore, brands need to understand and develop the new process for engaging individual customers in the social interaction and communication to show their brand value and brand identity (Berthon *et al.*, 2012). Another problem that has been identified is, although this increasing customer empowerment can provide positive and important effect for brands, it can also generate negative word-of-mouth among customers (Gensler *et al.*, 2013). Berthon *et al.*, (2012) claim that the negative e-WOM can be spreaded quickly on social media and then seriously destroys the brand image, as customers tend to involve in such discussions and they believe in the contents generated by other customers rather than by the brands.

In this respect, there is an obvious knowledge gap in terms of a holistic understanding of customer engagement in social media marketing activities, and the process of creating and co-creating value for themselves. Most of the previous knowledge with regard to social media marketing applications is mainly focus on marketer's sphere. Therefore, it is required to develop an innovative model that exploit the marketing communication strategy from customer's perspective. In order to understand customers' engagement behaviours, it is necessary to understand customers' motivations and preferences towards engaging in marketing communication activities, so that brands can know what resources they can provide for their customers on social media. Therefore, it requires the future studies to apply

a marketing theory that stands on customer's situation to explore customers' online engagement behaviours. The next chapter will review the Customer-Dominant logic that applies in marketing communication, to provides a new perspective for brands to design their social media marketing activities.



## **Chapter 3 Customer-Dominant Logic of Marketing and existing models for customer value formation**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Based on last chapter's discussions, it assumes that customers are now playing a central role in marketing activities. Therefore, a rejuvenated marketing perspective called Customer-Dominant (C-D) Logic is needed to explore and understand customers' online engagement behaviours towards a set of social media marketing activities on social networking platforms. The central objective of this chapter is to present a comprehensive understanding of C-D logic towards marketing communication and to critically review the literature towards the existing model of customer engagement in value formation process.

C-D logic emphasises that customers play the central role in marketing practices. Heinonen and Strandvik (2015, p.472) propose that "understanding customers is commonly seen as a key aspect of business practice for firms to improve their performance in increasingly competitive markets. ". Applying C-D logic means shifting from the focus on how company integrates its own resources to offer products or services in the business and marketing activities to how customers utilise their relevant knowledge, previous experiences, and other competencies to engage in value formation process, then create the material and immaterial values that they need. More essentially, C-D logic is no longer limited to evaluate the customers' relationship with one targeted service provider, but rather taking a customers' centric point to investigate their interactions within customer ecosystem.

Along with C-D logic, the empowered customer has been recognised as the activity controller and value creator through resources integration process. It is common for them to collaborate and interact with firms and other customers to co-create and exaggerate the benefits (Gummerus 2013). Especially, the modern online communication technology such as social media (SM), social networking sites (SNSs) expand the range of channels for customers to obtain business-to-customer (B2C) and customer-to-customer (C2C) interactions simultaneously. Such mutual and co-creating communications among different actors defines as dialogic co-creation by Hsieh and Hsieh (2015). Hence, the value emerges when customers are engaging in conversational co-creation process on virtual platforms (Finne *et al.*, 2017).

The following sections in this chapter will discuss the theory of C-D logic from different aspects. The first section (Section 3.2) will analytically demonstrate the theoretical foundation of C-D logic, including its definition and key features in business and marketing practices; its development from traditional Good-Dominant logic and contemporary Service-Dominant logic; and its managerial challenges and implications for marketing researchers. The second section (Section 3.3) will review the current studies in terms of customer co-creation activities/experiences. It will also discuss the conceptual framework, dominant elements and research methods that applied from previous empirical studies in terms of customer value formation process. The last section (Section 3.4) will recognise the emergent research gap

arising with the proliferation of SNSs. Finally, it will justify the urgent call for implanting C-D logic to study the customer engagement in co-creation activities on SNSs.

### **3.2 Customer-Dominant Logic Approach: An Up-To-Date Marketing Paradigm**

Before introducing the C-D logic, it is necessary to firstly understand the term of 'dominant logic'. Prahalad and Bettis (1986, p.491) give a specific definition of 'dominant logic' as "a mind set or world view or conceptualisation of the business and the administrative tools to accomplish goals and make decisions in that business. It is stored as a shared cognitive map (or a set of schemas) among the dominant coalition". In other words, choosing a 'dominant logic' is to identify which viewpoint for firms to hold in implementing the business concept or model. Therefore, identifying the appropriate dominant logic should set as the first step for both academic study and business practice. Otherwise, adopting an improper dominant logic may result in generating incorrect research assumptions, establishing inappropriate theoretical framework, executing wrong research methods and interpreting misleading implications for marketing practitioners (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010, Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). However, different business and marketing perspectives have their own advantages and demerits, as each perspective has different focuses and applications (Strandvik *et al.*, 2014). Prahalad (2004) suggests that firms must incessantly consider and adjust the potential perspective, in order to understand the competitive and dynamic business environment. Moreover, the business managerial and marketing studies should provide a new and creative perspective to assist firms to cope with the current urgent challenge of customer empowerment.

Considering customers as central is one business managerial and marketing perspective, which has been introduced and discussed in recent conceptual papers (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010; Strandvik *et al.*, 2012; Heinonen *et al.*, 2013; Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). By applying the C-D logic approach, firms not only need to understand customers' logics but also need to put efforts on figuring out how to initiate their customers to create value through engaging in marketing activities (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). Heinonen *et al.*, (2013) also claim that firms must change the traditional view of provider-oriental to the new perspective of customer-orientation by involving services in customer's daily life. Strandvik *et al.*, (2012) illustrate that business should address the core issue of what practices they can design for customers that inspire their purchase intention, rather than consider how to improve the sales of the existing products or services. Moreover, firms need to discover what types of activities that customers want to engage to create value. Another point Heinonen *et al.*, (2010) underscore, companies should recognise the invisible values that can provide for customers rather than merely offer goods or services. In conclusion, the C-D logic approach underlines the importance of customer engagement in service experiences and activities. The new dominant logic from customer aspect will shed a light to develop an innovative paradigm for marketing.

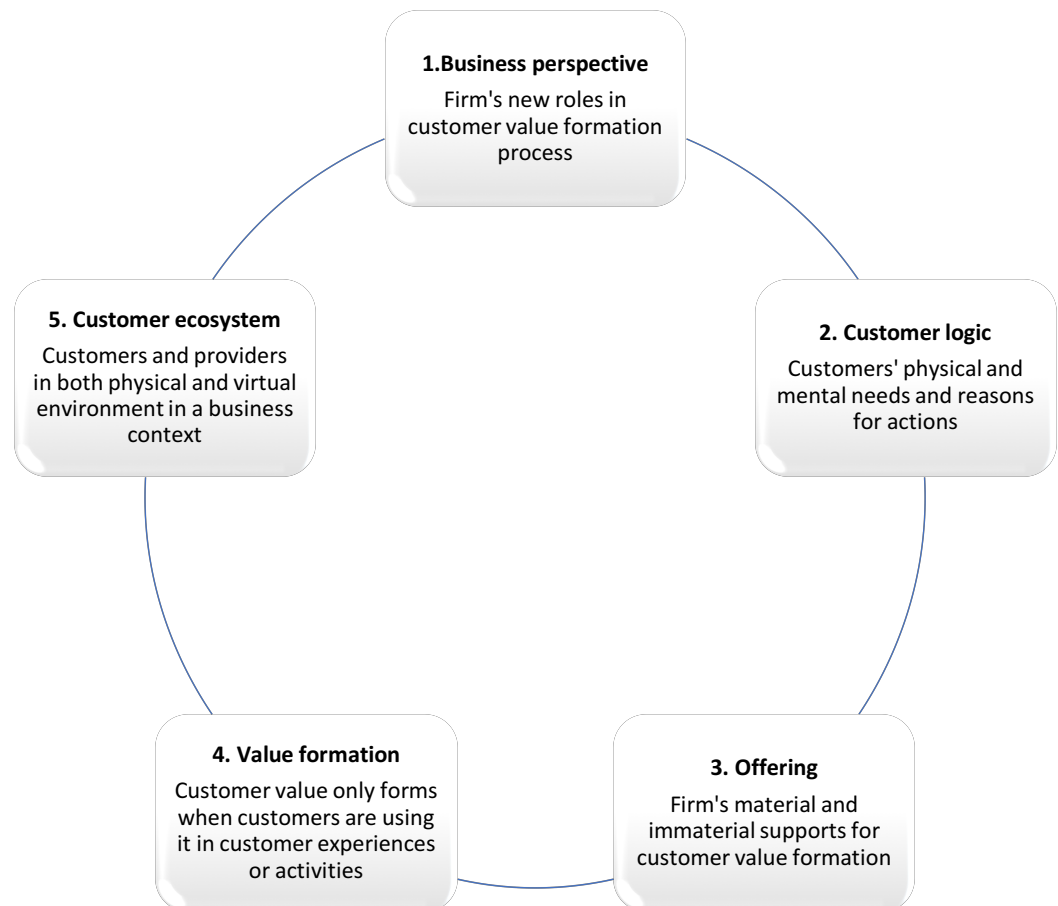
The approach of C-D logic has been studied and examined by several scholars. Cheung and To (2011) identify the essential role of customers in service experience and emphasise the customer engagement has strongly positive relationship with customer service performance. Moreover, Gustafsson *et al.*, (2012) examine whether the intensive communication between customers and firms can determine the success of new products or services. They found that the interaction activities are the most important element to influence on the sales of the innovative product and service. But they also imply that the co-creation contents may cause either positive or negative effect on generating customer value. Vega-Vazquez *et al.*, (2013) investigate co-creation process from customer perspective and detect the relationship between customer participation and value creation in service experience. The results prove that service companies should foster the customer engagement in co-creation activities. Cheung and To (2015) explore how customer engagement and customer motivational orientation influence on customer satisfaction and service quality received. The findings show that customer involvement serves as the driver in the customer value formation process and influences service's outcome. However, although these studies proved C-D logic provides a new approach for firms to involve their customers in the marketing context, it is essential to understand comprehensively why this logic suits to current marketing application. The following sub-sections will review the definition and characteristics of C-D logic, the development from previous dominant logics and the implications of C-D logic for future marketing implements and studies.

### **3.2.1 Definition and key characteristics**

C-D logic is introduced by Heinonen *et al.*, (2010) and aims to understand how customers command firms' offerings in their value creation experiences. Heinonen *et al.*, (2010, p.537) firstly define the notion of C-D logic as "a view that positions the customer in the centre, rather than the service, the service provider/producer or the interaction or the system". According to this definition, Voima *et al.*, (2010) point out that value is not always embedded in active creation process, but formulated in customer's dynamic and real life. However, Tynan *et al.*, (2014) argue that based on C-D logic, value can be ultimately acquired by customers through the interactions between customer-to-customer and customer-to-business.

In order to gain an in-depth understanding towards the mechanisms of C-D logic in practice, the five essential characteristics concluded by Heinonen and Strandvik, (2015) will be reviewed in following section respectively. These five features including: (1) business perspective; (2) customer logic; (3) offering; (4) value formation and (5) context, as shown in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3 1: Key features of Customer-Dominant Logic



Source: based on Heinonen and Strandvik, (2015)

### 3.2.1.1 Business perspective

Heinonen and Strandvik (2015) explicitly mention that C-D logic requires firms to change their managerial roles in the business environment by allowing their customers to control the value formation process. Specifically, what the marketers and business managers can assist their customers are: (1). to identify which kinds of customer activities in their business context that customers would like to get engaged in; (2). to design and operationalise the suitable customer experiences that ensure the value can be created and used by customers; (3). to act as a co-creator when customers requested; (4). to monitor the value creation process continuously. However, firms also need to play as an interlinked role in the external business landscape to associate with different customers. Ng *et al.*, (2016) also recognise that underpinning by C-D logic, firm's roles are varying based on the different situations and customer's expectations. In order to assist customers to integrate the resources for value creation, firm can get involved in the customer activities via interactions.

Therefore, C-D logic demands providers not focus on a single and short-term marketing task but put efforts on a holistic and long-term marketing and business strategy.

### **3.2.1.2 Customer logic**

One of the core feature of this marketing perspective is customer logic, which refers to “customers’ idiosyncratic reasoning of and their sense making about appropriate ways for achieving their goals and conducting their tasks” (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015, p.484). In other words, Customer logic influences his/her cognitions, attitudes, behaviours, responses, choices and decision-making concerning in each particular situation. In marketing context, customer logic guides customer’s allocations of resources and energy; influences customer’s behaviour on conducting the marketing tasks; drives customer’s actions on engaging in marketing activities; influences customer’s preferences of receiving values from firm’s offerings. Although customer logic can be changed and influenced by the provider’s context, customers tend to follow their perceptions from previous experiences, activities and practices.

Firms need to understand the customer logic, so that they can appropriately design customer activities and value propositions. Furthermore, it is necessary to recognise the customer logic and classify into different categories. In line with customer logic, Makkonen *et al.*, (2016) point out the business perspective in C-D logic implies marketers need to understand customers’ mental needs and their desired values when firms are considering to adopt an innovative technology in their business. Holmlund *et al.*, (2017) explore the customer mental model in bank service context and investigate how an individual customer make sense of bank issues from customer-bank interactions. They suggest the future studies should discourse the potential factors from customer mental perspective. Based on their discussions, it is essential for providers to understand customer logic at the beginning rather than asking customers to adapt provider’s logic.

### **3.2.1.3 Offering**

The distinctive feature of ‘offering’ described in C-D logic is from customer perspective, which consider what offering customers want from provider rather than what products/services firms can sell to customers. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) identify the practical values for customers are shifting from a specific product or service to personalised customer experiences and activities via interactions. Specifically, the informational, affectional and dialogical interactions within the business networks are the main function for customer value creation (Ballantyne and Varey, 2006a). As the value formation process changes to multi-interactions, the emphasis of offering in C-D logic is based on whether firm’s resources and capabilities can match with facilitations of customer experiences and involved in customer value creation. Moreover, the offering in C-D logic also refers to an abstract concept including the perceptions and emotions that can drive customers for engaging in experiences and activities. Therefore, in practice, providers need to consider the material and immaterial offerings for customers in value creation/co-creation experiences including the technical supports, the functional strategies, the

temporal and spatial designs, the internal and external relationships managements. More essentially, all these offerings prepared by providers should be based on the understanding of customer logic (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015).

#### **3.2.1.4 Value formation**

In earlier discussions, Heinonen (2004) realise customer value is only emerged when customers are actively using it in the creation process rather than created in purpose. Heinonen's (2006) discussions in terms of customer value formation highlights that the dimensions of value formation not only restrict in the process and outcome but also include in the temporal and spatial situations. Heinonen and Strandvik (2009) argue that customer value emerges in either positive or negative ways. Later, Heinonen *et al.*, (2010) state that customer value is generated separately from provider's sphere, which extends beyond the co-creation with firms or service providers through the interactions. This statement has been supported by Grönroos and Ravald (2011) and Voima *et al.*, (2010). Heinonen *et al.*, (2013) conclude the structure of customer value formation by answering the questions of what, how, where and when is the value to be formed. They conclude: (1). Customer value formation is personally based on customer's needs. (2). Customer value is formed in either physical or mental experiences; (3). Customer value appears outside the control of service providers but in customer daily life directly and indirectly; (4). Customer value is emerged without the specific time but depends on customer engagement in a specific experience or activity. Heinonen and Strandvik, (2015, p.488) give a definition of customer value formation in C-D logic as 'customers' emerging behavioural and mental processes of interpreting, experiencing, and integrating offerings in their everyday lives/businesses, with either positive or negative outcomes'. Based on the review of C-D logic, it implies that firms need to change their strategies towards value propositions by explore how to get involved in customer's daily life and assist customer to finish value formation process (Mustak *et al.*, 2013).

#### **3.2.1.5 Customer ecosystem**

As customer value only can be formulated in customer experiences and under the control by the customers themselves (Medberg and Heinonen, 2014; Mickelsson, 2013; Heinonen *et al.*, 2013; Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). The customer sphere is called 'customer ecosystem' in C-D logic, which includes customers, service providers, other business actors and communities in a specific customer-involved experience. Customer ecosystem is a holistic and large structure containing the service ecosystem, which exists in both physical and virtual commercial environment. Heinonen *et al.*, (2013) illustrate that customer ecosystem is a satellited structure and customer stands on the central of this ecosystem. In addition, Heinonen *et al.*, (2013) highlight that customer value is not generated in the service provider's control zone but cumulated in the customer ecosystem. Lipkin (2016) implies that customers can cooperate with other actors including other customers and business providers to achieve their goals in value formation process. In other words, customer value formation is not only between customers and firm but also among customers. Furthermore, the members in customer ecosystem are not the same all the time. According to a specific experience or a specific situation, there are different

members involved in the customer ecosystem (Heinonen *et al.*, 2013). As the customer is consciously or unconsciously to engage in an experience, customer ecosystem is shaped by the different of the specific experience/activity (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). Moreover, customer ecosystem is also framed by customer's daily life. The actors involved in customer's social networks may also involved in customer ecosystem (Heinonen *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, customer ecosystem can be complex, which is influenced by the process that customers engage in value formation.

To sum up these discussions, C-D logic highlights the customer logics and customer activities/experiences within the customer ecosystem beyond the customer-firm interactions and company's offerings.

### **3.2.2 The development of Customer-Dominant Logic**

The notion of C-D logic is based on the criticisms of the former products-oriented approach and the recent service-focused approach in marketing studies and business practices. The traditional marketing studies have embraced with the Goods-Dominant logic (G-D logic) to construct the value creation process by allocation and exchange of products and manufactured merchandises (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). It means that the value based on G-D logic is identified as a kind of concrete thing, which is exchanged from products only. The business and marketing managers assumed that it is sufficient to satisfy their customers by the items, so that only put their efforts on facilitating the goods production and the exchange process but neglect the service delivery (Vargo and Lusch, 2006).

However, the G-D logic was replaced by the Service-Dominant logic (S-D logic) after the G-D logic has been applied for 30 years later, as many scholars realise that customers are not only fulfilled by the tangible commodities but also pursue more potential benefits from firm's service (Grönroos 2006; Lusch and Vargo, 2007; Gummesson 2007). The service offering was considered to improve the competitive advantage of the firm. The most outstanding difference of S-D logic and G-D logic is the S-D logic proposes the term of 'value co-creation', which indicates value cannot be created independently either from firm or from customers. It must be co-created by both of these actors through a set of value propositions and resources' integration process (Vargo *et al.*, 2008). According to S-D logic, it requires an update perception of the interwoven relationship among all the stakeholders. Firms are no longer playing the main role in the consumption process, but they act as the value facilitator through value propositions (Vargo, 2009). Buyers are no longer the passive receiver, but deemed as the working customers, which are capable to cooperate with firms to co-create values (Cova and Dallı, 2009). The tangible offerings are no longer the ultimate goal for the business to deliver, but viewed as an object within service flows. The values are no long exchanged by products but created and used in the interactions between customers and firm (Lusch and Vargo, 2007).

Although the S-D logic has extended and deepened the understanding of the function of marketing, the emphasis of S-D logic still belongs to provider-dominant

perspective and has its limitations (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010; Heinonen *et al.*, 2013; Anker *et al.*, 2015; Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). Heinonen *et al.*, (2010) criticise that most of the service studies such as Bitner and Brown (2008), Payne *et al.*, (2009), which apply S-D logic approach and point out the necessary of firm to provide the service through co-creation process, neither investigate from customer's perspective nor firm's service system's aspect, but from company's perspective.

Furthermore, Heinonen and Strandvik, (2015, p.535) also contend that if the fundamental goal for firms is to facilitate value for their customer through the service, the S-D logic approach does not provide an integrated and sufficient guidance towards the question of 'what the customer does with the service?'. Hence, they (p.542) suggest that "there is a need to contrast the established company-oriented view of involving the customer in service co-creation with a more radical customer-oriented view of involving the service provider in the customer's life". Additionally, they argue that value can not only be co-produced between customers and firm but also be created by customers unilaterally. They highlight that the working customers are able to control the value creation activities, and imply firms to reduce their parts in these activities.

In addition, other scholars such as Brown (2007) argue that although the S-D logic has stressed the importance of customer engagement in the service process and customer cooperation with firm, it did not consider the interactions among customers. Grönroos (2011) recognises that S-D logic cannot entirely support an interpretation of value co-creation process, as well as identify the contents of co-creation experience. Helkkula *et al.* (2012) notice that customers' participation in value creation activities do not constantly correspond with the firm's value propositions, as the customers can construct and control the situation of value creation. For instance, retail shoppers can utilise their social experiences by interacting with other customers either online or offline to assist their consumption (Rosenbaum, 2008; Rowley *et al.*, 2007). Value creation in such situation can be primarily control by the customers, while marketers can only provide the platforms and design the activities for customers to create values (Grönroos, 2008; Gummerus, 2013). Moreover, if the interactive activities that the firm designed are not attractive, customers may not be willing to engage in the co-creation or co-production process with the company (Heinonen *et al.*, (2010). Heinonen *et al.*, (2010) realise that there is a gap that requires to uncover the understanding of customers in the value creation circumstances.

The emergent of C-D logic set another perspective for marketing study, which merely focus on analysing how customers get engage in the activities or experiences to create value by themselves or co-create value with firm (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). The essential difference between C-D logic approach and the previous provider-dominant logic (both G-D logic and S-D logic) approach is that C-D logic does not address the issues from firm or other business actors but focuses on investigating how customers embed themselves into the firm's service and create value for themselves (Akaka *et al.*, 2015). In addition, C-D logic adopts a broader scope to evaluate the customer value formation process compared to the previous dominant



logics. C-D logic highlights that the customer experience may not only be provided by firms, but also can be embedded in customer's normal life. Therefore, customer value can be created any time when customers get involved in the experience or activity (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). Grewal *et al.*, (2009) also illustrate that the service activities or experiences that emphasise in C-D logic are not only the customer's initial perception of the experience, but also customer's impressions towards the interaction with all kinds of relationships in the experiences.

In conclusion, G-D logic is inclined to value-in-exchange by goods, S-D logic emphasises value co-creation, whereas C-D logic supports value-in-experience within customer's sphere. The major differences among G-D logic, S-D logic and C-D logic have been summarised in Table 3.1. Six aspects including the focus, the perspective, the roles of customers and firm, the offerings and the value emerged are compared.

Table 3.1: Comparison of Good-Dominant Logic, Service-Dominant Logic and Customer-Dominant Logic

Differences	G-D Logic	S-D Logic	C-D Logic
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers</li> </ul>
Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provider-perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provider-perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer-perspective</li> </ul>
Role(s) of customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passive receiver</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value co-creator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value co-creator</li> <li>• Value creator</li> </ul>
Role(s) of Firm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product provider</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service provider</li> <li>• Value deliverer</li> <li>• Value facilitator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value facilitator</li> <li>• Activity supporter</li> </ul>
Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tangible products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visible firm's services</li> <li>• Firm's controlled interactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical activities/experiences/practices</li> <li>• Mental activities/experiences/practices</li> </ul>
Value emerge in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumption finished</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer's daily life</li> <li>• No limitations</li> </ul>

Sources: Based on Heinonen *et al.*, 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015

### 3.2.3 Implications of Customer-Dominant Logic for future marketing studies

Heinonen and Strandvik (2015) conclude the main challenges towards applying C-D logic in five aspects (involvement, control, visibility, character, scope) for researchers to conduct future marketing studies. Specifically, these issues are: (1). Who are the actors involved in the value formation process? (2). What are the characters and duties of customers and firms in the value formation process? (3). What are the contents and types of activities for customer value creation; (4). The time, location and function for facilitation of customer activities/experiences; (5). The value emerged process for customers and firms. Moreover, Heinonen *et al.*, (2010) and Heinonen *et al.*, (2013) also provide three major implications of C-D logic for theoretical operation and methodology for future empirical studies.

(1) Investigate from customer perspective.

As the dominant logic has been transferred from provider perspective to customer perspective, there is a call for marketing studies to provide new assumptions, viewpoints and principles towards understanding customer logics (Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014). Moreover, future marketing studies should provide a practical and detailed guideline from C-D logic for business to change their mindsets in value co-creation activities and set new marketing strategies towards facilitating customer experiences.

## (2) Explore in different research context

Although C-D logic has been applied in variety research contexts, which includes health care service (Elg *et al.*, 2012), consumer driving experience (Tyran *et al.*, 2014), educational service (Gummesson and Grönroos, 2012), retailing (Strandvik *et al.*, 2013), retail banking (Medberg and Heinonen, 2014), customer online activity (Ranjan and Read, 2016), future studies are recommended that focus on different types of customer interactions, activities and experiences, as well as explore undeveloped research contexts. Furthermore, Heinonen and Strandvik, (2015) suggest researchers evaluate the established enterprises who have applied the C-D logic in their business and marketing strategies and conclude the useful implications for other companies that in the same business context.

## (3) Employ new research methods

As the majority of previous marketing studies focus on Service-Dominant Logic (Hilton and Hughes, 2013; Löbler, 2013; Nilsson *et al.*, 2014; Skålén *et al.*, 2015; Peters *et al.*, 2015), they did not explore the important details of customer logics and customer engaging in value co-creation process, therefore new research methods are needed to fill this gap. Medberg and Heinonen (2014) suggest an observation approach such as netnographic study can be employed in investigating customer engagement process. Especially, Brodie *et al.*, (2013) highlight that netnography is necessary for observing and recording the online consumer engagement process.

### 3.3 Customer value formation process

The C-D logic implies that marketing research should place a strong focus on customers' daily activities, experiences and practices, as the value formation always lies in customers' daily lives (Voima *et al.*, 2010; Helkkula *et al.*, 2012). Prior to the C-D logic posits the importance of focusing on customers' mundane lives, many prominent marketing and service managerial scholars only concentrated on providing a thorough understanding of the characteristics and functions of value co-creation that occurs in marketing activities (Edvardsson *et al.*, 2005; Tynan and McKechnie, 2009; Grewal *et al.*, 2009; Helkkula *et al.*, 2011; Klaus *et al.*, 2012; Mickelsson, 2014; Jaakkola *et al.*, 2015). Later, some scholars identified that a superior customer activity or customer experience can attract the potential customers, as well as satisfy the loyal customers (Klaus *et al.*, 2012), and thereby to create the ultimate value for firms (Jaakkola *et al.*, 2015).

Initially, customer activities in service marketing are narrowly considered as the concept of interaction, which refer to a view of customers and firms engaging in a dyadic relationship (Grönroos, 2009). Subsequently, a more active and extensive explanation of customer activities is explained in the notion of 'co-creation', 'co-construction', 'co-innovation' or 'co-production' between customers and provider in different service domains, such as customised product development and service problems solving (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004, Grönroos and Voima 2012; Lee *et al.*, 2012b; Healy and McDonagh, 2013). Moreover, a series of current studies have conceptualised the model of customer engagement in value co-creation process

(Etgar, 2008; Kao *et al.*, 2016; Frow *et al.*, 2015; Jaakkola *et al.*, 2015; Baumann *et al.*, 2015; Groeger *et al.*, 2016; Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016).

However, Anker *et al.*, (2015) point out that the contributions from previous studies in terms of customers participating in firm-initiated activities and customers engaging in jointly value co-creation process fail to meet the current customer-oriented paradigm, as customer value formation is not only a dyadic interaction with firms or even personalised service experiences but also stems from multi-stakeholder's engagement (Grönroos, 2008). From C-D perspective, it requires scholars and service providers refocus the customer activities from firm's deliberated service settings to the customer's social environment and everyday practices. Heinonen *et al.*, (2010) argue that customer's value emerged is not restricted in using a particular type of service, but in any stages including before the service, during the interactions, after the service. Therefore, a standing point for firms to facilitate a customer-centric activity is to find out where do customers spend their time to improve their purchase experience's quality.

Nowadays, the sophisticated communication and information technologies profoundly influence on people's work and life (Bolton *et al.*, 2013; Pang *et al.*, 2016). Specially, the interactive social networking platforms foster a variety of value creation and co-creation activities among customers, communities, brands and service providers without time bound and geographical constrain (Healy and McDonagh, 2013; See-To and Ho, 2014; Luo *et al.*, 2015; Hoffmann *et al.*, 2015). It allows customers to generate personal content, share opinions and experiences, and interact with individuals and organisations, whereas firms can easily interact with active customers, provide useful resources and mutual supports, which emerge and manifest the benefits for both actors (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Volberda *et al.*, 2010).

Nevertheless, the implementation of social networking sites also has critical effects on a firm's reputation (Tussyadiah and Zach, 2013). The empowered customers have been deemed as inherently uncontrollable for firms on social networking sites, as customers voluntary contribute their time, skills, resources, energy on generating online contents and choosing the online activities to engage (Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Fournier and Avery, 2011). The customer-generated contents sometimes are negatively, which may create negative influence on brand image and even threaten the customer-firm relationship (Anker *et al.*, 2015).

Consequently, it is necessary for companies to understand how customers engage in the value creation and co-creation process on SNSs (Grönroos, 2008; Lemke *et al.*, 2011). Particularly, companies need to discover: what kinds of inputs customer employ to create the content, which topics of activities customer want to participate in; and what potential and unrealised customer value can be generated by customer engaging in these activities (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). In addition, it is essential for firms to understand that they need to change their role in customer value formation process. They are not the activity's leader but are the

value facilitator in customer value creation/co-creation process. Firms are not only required to gain a precise picture of how customers engage in this process, but also need a practical strategy of how they can navigate through this process (Eichentopf *et al.*, 2011). The following sub-sections will review the existing research models in terms of customer value formation process and the customers engaging in the value co-creation activities on virtual environment.

### **3.3.1 Existing models of customers engaging in value formation process**

It is common to recognise that customers become the active participants who can undertake the responsibility in the value formation process. Moreover, customer engagement in the value formation experience can generate different outcomes for both customers and firms simultaneously (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Payne *et al.*, 2008; Hoyer *et al.*, 2010). However, through deeper review of the literature related to customer value creation process, it is found that customer value creation activities are always related to S-D logic, which is considered as co-constructing services or co-create value between customers and service providers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). The concept of co-creation is the core idea in the customer activities, which refers to customers creating value in collaboration with or affected by firm (Jaakkola *et al.*, 2015). These studies recognise that the level of customers' participation in the interactive activities has substantial effect on the whole value co-creation process (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Fernandes and Rernelhe, 2016). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) realise that study of the customer engagement in value co-creation process can gain valuable managerial implications for service organisation. Baumann and Meunier-FitzHugh (2015) notice that the continuous value generation process requires service providers to not only comprehend the current customer value formation process but also to understand how to coordinate and develop the whole process over time.

Based on the above discussion, it is necessary to systemtically review the revelant studies that have contributed the knowledge towards customer engagement in value creation/co-creation process and identify the research gaps that remain. The standard bibliometric procedure (Mustak *et al.*, 2013; Galvagno and Dalli, 2014; Alves *et al.*, 2015) is applied to collect the relevant topic of marketing literatures from 2007 to 2017. The selected literature is gathered by searching the journal papers concerned with the topic of "value co-creation process" in different acknowledged doctoral level database including Web of Science, Google Scholar, Scopus. The selection process also considers the citation settings of Science Citation Index Expanded, Social Sciences Citation Index and Arts & Humanities Citation Index.

Initially, as the results from the database cover a variety domains of social science studies, a refined search has conducted by putting the second keyword of "marketing management" to narrow down the number of results. Based on this search, there are 61 items generated from Web of Science, 232 journal papers from Scopus, 3,160 results from Google Scholar. All these publications from the high ranking of social science journals are scrutinised and validated according to three key types of research themes, which are service science, innovation and technology

management and marketing and consumer research. Researcher has selected 25 references (See in Appendix 1) from high ranking journals that have focused on consumer and marketing research topic. Specifically, these studies have been selected as: (1) they have put their efforts on investigating how customer engage in the value co-creation process or how company initiates customers to participate in the co-creation activities (Etgar, 2008; Piller et al., 2010; Vega-Vazquez, 2013); (2) they have developed a model to illustrate how customer engage in the value formation process (Etgar, 2008; Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Gummesson and Mele, 2010; Hoyer et al., 2010), which can provide guidance for the current study; (3). they have higher citation than the other studies indicating their reliability. Table 3.2 (p.58) categorises these key articles in terms of the perspective of dominant logic they applied and the type of channel for facilitating value co-creation they focus on.

Based on the analytical review, customers desire to engage in the content creation (Nambisan and Baron, 2009); interacting with each other in brand community (Wirtz *et al.*, 2013); promoting the brands, products or services to other users (Libai *et al.* 2010); sharing personal previous user-experiences (Buonincontri, 2017). Moreover, these studies have covered a variety of business contexts including technological brand (Nambisan and Baron, 2009), furniture market (Andreu *et al.*, 2010); football fan club (Pongsakornrungrasit and Schroeder, 2011), art auction (Gummerus, 2013), rail service (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014), online food retailing (Groeger *et al.*, 2016), online technology for product innovation (Sawhney *et al.*, 2005), tourist experience (Buonincontri, 2017), luxury fashion brand (Choi *et al.*, 2016).

Generally, the established value creation process models from previous literature are developed from three perspectives. The first perspective is considering from service provider's sphere. The second is from customer's aspect. The third is evaluating from both customer and service provider's perspective. Those studies focus on firm's sphere usually assess the efficiency and functionality of the value co-creation process (Choi *et al.*, 2016). They also appraise the performance and quality of the co-creation activities (France *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, another theme for provider's angle focuses on elaborating a precise picture of how to involve customers in value co-creation process (Baumann and Le Meunier-FitzHugh, 2015; Groeger *et al.*, 2016). While the studies related to the customer's perspective reflect customer's individual emotion, cognition and behaviour towards engaging in cooperative value creation process (Eichentopf *et al.*, 2011; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). Furthermore, these studies also reveal customer's subjective norms, customer's capabilities to create value and receive benefits (Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Buonincontri, 2017). Additionally, the studies that consider both customer's and firm's perspective provide an understanding of how different actors devote their resources and capabilities to engage in value co-creation process (Andreu *et al.*, 2010).

In terms of the components for the value co-creation process, most of the previous studies have considered three domains including the antecedents, process and consequences in co-creation experience (Etgar, 2008; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; France *et al.*, 2015; Groeger *et al.*, 2016). Regarding the antecedents in value co-

creation process, from one aspect, researchers pay attention on the diverse resources from different actors as the inputs to integrate in the firm-customer interactive experiences (Füller *et al.*, 2010). They found out that the relational integrated resources can influence on the outcome of customer engagement and performance in value co-creation process (Eichentopf *et al.*, 2011; Buonincontri, 2017). From another aspect, customer's motivations, self-congruity have also been evaluated as the antecedents to influence on customer engagement in value co-creation (Etgar, 2008; Nambisan and Baron, 2009; France *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, the co-creation activity's type, interaction characteristics, customer's performances and behaviours, as well as the resources integration process have been emphasised to assess the co-creation experience (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Groeger *et al.*, 2016). The continuous communications and customer involvements have also been emphasised in the customer co-creation activities (Groeger *et al.*, 2016; Buonincontri, 2017). Related to the consequences of value co-creation process, different kinds of value, either for customers or for firm have been viewed as the outcome at the end of customer engagement in co-creation (Nambisan and Baron, 2009).

In addition, the majority of representative literatures related to co-creation process are theoretical frameworks or conceptual propositions, which has provided a roadmap for facilitating the appropriate mechanisms in different contexts of co-creation process (Etgar, 2008; Gummesson and Mele, 2010; Gummerus, 2013; France *et al.*, 2015; Pfisterer and Roth, 2015). Moreover, there are a few of studies employed qualitative methods, such as case studies (Andreu *et al.*, 2010; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014); individual interview (Baumann and Le Meunier-FitzHugh, 2015); netnography (Pongsakornrunsilp and Schroeder, 2011), focus group interview (Dong *et al.*, 2008), as well as service script description (Eichentopf *et al.*, 2011) to explore the phenomenon of the co-creation process. Furthermore, the quantitative approaches such as questionnaire, experiment are also prevalent to be employed to test the effect of the antecedents on co-creation process (Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Laud and Karpen, 2017). However, there are other studies employed mixed-method (both qualitative and quantitative approach) to explore and validate the framework of value co-creation process (Groeger *et al.*, 2016). Buonincontri (2017) suggests that the richness and variety data from mixed-method including quantitative and qualitative approaches are recommended to use in value co-creation studies (Groeger *et al.*, 2016).

Table 3.2: Summary of the studies that have investigated customer value co-creation process

	<b>Customer engagement in value co-creation studies</b>		
<b>Channel</b>	<b>Online</b>	<b>Offline</b>	<b>Both</b>
<b>Logic Perspective</b>			
<b>S-D logic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Füller <i>et al.</i>, (2009)</li> <li>• Smaliukiene <i>et al.</i>, (2015)</li> <li>• France <i>et al.</i>, (2015)</li> <li>• Choi <i>et al.</i>, (2016)</li> <li>• (Pongsakornrunsilp and Schroeder, (2011)</li> <li>• Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2016)</li> <li>• Kao <i>et al.</i>, (2016)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Etgar (2008)</li> <li>• Pfisterer and Roth, (2015)</li> <li>• Hibbert <i>et al.</i>, (2012)</li> <li>• Baumann and Le Meunier-FitzHugh, (2015)</li> <li>• Buonincontri (2017)</li> <li>• Gummesson and Mele (2010)</li> <li>• Eichentopf <i>et al.</i>, (2011)</li> <li>• Patterson, (2016)</li> <li>• Maslowska <i>et al.</i>, (2016)</li> <li>• Dong <i>et al.</i>, (2008)</li> <li>• Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)</li> <li>• Laud and Karpen, (2017)</li> <li>• Gummerus (2013)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groeger <i>et al.</i>, (2016)</li> </ul>
<b>C-D logic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nambisan &amp; Baron, (2009)</li> </ul>		
<b>All actors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hoyer <i>et al.</i>, (2010)</li> <li>• Smaliukiene <i>et al.</i>, (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andreu <i>et al.</i>, (2010)</li> </ul>	



### **3.3.2 Customer value formation process in virtual environment**

The unprecedented development of social media platforms and online platforms allow firms to integrate the interactive experiences related to their services and products into customers' daily lives. For instance, software technology companies such as SAP and Microsoft invite their customers to engage in their new product development process in an online platform (Nambisan, 2002). Moreover, the footwear retailer, Nike, provides technical support for customers to design their customised shoes (Ramaswamy, 2008). Additionally, numerous brands are seeking to operate dialogic interactions to cultivate the relationship with their customers on social networking platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) (Pang *et al.*, 2016). The customer experiences in these scenarios will generate dynamic value for all the stakeholders who have been involved in this process. Despite the advantages of social media platforms in executing collaborative experiences, there are many potential crisis and uncertain situations that firms need to face. For example, firms need to target the online participants who are willing to generate positive brand-related contents. Moreover, brands also need to find out the strategy to stop the brand-related negative messages spreading among customers on social media (DiStaso *et al.*, 2011). In addition, brands need to learn how to effectively manage the interactive activities on social media (Lovejoy *et al.*, 2012).

In order to handle these challenges, firms and marketing practitioners should understand how customers are involved in the value formation process. According to the review from last section, the general customer engagement process includes a set of stages. The developed framework usually put an emphasis on understanding the antecedents, process and consequences of the customer engagement in the value formation process, this section reviews the existing studies which put efforts on investigating towards these three sub-processes respectively in virtual environment (See in Table 3.3).

First, to understand the antecedents of customer value formation process, previous studies (e.g. Singaraju *et al.*, 2016; Fernande and Remelhe, 2015) that applied S-D logic mainly focus on explore the resources exposed on social media. They consider the interactive activities between customers and brand on social media platforms as a resources' integration process. In the same vein, some studies (e.g. Vargo and Lusch, 2008; Hsu and Tsou, 2011; Henfridsson and Bygstad, 2013) explicate that the virtual communication platforms (i.e. social networking sites, social media) contribute abundant intangible resources for actors to employ and exchange. Füller *et al.*, (2010) also propose that the customer-relational resources (e.g. skills, knowledge, time) can be deemed as the key driver to motivate customer to engage in the value creation process. Brodie *et al.*, (2013) agree that in online social environment, customers' operant resources through the interactive and collaborative effort influence the outcomes of value creation and co-creation for different members.

However, the view of resource integration in value creation process is criticised by other scholars as it is too mechanistic (Korkman, 2006; Rihova *et al.*, 2014). Rihova *et*

*al.*, (2014) argue that the resources integration process is typically considered in business-to-customer interactions through the value propositions that provided by firms, but based on the C-D logic, customer value can emerge outside the service circumstances but in the customer's practical life, so that the resources integration approach is not always necessary in customer value creation activities. Although the C-D logic emphasises the customer logic rather than the customer resources as the antecedents in the customer formation process, the resource-based approach is still adopted in several customer-to-customer value co-creation studies. For instance, Finsterwalder and Tuzovic (2010) provide evidences that the operant resources in the group consumption service context have positive effect on both individual value creation and consumer co-creation process. Moreover, Baron and Harris (2010) apply the resource integration approach to study the customer co-creation experiences.

Besides the abundant resources from social media are considered as the antecedents in value co-creation process, the motivations (e.g. customer's anticipated benefits, customer's internal factors) for customer engagement are also deemed as another type of antecedent (Mahr and Lievens 2012). Fernande and Remelhe (2015) mention that customers are willing to engage in this process voluntarily only if they thought it worth. In addition, the monetary costs will influence on customers' motivation to participate in value co-creation (Mahr *et al.*, 2014). Pera *et al.*, (2016) suggest that customer's internal factors that related to customer's personalities (i.e. personal traits, customer's particular mindsets) will also generate effects on customer engagement. While the external factors such as the accessibility of the social media (Zwass, 2010), the characteristics and qualities of the social media posts (Sorensen *et al.*, 2017) are also considered as one of the antecedents to influence customer engagement behaviour.

Second, in terms of the process of value co-creation on social media, a number of scholars agree that the communications and interactions between firms and customers constitute the major element for customer engagement on the virtual social platforms (Rohm and Kaltcheva, 2013; Bruhn and Schnebelen, 2015; Azar *et al.*, 2016; Wagner *et al.*, 2017). Specifically, the creation contents both generated by firms and users (Hoffmann *et al.*, 2015; Malthouse *et al.*, 2016; Kim and Johnson, 2016) and the variety of types of social media activities (Heinonen, 2011; Dijkmans *et al.*, 2015) have been recognised as the central research topic in value co-creation studies. Customers can elaborate content to generate the value on social networking platforms, to some extent, the degree of customer content-creation indicates the level of customer engagement in value creation process (Fernandes and Rernelhe, 2015). Based on this logic, Malthouse *et al.*, (2016) prove that the higher level of the customer content-elaboration, leads to the greater effect on customer engagement in brand related social media activities, which will increase customer's purchase intention.

Moreover, the effects of customer-generated content has been examined by some empirical studies. Hwang *et al.*, (2014) explore the specific content types that can motivate users to engage in multitasking on social media. Kim and Song (2017)

discuss the relationship between the types of sponsorship content and customer response on Twitter. Similar to Tafesse's, (2014) and Jeon's *et al.*, (2016) studies that explore the social media posts' characteristics effecting on online customers' reactions. Dijkmans *et al.*, (2015) validate the effect of firm's social media activities on fostering brand's reputation. They confirm that active customers who engage in brand's online activities are the valuable resources for firm. Yang and Li (2016) focus on the research context in Chinese online community and they try to identify the factors influencing on the popularity of user-created contents.

According to these scholars, customer value creation on social media are always referred to the process through continual conversations and interactions by firms and customers. The results from these empirical studies show that the variety of online creation content provides considerable opportunities for firms and customers to co-create value. However, it is surprising that most of these studies are evaluated from the firm's perspective. There is merely study deeply investigate how customers participate in these online activities or engage in online content-generation. Moreover, according to C-D logic, the potential customers who did not engage in the firm's service process but still can generate value by themselves. Therefore, further study should consider how the potential participants generate their value through observation rather than active engagement.

Lastly, to assess the outcomes of customer engagement in value creation process in virtual social environment based on customer's sphere, many of the social media-based studies explain that customer-generated value (resLi *et al.*, 2013; Zhang *et al.*, 2016; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2016) and customer-received benefits from the engagement (Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Chen *et al.*, 2015; Gummerus *et al.*, 2012) are two common consequences. Specifically, Joen *et al.*, (2016) illustrate that customers can acquire more up-to-date firm's information, participate in brand's promotions or activities, report the problems and ask for help from companies, interact with other customers and share experiences with each other by engaging in the social media brand pages. However, they also mention that despite providing rich information, the social media posts may generate negative impact either. Zhang *et al.*, (2016) proved that on Chinese social network sites, the online social interaction yields negative effect on customers. Moreover, Zwass (2010) propose another viewpoint that through the co-creation activities engagement, many individuals prefer receiving more emotional and intrinsic satisfaction and enjoyment but forgo the economic rewards. Consequently, the critical evaluation of co-creation results drawing on the social network-mediated interaction is required in future study.

To summarise, based on the review, it is worthwhile to investigate how customer engage in value co-creation activities on social media from customer perspective. The next section will: (1) summarise the discussions based on this chapter; (2) identify the research gaps that evidently based on the literature review from previous sections; (3) provide strong justifications to conduct the current study.

Table 3.3: Key literatures towards the investigation of customer value co-creation in virtual environment

	Literatures	Context	Dimensions	Findings
<b>Process</b>				
<b>Antecedents</b>				
	Zwass (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General social networks/virtual environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desire to contribute</li> <li>Passion for a task</li> <li>Perceive useful knowledge</li> <li>Self-expression</li> <li>Self-identity</li> <li>Develop personal relationship</li> <li>Perceive socialibility and peer recognition</li> </ul> <p>...</p>	It identified different factors that motivate users to engage in the value co-creation on social networking sites.
	Mahr and Lievens (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer's personality</li> <li>Product-specific knowledge</li> <li>Benefits</li> </ul>	It validated that the lead user who has the ability to provide solutions or state customer needs can create more value through the value co-creation in innovation context.
	Sorensen <i>et al.</i> , (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facebook</li> <li>Twitter</li> <li>YouTube</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The characteristic of social media post</li> </ul>	It indicated that social media platforms need to be user-centric and the different post types will motivate users to engage effectively.
	Fernande and Remelhe (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtual community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intrinsic motives</li> <li>Knowledge motives</li> <li>Social motives</li> <li>Financial motives</li> </ul>	The findings showed that knowledge motives are the most important factor that influence on customer's willingness of engaging in co-creation.
	Pera <i>et al.</i> , (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open online platform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual characteristic</li> <li>Individual skills</li> </ul>	It found that the key motives for users to engage in the co-creation of new product development are

				experimentation, reputation enhancement and relationship motives.
	Mahr <i>et al.</i> , (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-creation knowledge</li> <li>Novelty</li> <li>Cost</li> </ul>	It emphasised that the lead users who have knowledge are more eager to engage in innovative co-creation activities.
	Marbach <i>et al.</i> , (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online brand community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer personalities</li> </ul>	It proved that the user's personality traits such as need for learning, need for arousal are the antecedent factors that motivate user to engage in co-creation activities on online brand community.
<b>Co-creation process</b>	Heinonen (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SNSs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers' social media activities</li> </ul>	It indicated that different social media activities will impact on customers' social media behaviour.
	Hoffmann <i>et al.</i> , (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SNSs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content creation (social, skilled, political content)</li> </ul>	It suggested that the social demographic only influence on several specific forms of user's participating in online content creation.
	Malthouse <i>et al.</i> , (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>User-generated content</li> </ul>	It indicated that customer's purchase intention will not be influenced by engagement in content creation on social media.
	Rohm <i>et al.</i> , (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facebook</li> <li>Twitter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer-brand interactions</li> </ul>	It suggested that customer-to-brand interaction is driven by the different types of social media activities and themes.
	Tafesse (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facebook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers' responses to brand posts on social media</li> </ul>	It indicated that consumer engagement in the brand page on social media is an interactive experience.

	Dijkmans <i>et al.</i> , (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media activities engagement</li> </ul>	It proved that customer engagement in firm-facilitated social media activities have the influence on corporate reputation.
	Wagner <i>et al.</i> , (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facebook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brand-customer interaction via Facebook brand posts.</li> </ul>	It concluded different types of posts that have different influence on customer's engagement behaviour.
	Yang and Li (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online co-creation community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer-generated contents</li> </ul>	It emphasised knowledge exchange and collaboration of co-creation experience.
<b>Outcomes</b>	Zhang <i>et al.</i> , (2017)	Chinese SNS Sina Weibo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer values</li> <li>Customers' stickiness</li> </ul>	It found that the outcomes of customer engagement in value co-creation on social media are perceiving customer value and enhancing customer's stickiness.
	Gummerus <i>et al.</i> , (2012)	Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consumer relationship benefits</li> </ul>	It identified three types of benefits including entertainment benefits, social benefits and economic benefits that customer can perceive from value co-creation engagement.
	Marbach <i>et al.</i> , (2016)	Online brand community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer values</li> </ul>	It showed that the consequence of customer engagement in co-creation on online brand community is perceiving customer values.

### 3.4 Summary

According to the literature review in this chapter, it found that most of the existing studies have emphasised customer's active role in marketing practice. Although either the conceptual papers or empirical studies have put efforts on investigating customer engagement in physical or virtual environment, there are some research gaps that remain.

First of all, most marketing studies related to co-creation process apply S-D approach to view customers as: (1) value co-creators who utilise their knowledge and skills to co-design the product or co-produce the value with firm (Etgar, 2008; Nambisan and Baron, 2009); (2) content generators to share experiences and information in many interactive circumstances (Carbonell *et al.*, 2014; Smaliukiene *et al.*, 2015; France *et al.*, 2015; Witell *et al.*, 2017). Some scholars emphasise that it is essential to investigate the value co-creation from customer perspective, customer activities are merely restricted to the processes by which both firm and customers collaborate in the specific activity (Hoyer *et al.*, 2010; Pongsakornrungrasit and Schroeder, 2011; Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016). Critically, C-D logic highlights that customer as an independent agent and value creator in customer activities is not fully discussed in previous studies (Anker *et al.*, 2015). As customer can play an important role in value process and actively create the value in their ecosystem (Cheung *et al.*, 2016), companies should consider how they can be involved in customers' daily lives and activities rather than involve customers in their service (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). To address this limitation, this study applies C-D logic to generate interesting insights from customer's sphere to understand the dynamic customer value emergent process.

Second, although previous studies conclude the multiple resources and drivers are the motivational factors to influence customer engagement based on the S-D theory, the C-D logic requires researchers to rigorously work on understanding customers' logic, which related to customers' characteristics, expectations and resources (Cheung and To, 2015). Cheung and To (2012) claim that companies need to find out customers' motivations to engage in the value creation activities, which may be related to customers' personal traits. Hoyer *et al.*, (2010) categorise the characteristics of those customers who are more willing to engage in the new product development process. These customers usually are product innovators, lead customers, emergent users and market experts. Marbach *et al.*, (2016) also prove that customers who belong to one of seven types of personalities have higher level to engage in value co-creation activities. Moreover, Carlson *et al.*, (2016) propose that social motives also affect the peer-to-peer interactions in group travel experiences. Cheung and To (2015) mention that customers know what kind of contents they are interested in and what kind of activities they participate in the value creation process. Particularly, the social networking platforms provide substantial information that can attract customers to engage (Singaraju *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, the key customers' personal factors that influence customers to engage in the value formation process in social media should be further explored.

Third, previous literatures regarding value co-creation in virtual environment have highlighted the importance of social media on customers' daily lives. These literatures have also explained how social media can empower customers and remain their active roles in digital commercial landscape (Pang *et al.*, 2016; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). However, despite a number of studies have identified and classified the interactive forms between firm and users and the communicational contents on social media (Hwang *et al.*, 2014; Hoffmann *et al.*, 2015; Yong *et al.*, 2016), most of the studies focus on providing the implications of business-to-customer interaction for firms (Rohm *et al.*, 2013; Dijkmans *et al.*, 2015; Kim *et al.*, 2016). While few studies consider the communications developed in customer's own ecosystem (Bruhn *et al.*, 2015; Chae and Ko, 2016). Furthermore, Wagner *et al.*, (2017) call for future studies to recognise the negative effects from the customer-generated contents. Jeon *et al.*, (2016) recommend the future studies to conduct this research topic based on different social and culture context, as amount of the current existing studies focus on western population and western social networking platforms.

Fourth, some studies have identified the antecedents and consequences of customer engagement in value co-creation process. However, few study has provided academic and practical implications towards both customer-to-brand and customer-to-customer interactive process. Carbonell and Rodriguez-Escudero, 2014; Marbach *et al.*, 2016; Maslowska *et al.*, 2016). Some studies have evaluated the whole process but they investigated from provider's perspective and merely considered the business-to-customer co-creation activities (Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Andreu *et al.*, 2010; Hoyer *et al.*, 2010). Some studies have proved the significance of customer involvement in value creation process but they were based on physical environment (Gummesson and Mele (2010; Eichentopf *et al.*, 2011; Vega-Vazquez, 2013). Surprisingly, a comprehensive and validated framework that completely develops from customer's own perspective and deeply evaluate the antecedents of customer logic, the process of customer engagement, the consequences of customers engaging in value creation activities on a social media platform is not established (Hoyer *et al.*, 2010; Anker *et al.*, 2015; Cui and Wu, 2015; Finne and Grönroos, 2017).

In order to address the aforementioned research gaps, the following chapter will focus on developing a conceptual model of customer engagement in value formation process based on the C-D logic. It will explore and identify the antecedent factors that reflect customer logic towards motivating customer engagement in value formation process on social networking platforms, the major social media marketing activities that customers prefer to engage in and the positive outcomes from customer engagement.



## Chapter 4 Customer engagement in dialogic co-creation for value formation on SNSs

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to establish a conceptual model from the customers' perspective to explore the antecedent factors that reflect customer logic towards engaging in dialogic co-creation, different types of dialogic co-creation activities that customers prefer to engage in, and the outcomes of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation for value formation on SNSs.

Before exploration of customer engagement in the dialogic co-creation process, it is necessary to understand the concept of customer engagement. In the online environment, the notion of customer engagement is different to the concept of customer participation and customer involvement, both of which simply focus on customers passively consuming the social content that is generated by brands (Hutton and Fosdick, 2011). Van Doorn *et al.* (2010) explain that customer engagement is a type of active customer behaviour that results from the motivational factors. They also emphasise that word-of-mouth activities, blogging activities and customer-to-customer interaction can attract more customers engaging in viral marketing. Brodie *et al.* (2011) illustrate that the customer engagement behaviour is associated with the brand or firm-generated activities on social media beyond the transactions. Maslowska *et al.* (2016) advance the understanding of the concept of customer engagement, which comprises customer-brand dialogue behaviours, customer consumption behaviours, and customer experience of a brand's actions. They imply that customer engagement is not only an intended customer reaction brought about by marketing activities, but also the interconnection of the entire customer ecosystem, including the brand and other customers' interactivity.

However, following the generic C-D logic perspective, customer engagement in the value formation process includes physical and mental engagement (Finne and Grönroos, 2017). The value formation process need not be deliberate, as it is not controlled by the brands and marketers, but is sometimes formed in a customer's mental process. Dessart *et al.* (2015) claim that customer engagement is a customer's psychological state that is triggered by the virtue of the customer's co-creative and interactive experiences with a brand or service provider. Although Heinonen *et al.* (2010) and Rindell and Strandvik (2010) emphasise psychological engagement in the value formation process, this thesis merely focuses on the direct interaction and communication between brand-to-customer and customer-to-customer that generate value for customers themselves. Therefore, the notion of customer engagement in this study is consistent with Ashley and Tuten's (2015), who define it as customers' online social behaviours, including sharing their own created content and brand-generated content, interacting with other customers on social networking platforms beyond purchase, and has positive outcomes based on these behaviours.

Most research investigating the customer engagement phenomenon focused on antecedent factors (e.g. individual factors) that drive customer involvement and the consequences (e.g. brand loyalty) of this engagement (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). Section 4.2 will explore and identify the customer logic that is deemed as the antecedent factors driving customers to engage in value formation. Next, section 4.3 will recognise the major types of dialogic co-creation activities that attract customer engagement to create value for themselves on SNSs. Section 4.4 will discuss the benefits customers receive and their purchase intention as a consequence of customer engagement. Lastly, a chapter summary (Section 4.5) will be drawn to display the conceptual model that was built based on the previous sections.

## **4.2 Antecedents: drivers of customer engagement**

Understanding a customer's motivation for engagement in value creation or co-creation is a way of exploring customer logic that can shed light on evaluating why and how customers contribute in this process (Cheung and To, 2011; Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). Researchers have examined personality traits and individual differences as the driving factors of customer online engagement, as they believe that the primary intention of customers joining social media activities is associated with customer's personal characteristics (Seidman, 2013; Gosling *et al.*, 2011).

However, Libai *et al.* (2010) argue that due to the distinctiveness of the online social environment, customers' interactions are a valuable source of knowledge and information and greatly impact on the level of customer engagement. Alden *et al.* (2016) propose that social self-schemas and brand-related self-knowledge play essential roles in distinguishing the motivating customer interactions with firms and other users on brand websites. Shao and Ross (2015) also argue that, although a customer's motivations for social media engagement may alter over time, initially, customers engage in the brand page on social media to acquire information and to socialise. Ma and Chan (2014) suggest that motivational factors for customer engagement are affected by an individual's knowledge sharing behaviours and their interpersonal relationship with others in the social media environment.

Relatedly, Mahr and Lievens (2012) claim that, in addition to the variables in terms of customers' general characteristics, customers' product-specific knowledge can have an influence on knowledge creation in virtual communities. They also identify the main sources of customers' knowledge acquirement. The first source is from customers' previous usage experiences or their frequent purchase and use of products. Another is from various sources including the product's structural design and applications in existing products as well as the product's future market trends. Pongsakornrunsilp and Schroeder (2011) state that customers tend to use their consumption experience to demonstrate their product knowledge and expertise so that they can create and co-create value, as well as construct and maintain their identity on social networks. Schreier and Pruegl (2008) deem the customers who gain such credible and applicable knowledge to be the lead users.

Earlier, Ozer (2009) illustrated that the product lead users who have product-related expertise have a higher level of accuracy when evaluating an innovative product compared to less informed customers. Nambisan and Baron (2009) identify three types of customer characteristics of online interaction for value co-creation, which refer to the extent of customers' possession of product-related knowledge, customers' remaining identity and customers' responsiveness to other users. Hoyer *et al.*, (2010) recognise the customers as market mavens who have abundant information about different types of products and their prices, places to shop and other firm-related information. They have higher engagement in online discussions and are more willing to respond to questions from other customers. However, Packard and Wooten (2013) detect the variable of consumer knowledge as a motivator of customer engagement. Surprisingly, they found that those customers who lack product information and knowledge are prone to engage in online discussions with other customers as they want to pretend to have high level of knowledge. Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013) proved that in an e-commerce environment, consumers who have specific knowledge and skills in online shopping influence customer engagement and performance in e-commerce shopping. As there are multiple choices available on the e-commerce shopping platform, the expert customers who are familiar with the product information can complete the buying task effectively compared to those non-expert customers who feel overwhelmed in this situation.

Based on the above discussions, it cannot be denied that customer knowledge, as personalised and constructed information possessed by every customer, is a crucial element to be considered as a motivational factor for customers' online engagement. Furthermore, a high level of consumer knowledge enables customers to recognise their own needs and transfer their knowledge in the value creation. Combining product knowledge and other types of information trigger the expert customers to perform better in online engagement.

In addition, except for the expert customers, other customer predispositions and personality traits that influence a customer's cognitive and decision-making processes can also affect the motivation for customers to engage in social media (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010). Van Doorn *et al.* (2010) suggest that the customers with higher moral personal traits are more likely to become involved in brands' activities, provide critical suggestions to firms and help other customers in online communities. Paredes *et al.* (2014) propose that the actors' interactions sharing knowledge and experiences in a community can be deemed as a co-consuming process. Customers engaging in co-consuming the resources is based on their trust of other customers.

Ballantyne and Varey (2006a) corroborated earlier findings that acquiring the opportunity to enter into a conversation can be considered as a precursor to customer co-creation engagement. Blazevic *et al.* (2014) developed a general online social interaction propensity model to claim that customers engaging in social media do so to interact with other users. Barger *et al.* (2016) conclude that the number of friends or followers a customer has can influence their willingness to engage and share information on social media. Barrutia *et al.* (2016) propose that the customers

who gain intelligence support from their social groups will influence customers' decision towards value co-creation engagement. Hennig-Thurau *et al.* (2004) empirically assessed eight factors with 27 items to identify the customer motives for word-of-mouth (WOM) engagement in online communities. They found that customers who desire social benefits and self-enhancement, as well as concern about others, have a positive likelihood of engagement in online communication, while the factors of platform assistance and venting negative feelings did not strongly drive customer engagement.

However, Eisingerich *et al.* (2015) extended the study on customers' self-enhancement by comparing the customers' preferences for online WOM and in-person interaction. They found that, generally, customers are less willing to participate in WOM in social networks than in reality, as they are concerned about the higher social risks that result from online sharing. Barasch and Berger (2014) also compared customer online sharing behaviours between the scenarios of customer interaction with multiple users and customer interaction with one other person. They found that customers are more likely to share content with one other person as they can focus on creating and perceiving the value from the communication, instead of worrying about the negative effects of sharing information among other customers. Furthermore, He *et al.* (2008) recognised that the gender factor also impacts on public discussion engagement. They indicate that female customers are more prone to engage in communal interactions as they prefer to complain about issues via negative WOM.

Therefore, it is suggested that the social experts who can gain social support through online interactions and share their knowledge among friends and other users is another core central configuration for customer engagement.

#### **4.2.1 Consumer expertise**

After reviewing the definitions of customer knowledge in existing empirical studies (see Table 4.1), the notion of consumer expertise adopted for this study is defined as "the ability to perform product-related tasks successfully" (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987 p. 441). In this research context, the customers accomplish specific product-related tasks such as contribute ideas, solve problems, and influence others (Dholakia *et al.*, 2004). Although Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013) considered customer knowledge stored in a customer's mind as variety operant resources, they can be applied in the interaction with a firm for value co-creation. Consumer expertise has moderated the effect on how customers gather, understand, organize and deliver product information in online engagement (Mishra *et al.*, 2014). Customers aim to seek information about the firm and brand or to ask other customers for advice on social media (Dessart, 2017). According to different levels of consumer expertise, customers have different information possessing capabilities in diagnosing brand and product information (Chen and Xie, 2008). For this reason, the product-related information from social media may be more valuable to expert customers. Furthermore, Marbach *et al.* (2016) conclude that most of the previous studies (Mollen and Wilson, 2010; Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011b; Vivek *et al.*, 2012;

Brodie *et al.*, 2013) across different academic disciplines directly or indirectly consider one or more of the three dimensions of customer engagement concept, which are cognitive, emotional and behaviour. Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013) examine five aspects of consumer expertise (cognitive effort, cognitive structure, analysis, elaboration and memory) for consumers engaging in value co-creation on e-commerce platforms.

Cognitive effort is related to the customer's ability to acquire and understand product information and complete product-related tasks (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). As customers' cognitive faculties are different, they exert different levels of mental effort addressing the variety of online information. Cognitive structure refers to the factual news and product-related categories that customer know about the brands and the ways they organise and classify the information and knowledge (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987; Kleiser and Mantel, 1994). The structure of product category is more specific, more veridical and clearer for expert customers. As a result, expert customers identify the relevant information more easily and spontaneously than the novices. Expert customers are also better in selective information analysis, encoding, classifying and inference, as they only consider the important and relevant information and are less likely to make inferential errors than ordinary customers (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). Furthermore, information such as brand-created information and customer-generated content of product ratings, previous consumption experiences, is overwhelming on social media and expert customers can exploit and filter more effectively and efficiency than non-expert customers (Ariely 2000). The element of elaboration in consumer expertise represents a customer's ability to problem solve (Kleiser and Mantel 1994). Specifically, it means the amount of factual knowledge that has been computed for further inference (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). Moreover, Alba and Hutchinson (1987) noted that expert customers can recall product information more accurately than non-expert customers; thereby, they use a higher quantity and better quality of information to guide their decision-making process.

Table 4.1: Notion of consumer knowledge in the marketing literature

References	Construct definition	Dimensions/ Items	Research Methods	Online context				
				social media/social networks	Online communities	Online forums	E-commerce platform	Firm website
Ozer (2009)	Lead user knowledge towards product information, solving related problems etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Dimensions (Product lead-ownership and product expertise)</li> <li>8 Items</li> </ul>	Quantitative survey 491 responses	x	x	x	x	*
Mahr and Lievens (2012)	Lead user knowledge towards technical experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Dimensions (knowledge novelty and knowledge relevance)</li> </ul>	Qualitative Nenography  676 pieces of user posts	x	*	x	x	x
Schreier and Pruegl, (2008)	"an individual's consumer knowledge and use experience in the underlying field as well as one's personality." (p.333)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Dimension (consumer knowledge) 22 items</li> </ul>	Quantitative online survey	x	x	x	x	*
Nambisan and Baron (2009)	"Customer engaging in value creation vary in their product-related knowledge; product-technology knowledge, product-market knowledge, or product-use knowledge." (p391)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 Dimensions (product content; member identity; human interaction)</li> <li>8 Items</li> </ul>	Quantitative online survey	x	*	x	x	x
Hoyer <i>et al.</i> , (2010)	"Consumers often vary highly in their interest and ability to participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Dimensions</li> </ul>	Conceptual model	x	x	*	x	x

	usefully in cocreation tasks.” (p.288)							
Packard and Wooten (2013)	“what or how much a person thinks he/she actually knows about products, whether at the level of a specific product category or at a more general level” (p. 436).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Dimensions (actual consumer knowledge manipulation check and ideal consumer knowledge manipulation check)</li> <li>• 6 items</li> </ul>		*	x	x	x	x
Barrutia and Gilsanz, (2013)	“Consumer expertise has a direct impact on how consumers gather, understand and organize incoming product information and also on the evaluation of products/brands to make purchase decisions.” (P.445)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 Dimensions (cognitive effort, analysis, elaboration, memory)</li> <li>• 12 items</li> </ul>	Quantitative 1024 pieces of valid survey	x	x	x	*	x
Shao and Ross (2015)	One of the motivational factors for customers engaging Facebook brand page is seeking information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Dimension (information seeking)</li> <li>• 2 items</li> </ul>	Quantitative survey with 1114 respondents	*	x	x	x	x

#### 4.2.2 Social expertise

Extending another stream of motivational factors resulting in a higher propensity for customer social media engagement, based on the customer gratification theory, some scholars claim socialising is one of a customer's fundamental motives for engaging in social media (Shao and Ross, 2015; Heinonen, 2011). Table 4.2 summarises the most representative papers discussing the notion of social expertise.

Although Blazevic *et al.* (2014) believe that an individual's online engagement propensity varies based on their personality traits, Naylor *et al.* (2012) imply that customers may be inclined to participate in a brand's activity due to the influence of their reference groups (i.e. friends, families, peers). Zolkepli *et al.* (2015) suggest that social interaction and social influence are two types of social needs motivating customers to engage in social media as a customer's social group plays a significant role as a reference point for customers, increasing an individual's compliance and their desire to be accepted by their social group members. Xu-Priour *et al.*'s (2014) comparison of consumer behaviour demonstrated that Chinese consumers show a preference for allowing reference groups to influence their online engagement behaviour.

According to Ma and Chen's (2014) work, customers receive knowledge and learning through sharing experiences and ideas and social interaction on social media. They also propose two other factors: first, establishing and maintaining a sense of belonging as a driver for customers to interact with others on social media, which influences their online engagement decision; and second, the customer's altruism, which means they enjoy helping others and achieve satisfaction through this action. As Barrutia *et al.* (2016) and Paredes *et al.* (2014) indicate, the knowledge is available in a customer's social group, which can enrich and enhance their expertise; therefore, social expertise is deemed to be the degree to which customers perceive intelligent social support from their social context. Brodie *et al.* (2013) suggest customers can not only receive social support from their social context, but also gain bonding, social interaction, affiliation and proximity through social media engagement.

Moreover, as social media provides a channel for knowledge learning and sharing, information from social networks, online communities and blogs is available to customers. When customers share their knowledge by interacting with brands and others, their expertise can be strengthened (Blazevic and Lievens, 2008). Finne *et al.* (2017) indicate that customers can access multiple forms of social media and actively or passively interact with several users simultaneously by choosing or refusing the information that is offered, as well as sending and receiving messages. Ståhlbröst and Bergvall-Kåreborn (2011) also suggest that online users are both producers and consumers in a democratic and voluntary manner; thereby, they can contribute their knowledge in their social interactions to achieve benefit perceptions. However, based on the customer self-knowledge theory (Markus, 1983), which measures the extent to which customers interact with brands and other users, Alden *et al.* (2016) consider the survey constructs of customer social interaction on social media as an



important and integral perspective of their self-schema. They state that a customer's self-knowledge is the centre of their self-schema, which is constructed by their past life experiences. Customers utilise their self-knowledge to organise and guide their social interaction process.

Based on the above discussions, the notion of social expertise developed from the work Barrutia *et al.* (2016) and Alden *et al.* (2016) is adopted as another antecedent factor to motivate customer engagement in value formation on SNSs.

Table 4.2: Notion of social expertise in the marketing literatures

References	Construct definition	Dimensions/ Items	Research Methods	Online context				
				social media/social networks	Online communities	Online forums	E-commerce platform	Firm website
Shao and Ross (2015)	Socialising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Dimension</li> <li>5 items</li> </ul>	Quantitative online survey	*	x	x	x	x
Alden <i>et al.</i> , (2016)	“Based on the self-knowledge theory to recognise the customer’s social and brand related self-schemas motivates customer’s interactions with brands and other users on social media” (p.5910)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Dimension</li> <li>4 items</li> </ul>	Quantitative online survey	*	x	x	x	x
Zolkepli <i>et al.</i> , (2015)	“Social needs are affiliation needs where the consumer intends to be part of a group, wants to be recognized as part of the group and relates to a sense of belonging.” (p.193)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Dimensions (social influence and social interaction)</li> <li>9 items</li> </ul>	Mix-method Focus group interview Online survey	*	x	x	x	x
Ma and Chan (2014)	Three determinant factors including knowledge sharing behaviour, altruism and the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 Dimensions (knowledge sharing behaviours, perceive online attachment, altruism)</li> </ul>	Quantitative survey	*	x	x	x	x

	need of belonging among social media users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 27 items</li> </ul>						
Heinonen (2011)	Social connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Dimension</li> <li>• 3 items</li> </ul>	Qualitative Diary method	*	x	x	x	x
Blazevic <i>et al.</i> , (2014)	Online social interaction propensity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Dimensions (level of interaction, social, enjoyment in activity)</li> <li>• 11 items</li> </ul>	Quantitative online survey	*	x	x	x	x
Paredes <i>et al.</i> , 2014	Social expertise, the social capital and social supports from customer's social context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Dimension</li> <li>• 3 items</li> </ul>	Conceptual Paper	x	x	x	x	*
Hennig-Thurau <i>et al.</i> , (2004)	Concern for other consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Dimension</li> <li>• 4 items</li> </ul>	Quantitative survey	x	*	x	x	x

### **4.3 Process: Dialogic co-creation between firm and customers**

Social networking platforms provide both customers and brands new channels and efficient ways of engaging with one another at an unprecedented level (Heinonen, 2011; De Vries *et al.*, 2012; Gensler *et al.*, 2013; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Bruhn and Schnebelen, 2017; Kim and Johnson, 2016; Wagner *et al.*, 2017). From the customer's perspective, social networking is integrated into their life and makes it easy for them to broadcast their opinions and musings and connect to brands and other customers. In this respect, customer value emerged through the customer content creation process (Wang *et al.*, 2012; Trusov *et al.*, 2009). From the brand's perspective, social networks enable them to foster relationships, collaborating with all stakeholders in public including new and existing customers. A brand's generated value stems from disseminating information and facilitating activities to influence customers' perceptions (Bruhn and Schnebelen, 2017). Thus, maturely interacting and socially dialoguing among firms and customers are the main forms of the customer value co-creation process (Hsieh and Hsieh, 2015). The social media marketing strategies mentioned in the second chapter can be utilised to assist the facilitation of dialogic co-creation.

Specifically, in line with the interaction theory, Chae and Ko (2016) propose that customer engagement on social media should be categorised as customer-to-brand (C2B), customer-to-customer (C2C) and customer-to-media interactions (C2M). Finne and Grönroos (2017) hold the view of communication-in-use to emphasise that customer value emerges from a customer-driven communication process. Instead of focusing on the dyadic communication between firm and customer, marketing communication based on C-D logic is "a process where a customer perceives an offering, product, service, company or person. It can be deliberated or embedded in context, visible or merely in the head of the customer. It can include experience, processes, activities triggering value-in-use for the customer, and can consist of several simultaneous senders." (Finne and Grönroos, 2017, p. 447). In other words, it is the customer who actively decides with whom to co-create the dialogues: perhaps with the firm, or with other customers. The communication content, including product information, service message, unplanned dialogues or those beyond the range of their knowledge need to serve as useful sources to satisfy customers' demands and assist their consumption process.

Expanding Finne and Strandvik's (2012) discussion, the role of firms in customer value formation is to facilitate useful and valuable communication processes and instruments. On social networking sites, brand pages are recognised as a brand moderated and dedicated platform that is capable of facilitating marketing communication and customer interactions (Tafesse 2016). Moreover, companies have to learn how to exploit this new access to create interactive content to provoke customers' positive reactions and interactions (Gensler *et al.*, 2013; Wagner *et al.*, 2017). Other researchers suggest that brand-related user-generated content via virtual social environments evoke more impact than other created content, since it is transmitted by a reliable source of information embedded in a customer's personal

social networking site (Chu and Kim, 2011; Malthouse *et al.*, 2013; Corrigan, 2013; Kim and Song, 2017). Attaining a trustworthy level of information has been recognised as the most essential content to attract customers to engage in brand pages on social media (Hwang *et al.*, 2014; Dolan *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, since customers are both socially and emotionally stimulated actors, brand pages that provide informational and hedonic activities can better engender customers' positive responses. For instance, brand posts that refer to humorous content can be deemed as a successful topic as it is usually adopted and spread quickly amongst customers (Wagner *et al.*, 2017). Brand-related content that offers remuneration or reward including economic incentives, prize drawing, giveaways, or monetary compensation may meet customers' requirements for engaging in the brand's activities on social media (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011).

Therefore, in this study, dialogic co-creation content is defined as brand-generated posts and brand-related customer generated content. In the following sections, the topics of customer-to-firm and customer-to-customer dialogic co-creation on social networking sites are explored.

#### **4.3.1 C2B and C2C dialogic co-creation in SNSs**

Firms have undertaken proactive efforts on social networking sites to initiate and manage communication with customers in the form of launching brand pages where customers can interact with a brand by liking, commenting or sharing brand posts (De Vries, 2012; Rohm *et al.*, 2013). Marketing scholars have realised the importance of facilitating more effective C2B interactions on social networking sites to increase customer satisfaction, company competitiveness and overall brand sales (Rohm *et al.*, 2013). Recently, investigations of brand-generated content that affects C2B interaction outcomes have been undertaken by various scholars (Rauschnabel *et al.*, 2012; Gao and Feng, 2016; Martínez-Navarro and Bigné, 2017). Schivinski and Dabrowski (2015) examined how brand and customer-generated content on Facebook influence customers' brand awareness and brand equity. Rauschnabel *et al.* (2012) found that the design features of a brand post (i.e. post size, post position, post vividness) impact on the popularity of the post. Other researchers (De Vries *et al.*, 2012; Kim and Ko, 2012) explored how content topics influence customers' willingness to engage in brand activities on Facebook. Although companies have noted the importance of nurturing and sustaining their customers on social networks, B2C interactions are now more difficult as they are no longer a brand-dictated conversation but multi-party, co-created dialogues (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2010; Rohm *et al.*, 2013; Swani *et al.*, 2017).

C2C interactions on social networking sites are playing increasingly crucial roles in dialogic co-creation through user-generated content, friends and peer recommendations, product reviews and service feedback on firms' social media brand pages (Rihova *et al.*, 2013). Some empirical studies have explicitly investigated C2C co-creation processes within customer networks. For example, Libai *et al.* (2010) identified the dimensions, social systems, potential moderators and outcomes of C2C interactions with regard to online communication. Rihova *et al.* (2013) explored

different social layers of C2C co-creation that provide guidance for service providers to initiate customer engagement in C2C interactions. Neuhofer *et al.* (2013) uncovered six dimensions for customers' value co-creation through tourists sharing experiences online and highlight that the portrayal of customers' experiences is based on their everyday life. Brodie *et al.* (2013) conducted a netnographic study to investigate customers' interactive processes on virtual communities and identify customer engagement behaviours. Bruhn and Schnebelen (2017) proposed the co-creation paradigm from a customer-oriented view to address uncontrolled C2C interactions on social media. Finne and Strandvik (2012) developed a conceptual and integrated model of marketing communication based on customer-centric logic and outlined the different types of customer communication factors, including external and internal factors, as well as customers' past experiences and future expectations, that simulate customers' communication value.

While these existing studies advance, to some extent, understanding of C2C co-creation, there are still some issues that need to be resolved to enhance a holistic conceptualisation of C2B and C2C interactions on social networks. Heinonen (2011) realised that although social networks trigger customer engagement in C2B and C2C interactions, customers are not always active online and are considered to contribute a low level of content. Courtois *et al.*, (2009) also argue that customers are generally identified as being creative and active on social networks when the majority of user-generated content is produced by a small number of online participants. Therefore, a detailed investigation of both C2B and C2C dialogic co-creation activities that attract customers to engage need to be reviewed.

#### **4.3.2 Identification of the topics of dialogic co-creation contents in SNSs**

Based on the review in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.2), many marketing scholars agree that online content creation by brands and customers constitutes a key process of dialogic co-creation on social networks (Kim and Johnson, 2016; Rathore *et al.*, 2016; Martínez-Navarro *et al.*, 2017; Tafesse, 2014; Yang and Li, 2016; Kim and Song, 2017) (see Table 4.3). As an overt aim of brands on social networking sites is to attract larger online audiences by providing gratification and value through their brand page's content (Malthouse *et al.*, 2013), the brand-related content must be generated in a way that initiates customer engagement and creates value for them (Chauhan and Pillai, 2013; De Vries *et al.*, 2012; Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

According to the uses and gratifications theory, content that is informational, entertaining and remunerative has been identified as the major type of the social media content in recent literature, as this brand-created content satisfies customers' need to engage in online discussions (Kim *et al.*, 2011; Muntinga *et al.*, 2011; Sinclair and Vogus, 2011; Rohm *et al.*, 2013; Tafesse 2014; Dolan *et al.*, 2015; Azar *et al.*, 2016). Blank (2013) also considered skilled content and social content to evaluate British social media users' content creation preferences. Azar *et al.* (2016) emphasise that the reliable resource of information from other users rather than from the brand is crucial to online users. Jeon *et al.* (2016) identify 'call for action' as another key type of social media activity. This refers to asking customers to take

some action, such as pressing 'like', making comments or sharing a post. Wolny and Mueller (2013) identify a similar activity in the fashion context where it is called 'advice seeking', wherein customers take action by sharing brand-related posts to seek others' opinions before the decision to purchase. Kim and Ko (2012) classify another three types of social media marketing activities beyond the interactive and entertaining activities of luxury fashion brand pages on Facebook. They are customization, trendiness and word-of-mouth.

Moreover, especially in the fashion context, accessibility of C2C interactions among fashion shoppers through electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) is an essential element of customer engagement in social networking sites (Chae and Ko, 2016). Chu and Sung (2015) recognise e-WOM as information sources that can be exchanged by customers. Goyette *et al.* (2010) suggest that encouraging customers to communicate among their social groups to collect information is more desirable than releasing brand news to them forcibly. Godey *et al.* (2016) agree with this viewpoint and believe that the e-WOM sources enjoy higher relevance, credibility and empathy than the brand-created information that is accepted by customers on social networks.

Recently, brands have attempted to facilitate C2C interactions for their customers through a set of social media marketing strategies including social media campaigns, marketing activities, opinion-sharing posts, and incentive reward programs (Libai *et al.*, 2010). Two basic forms of e-WOM have been distinguished: organic e-WOM and amplified e-WOM (Word of Mouth Marketing Association, 2011; Groeger and Buttle, 2014). Organic e-WOM commonly exists among customers without a brand's intervention, while amplified e-WOM is related to a marketing campaign or a celebrity's endorsement on social media (Libai *et al.*, 2010). Kulmala *et al.* (2013) also identify organic and amplified content types of e-WOM for fashion customers engaging in fashion blogs. Customers usually read the comments left by other users under the brand post; dialogic co-creation occurs when customers interact with others by replying or sharing these users' comments on social networking sites (Heinonen, 2011). Jin and Phua (2014) point out that, as celebrities receive significant attention on social media, when they refer to a brand or product in their individual social networking post, they can usually attract more customers to engage in the interaction and discussion.

Table 4.3: Topics of brand-created posts and user-generated contents on SNSs

Author(s)	Content type	Dimensions	Social media	Research context	Methods	Findings
Blank (2013)	User-generated contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skilled contents</li> <li>• Social contents</li> <li>• Entertainment contents</li> <li>• Political contents</li> </ul>	General social networking sites	British Internet users	Online survey	Elites have no influence on generating skilled contents.
Tafesse (2015)	Facebook brand posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entertaining contents</li> <li>• Informational contents</li> <li>• Transactional contents</li> </ul>	Facebook	UK audiences	Observation	The different brand post content types have significant positive influence on post likes.
Hwang <i>et al.</i> , (2014)	Contents of multitasking on social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information</li> <li>• Social</li> <li>• Efficiency</li> <li>• Enjoyment</li> <li>• Habit</li> </ul>	Facebook	Korean social media users	Online survey	Users' motives for multitasking are related to different content types.
Dolan <i>et al.</i> , (2015)	Social media contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informational contents</li> <li>• Entertaining contents</li> <li>• Remunerative contents</li> <li>• Relational contents</li> </ul>	Western social media	Western social media participants	Theoretical model	The different content types have influence on users' engagement behaviour.
Rohm <i>et al.</i> , (2013)	Brand-customer interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timeliness-oriented interaction</li> <li>• Product information-based interactions</li> <li>• Fun-based</li> </ul>	Facebook and Twitter	Western social media users	Social media diary	The brand-customer interactions can be motivated by different themes.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interactions</li> <li>• Brand engagement-based interactions</li> <li>• Incentive-based interactions</li> </ul>				
Heinonen, (2011)	Social media activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entertainment</li> <li>• Social connection</li> <li>• Information</li> </ul>	Western social media	Western young social media users	Narrative survey	Customers would like to consume the different types of contents but not produce.
Wagner <i>et al.</i> , (2017)	Facebook brand posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional appeals</li> <li>• Utilitarian appeals</li> </ul>	Facebook	Facebook users	Netnography	Some types of contents have positive effect on user interaction.
Kim and Johnson (2016)	Brand-related customer generated contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product functions</li> <li>• Product values</li> <li>• Product benefits</li> <li>• Atmosphere towards brands</li> <li>• Emotions towards brands</li> <li>• Feelings towards brand</li> </ul>	Facebook	Facebook brand page fans	Online survey	Customer-generated contents have a significant impact on customer engagement behaviours.
Martínez-Navarro <i>et al.</i> , (2017)	Facebook brand posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoyment</li> <li>• Credibility</li> <li>• Marketer-generated content value</li> <li>• E-word of mouth</li> </ul>	Facebook	Followers of Zara's Facebook brand page	Online survey	Marketer-generated contents will influence on customer's accepting advertisement on social media.
Azar <i>et al.</i> , (2016)	Customer-brand interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social influence</li> <li>• Entertainment</li> <li>• Search for</li> </ul>	Facebook	Facebook users	Survey	The different contents types will influence on

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>information</li> <li>Trust</li> <li>Reward</li> </ul>				customer engaging in interactive activities with brands on social media.
Jeon <i>et al.</i> , (2016)	Korean brand posts on Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informativeness of the posts</li> <li>Structure of the posts</li> <li>Call for action</li> <li>Type of reward</li> </ul>	Facebook	Korean game company	Observation	The different brand posts will influence on users' reactions.
Kim and Song (2018)	Brand-related user-generated contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organic contents</li> <li>Sponsored contents</li> </ul>	Twitter	Twitter brand posts	Observation	The organic contents appeal higher customer's attention than the sponsored contents on social media.
Kim and Ko (2012)	Social media marketing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Entertainment</li> <li>Interaction</li> <li>Trendiness</li> <li>Customization</li> <li>Word of mouth</li> </ul>	Facebook	Luxury fashion brand	Online survey	The different types of social media marketing activities influence on customer's equity.
Wolny and Mueller (2013)	Customer interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Product involvement</li> <li>Self-involvement</li> <li>Other involvement</li> <li>Advice seeking</li> <li>Need for social interaction</li> </ul>	Facebook, Twitter	Luxury fashion brands	Survey	Customer's brand commitment and fashion involvement motives customer to interact with others on social media.
Chae and Ko (2016)	Social media activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>C2C participation (e-WOM)</li> <li>B2C participation</li> </ul>	SNS	International fashion brands	Survey	Customer's needs for social interaction are the

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer-media participation</li> </ul>				motive for customer engaging in SNS.
De Vries <i>et al.</i> , (2017)	Brand posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vividness</li> <li>• Interactivity</li> <li>• Informational content</li> <li>• Entertaining content</li> </ul>	SNSs	International brands	Observation	The different types of brand posts motivate customer to engage with brands on social media.
Libai <i>et al.</i> , (2010)	C2C interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organic e-WOM</li> <li>• Amplified e-WOM</li> </ul>	No specific	No specific	Conceptual paper	The different dimensions of customer-to-customer interactions.
Jin and Phua (2014)	Celebrities' tweets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amplified e-WOM</li> </ul>	Twitter	SNSs' users	Experiment	The amplified e-WOM has great impact on customer's purchase intention.
Kulmala <i>et al.</i> , (2013)	C2C e-WOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organic e-WOM</li> <li>• Amplified e-WOM</li> </ul>	Fashion blog	Finland fashion customers	Netnography	It has categorised different types of fashion consumer's interactions on social media.

#### 4.3.3 Organic e-WOM contents

The concept of word-of-mouth has been acknowledged widely as a form of information that impacts on what people think and how they feel and behave (Goyette *et al.*, 2010; Groeger and Buttle, 2014). In particular, in the new media age, e-WOM based on the social media context has aroused a great deal of interest (Chu and Song, 2015). Recently, numerous marketing communication studies have investigated and examined organic e-WOM activities and content, which refers to the customers' interactions not explicitly triggered by the marketers' specific strategies in SNSs (Zhang *et al.*, 2017; Swani *et al.*, 2017; Su *et al.*, 2015; Severi *et al.*, 2014; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016; Godey *et al.*, 2016; Moliner-Velázquez *et al.*, 2015; Groeger and Buttle, 2014; Wang *et al.*, 2012).

Hennig-Thurau *et al.* (2004) consider e-WOM as either positive or negative statements related to discussions about products or brands that are spread publicly and generated by active users on the Internet. Wang *et al.* (2012) define e-WOM as peer interactions and communications towards products or services across the social networking platforms. Colliander *et al.* (2015) suggest that e-WOM is not only spread among customers but is also informally created by users without a commercial purpose. Erkan and Evans (2016a) consider e-WOM content as the most utilitarian information that consists of customers' personal experiences and opinions, not merely brand-related information. Furthermore, Severi *et al.* (2014) argue that the content of e-WOM is usually associated with personal assessments in terms of a brand or product, which can influence other customers' perceptions and attitudes about the firms. Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) state that both brand-created content and user-generated content are sources for customers to employ in social media communications. Godey *et al.* (2016) found that fashion customers would like to engage in e-WOM activities by posting and commenting on brand-related or product information on social media. According to the purpose of this study, organic e-WOM content is defined as either positive or negative brand-related content that is generated by customers or shared among peers through social networking sites.

According to a review of e-WOM in existing literature, a number of scholars have examined different aspects of the content included in e-WOM. Zhang *et al.* (2017) selected seven measurement items to test WOM content in the research context of Chinese online shoppers, which covers the popular e-WOM topics of product prices and quality, online shopping websites, online transactions, product delivery and the brand's notoriety, which all have high factor loadings. Park and Kim (2014) employed four statements to measure US customers' e-WOM behaviour on social networks. These behaviours include spreading brand information on their personal Facebook page, making recommendations to others, discussing brands and products in their online social groups and giving positive feedback towards brands on Facebook.

Severi *et al.* (2014) examined e-WOM content's influence on customers' brand equity and detected five aspects of e-WOM based on Malaysia's young social media users. These e-WOM measurements mainly focus on the quality of the brand or

product's information that appeared on social media. Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) tested customer-generated content using four relevant survey measurements employed in previous studies (Tsiros *et al.*, 2004; Magi, 2003; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2013). However, these selective measurement items only describe customers' evaluations of the content generated by other social media users.

Wang *et al.* (2012) investigated Chinese online users engaging in peer communication on China's largest social media website. They applied five measurement items related to C2C communication on social media: customers' discussions about brands/products, customers asking for help, customers providing recommendations, customers giving advice, and customer encouragement. Moliner-Velázquez *et al.* (2015) analysed the moderated impact of online WOM on Spanish retail customers' satisfaction with regard to service recovery. They assess e-WOM measurement items including customers' interactions with their reference groups and other customers, and customers' recommendations passed around social media. Godey *et al.* (2016) explored the luxury fashion brands' social media marketing activities and found that while online WOM is one of the major activities, it has a minor effect on customers' brand loyalty.

Su *et al.* (2015) conducted research based on Taiwan bank customers and explained the influence of customers' satisfaction on customers' e-WOM intention and e-WOM behaviour. Okazaki and Yagüe, (2012) also examined the effect of e-WOM intention on perceived brand value with regard to Japanese online game players. Although their findings support the notion that online game users devote about half of their online time to interacting with other players, the influence of e-WOM intention on perceived brand fit remains uncertain.

In conclusion, based on this review, four major types of e-WOM measurements are identified: (1) e-WOM content and activities; (2) e-WOM information quality; (3) e-WOM behaviour; (4) e-WOM intention. According to this study, the survey construct of organic e-WOM from Zhang *et al.*'s (2017) study was adopted, as these items concentrate on e-WOM content and are based on the Chinese context.

#### **4.3.4 Amplified e-WOM contents**

Marketing scholars and practitioners have realised that, even though there is a plethora of brand and product information from brands' official websites, customers prefer searching product information on SNSs (Vinerean *et al.*, 2013; Wolny and Mueller, 2013). Furthermore, customers rely more on information sourced from the people they know (Bansal and Voyer, 2000; Morokane *et al.*, 2015). In order to explicitly encourage more customers to engage in WOM activities, marketers use campaigns, marketing promotions, advertising, or celebrity endorsements to influence customer engagement behaviour (Godes and Mayzlin, 2009). This form of powerful marketing communication activity is recognised widely as amplified e-WOM (Winer, 2009; Kozinets *et al.*, 2010; Libai *et al.*, 2010; Hinz *et al.*, 2011; Trusov *et al.*, 2009; Sweeney *et al.*, 2012). In addition, Boerman *et al.* (2017) discuss another type of sponsored content that refers to the promotional brand or product

information but is created by the regular users. Initially, they suspected that this type of content could attract more customers to engage in the discussion. Customer-generated content displays a great resemblance to a customer's true narration in its format and style, so it is difficult for customers to distinguish the sponsored content from the non-commercial content (Shrum 2012). However, this type of content in e-WOM communication has emerged with negative outcomes (Libai *et al.*, 2010). Customers thought of promotional content as gimmicks that are manipulated by organisations who can receive substantial benefits from its use (Balter and Butman, 2005; Morokane *et al.*, 2015).

According to the literature review, there are two major types of content included in amplified e-WOM. The first form is celebrity endorsement on social media, which refers to the products and brands that are advertised on a celebrity's personal or brand-generated post. Customers generally consider products endorsed by celebrities as reliable sources of brand and product information (Lafferty and Goldsmith, 2002). When celebrities introduce a brand, share their user experience, or extol the brand's virtues on SNSs, their endorsements are potentially spread to millions of their followers simultaneously, which may expose the brand's messages to the greatest possible audience (Jin and Phua, 2014). Wei and Lu (2013) reveal that celebrity endorsement is accepted by female customers and evokes attention, desire and influence on their purchase intention. Chung and Cho (2017) developed two survey items to examine the frequency of customer interaction with celebrities on social media, and proved that this variable has a positive effect on customer purchase intention.

In addition, Lee and Jang (2011) mention that customers are eager and enjoy interacting with public figures on SNSs as they can gain relaxation and gratification and release their emotions by escaping from mundane life. Gong and Li (2017) consider this type of interaction between customers and celebrities as parasocial interaction. They also examine and confirm that the parasocial interaction between audiences and celebrities has a salient influence on customer attitudes towards advertising and product as well as their purchase intention. Moreover, Kim and Song (2018) employed three items to measure customer engagement in parasocial interaction and found that social media users' frequency of retweeting a celebrity's post has a strong relationship with the parasocial interaction process. However, when celebrities get involved in a negative news or controversial issue, their level of blameworthiness is exaggerated. This may influence customers' perception of the source credibility that comes from those celebrities and their buying intention towards the brand and product that the celebrities endorsed (Louie and Obermiller, 2002; Banister and Cocker, 2014).

Another form of amplified e-WOM content is parasocial interaction between brand and customers (Godes and Mayzlin, 2007; Labrecque, 2014; Boerman *et al.*, 2017; Xiang *et al.*, 2016). Despite being recognised by many scholars, there is no common consensus of its measurement construct. Labrecque (2014) considers customers' perceived interactivity according to four survey items, which can be categorised in two main themes: (1) the brand's ability to respond to their customers on social

media; (2) the speed of the brand's responses. The result of their tested model illustrates that customers' perceived interactivity with brands on social media influences their willingness to share information and enhances their brand loyalty. Xiang *et al.* (2016) consider parasocial interaction as a customer's perceptual variable and further examine whether the interaction with brands and celebrities will enhance a customer's impulse to buy the product.

Compared to the different relevant measurement items, the constructs of amplified e-WOM content in this research employ both Labrecque's (2014) and Xiang *et al.*'s (2016) measurement. This is because Labrecque (2014) measured both the brand's ability to respond and their speed of response, which have proved to yield positive outcomes in parasocial interactions. Xiang *et al.* (2016) considered parasocial interaction, both with brands and other media figures, as the core content of amplified e-WOM; however, other studies did not.

#### **4.3.5 Entertaining contents**

Entertaining content is another important form of brand-generated content that has been consumed and shared by customers on social networking sites (Heinonen, 2011). According to the uses and gratifications theory, various studies recognise that customers, as hedonic seekers, are inclined to engage in entertaining brand-related posts because this type of content is enjoyable and a form of escapism that can make users feel amused and relaxed, and is a way to pass their leisure time (Muntinga *et al.* 2011; Lee and Ma, 2012; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; Manthiou *et al.*, 2013). The outstanding characteristic of entertaining content identified by the scholars is that these brand-created posts do not include any brand or product information (McQuail, 2005; Lee and Ma, 2012; Bronstein, 2013; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; Dolan *et al.*, 2015). McQuail (2005) defined entertaining content on social media as a valuable function for customers to escape daily work and life, thus relieving pressure, satisfying customers' hedonic needs, and releasing their emotions and anxiety. Muntinga *et al.* (2011) also identify that entertaining content enjoys a high attention level as social media users employ such content to pass their time and relax.

Lee and Ma (2012) classified five major forms of entertainment posts: funny videos; brand anecdotes; inspired slogans; humorous teasers; and interesting wordplay. Heinonen (2010) categorised four themes of entertaining content: relaxing and escapism; mood inspired; aesthetic entertaining; and encouraging self-articulation. Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) recognise five main types of entertaining activities that included a set of enjoyable content on social networking sites: social media games; funny cartoons; daily jokes; interesting stories; and horoscopes. Dolan *et al.* (2015) conclude that entertaining content aims to provide customers with hedonic pleasure and fulfil their desire for entertaining value. Therefore, brand page administrators can facilitate entertaining content to attract customer engagement.

Previous empirical studies indicate that entertaining content is one of the most essential factors influencing customers' behaviour on social networking sites

(Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009; Lee *et al.*, 2010; Lin and Lu, 2011; Chua *et al.*, 2012; Manthiou *et al.*, 2013). According to many scholars, entertaining content drives customers to engage in brand-generated social media activities to some degree (Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2009; Shao, 2009; Muntinga *et al.* 2011). For instance, Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) conducted a similar study to measure the effect of three types of social media content (informational, entertaining and remunerative) on comments, likes, shares and the duration of the brand-customer interaction. They proved that entertaining brand posts attract more customers to comment and share compared to the informational or other types of social media content. This is because users thought entertaining content is more appealing to their friends than other types of content, but they indicate that the entertaining content only produces a partial effect on the interaction duration between brand and customers. Luarn *et al.* (2015) also evaluated which type of brand post exhibits more number customer comments, likes and shares on social media. They collected 1,030 brand-generated posts and categorised them into four themes (informational, entertaining, remunerative and social). Entertaining content is second in terms of receiving customer comments, likes and shares. They found that entertaining content reinforces customers' enjoyable experience on social networking sites. The more the customers comment on their favourite entertaining brand posts, the higher the level of customers' stickiness to the brand they interact with.

However, De Vries *et al.* (2012) argue that entertaining content does not increase the number of customer comments on Facebook; it produces a negative effect on customers' likes of the brand post. Their research found that entertaining content is marginally important for brand posts on social media as they do not contain the relevant brand or product information that customers need. Beyond affecting customer engagement, from another side, Mabry and Porter (2010) suggest that entertaining brand posts that exclude product information aim to maintain the brand's friendly image, which may further trigger the customer's purchase intention.

With regard to the survey construct of 'entertaining content', some previous studies examined the measurement of entertaining content from brand pages on social networking platforms. Godey *et al.* (2016) conducted a survey to investigate which types of social media marketing activities facilitated by luxury brands are attractive to social media users. They employed two survey items to measure the customers' attitude towards entertaining content and proved that this type of content influences a customer's brand equity and response.

Enginkaya and Yilma (2014) explored the factors that impact on customers interacting with brands on social media. They used three measurement items that describe customer engagement in entertaining activities on social media to test this element. The results demonstrate that this survey component has high factor loadings that confirm entertaining content motivates customers to participate in brand-generated posts. Lee and Ma (2012) investigated the effect of entertainment on users' news sharing on social media. They employed three items from the survey construct of entertainment to measure the outcomes of social media users



consuming entertaining news. The findings indicate that the purpose of customers engaging in entertaining content is to combat boredom.

This study adopts Godey *et al.* (2016) and Enginkaya and Yilmaz's (2014) measurement items of entertaining content as these items specifically narrate how customers engage in brand-generated entertainment content from a customer's perspective, which is appropriate in this research context.

#### **4.3.6 Remunerative contents**

According to recent empirical research into customer engagement on social media, remunerative content that includes economic benefits and incentives offered by the retailers and brands has emerged as a new social media content type to attract customers engaging in brand-related interactional activities (Rohm *et al.*, 2013; Azar *et al.*, 2016). Muntinga *et al.* (2011) indicate that the level of monetary incentives provided to customers through brand posts on social media highly influence a customer's willingness to contribute to the online brand community. Sofia Martins and Patrício (2013) identified that company facilitated remunerative activities, which include extrinsic benefits such as raffles and competitions, can foster customer engagement and enhance the value for both customers and company. Gummerus *et al.* (2012) found that brands can utilise the Facebook community to facilitate remunerative activities to increase customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Tsai and Men (2013) proved that remunerative incentives and other types of benefits are the primary drivers for customers following brand pages on Facebook. Enginkaya and Yilmaz (2014) examined the factor 'seeking opportunity', which contains two measurement items related to the remunerative benefits of customer interaction with brands. They proved that customers are eager to seek monetary rewards when they are involved in brand-generated activities on SNSs. Muntinga *et al.* (2011) also validated the hypothesis that social media users consume brand-generated content as they expect future rewards. Jeon *et al.* (2016) mention that various types of product-related rewards have a positive effective on customer engagement on mobile games.

In terms of the definition of remunerative content, Muntinga *et al.* (2011) define it as social media content that offers economic benefits, job-related opportunities, monetary compensation, prizes, sweepstakes and giveaways and also meets customers' personal needs. They believe this type of content can gratify customers' expectation of remuneration from social networking sites. Cvijikj and Michahelles (2011) define remunerative posts as content such as product promotions, coupons, product offers and other special offers that are directly or indirectly intended to trigger customer engagement. Additionally, they point out that remunerative posts aim to promote the products or brands by providing these rewards to customers. Baldus *et al.* (2015) found that remunerative content that motivates customers to engage in an online brand community are related to utilitarian rewards – monetary rewards (e.g. product deals and discounts, prizes) and intangible benefits (e.g. time saving). In this research, remunerative content refers to brand-generated posts that include economic incentives for customers on social networking sites.

Although it is recognised that remunerative content generates positive effects for brands and exhibits high customer engagement on social media, a few scholars criticise this content type. Lee *et al.* (2013) found that remunerative information related to economic rewards or mentioning product deals and promotions produces a negative effect on the perception of customer comments. Leeflang *et al.* (2014) also found that remunerative posts can receive more 'likes' compared to informational posts; however, remunerative posts did not enhance the number of customers' comments or sharing of social media brand pages. They argue that customers follow a brand page on social media to obtain more valuable brand information and to engage in positive interactive activities. The remunerative posts do not trigger customers to communicate with the brand. In contrast, Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) found that remunerative content leads to a lower level of customer engagement compared to informational brand posts. Specifically, remunerative activities such as sweepstakes and prize drawing result in negative outcomes in terms of increasing the number of 'likes', but they have a significant positive impact on receiving customers' comments. Whilst these empirical studies illustrate the effect of remuneration posts on attracting customer engagement through likes, comments and shares, the content of customer comments (e.g. positive or negative) were not analysed.

As few empirical studies provide the survey construct 'remunerative content'. Azar *et al.* (2016) examined the effect of rewards content on social media on customers' motivation to interact with brands on Facebook. Jeon *et al.* (2016) tested the type of rewards on Facebook brand pages and their influence on customer engagement in mobile games. Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) and Luarn *et al.* (2015) quantitatively examined the relationship between brand posts that related to remunerative content and customers' likes, comments and shares. Compared to the survey construct of remunerative content from these studies, this thesis uses Azar *et al.*'s (2016) and De Vries *et al.*'s (2012) measurement items for remunerative content.

#### **4.4 Consequences: Customer benefit-received and customer purchase intention**

Current literature mentions a series of positive outcomes for customer engagement in co-creation activities. From the customers' perspective, their perception of the brand and product is enhanced and their needs are satisfied by the value they generate in a set of interactive activities. In co-creation studies, the notion of customer value has been explored and examined by many scholars (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Some of them consider this kind of value emerged from the benefits customers receive from the co-creation process (Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Hollebeek, 2013; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014).

Basically, in terms of co-creation activities in the social media environment, functional, social and hedonic benefits have been recognised as three major types of value for customers (Zhang *et al.*, 2016). Consistent with the uses and gratification theory, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) focus on four types of benefits (social, cognitive, personal and hedonic) that constitute customer value in co-creation engagement. Kuo and Feng (2013) also identified four types of benefits (social, self-esteem, learning and hedonic) that appeal to the community members engaging in the interaction. Chen *et al.* (2015) recognise that utilitarian, interpersonal and hedonic benefits are the main dimensions of value that customers can obtain from the co-creation process in a virtual social environment. For instance, when a customer co-creates dialogue with brands and other customers on social media, they are gaining an opportunity to acquire product information (Jahn and Kunz, 2012), develop and maintain the relational ties with other co-creators (Nambisan and Baron, 2009), and receive a hedonic interactive experience that allows them to release their emotion and enjoy the time during the co-creation experience (Chen *et al.*, 2015).

Other scholars have argued that potential risks can be concealed and lead to value co-destruction (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Chan *et al.*, 2010; Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Heidenreich *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, in the social media environment, except for the negative comments generated by customers, the most common risk is the ignorance of customers. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) have warned that not everyone enjoys engaging in such co-creation experiences. Most users only observe others' interaction but do not participate. Therefore, instead of directly detecting the negative outcomes, this study evaluates the level of customers' benefits from the dialogic of co-creation engagement. If the result is a low level of customer benefit received, it indicates that customers do not enjoy dialogic co-creation engagement. In terms of survey measurement, following Chen *et al.* (2015), it is suggested that the construct 'customer benefits' that emerged from dialogic co-creation engagement in this thesis contains the components of utilitarian benefits, interpersonal benefits and hedonic benefits.

In addition, a customer's purchase intention is deemed as an alternative outcome of co-creation engagement as it is potentially influenced by the customer's perception and emotions (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Li *et al.*, 2013; See-To *et al.*, 2014). It has been confirmed that a customer's cognitive and affective attitudes will impact

on their purchase intention (Hwang *et al.*, 2011; Morris *et al.*, 2002). The benefits of co-creation engagement impact on a customer's attitude and in turn influence their purchase intention (Bian and Forsythe, 2012; Zhan and He, 2012). The following sections specifically review customer benefits and how their purchase intention develops from co-creation engagement.

#### **4.4.1 Customer benefits**

Three types of customer benefits (utilitarian, hedonic, interpersonal) are defined and discussed specifically in this section. In this thesis, utilitarian benefits comprise economic and learning benefits (Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Chen *et al.*, 2015). Economic benefit reflects the product or discounts that customers expect to receive (Chen *et al.*, 2015). Learning benefit refers to a better understanding of the brands and improved acquisition of product-related information (Nambisan and Baron, 2009).

In this study, interpersonal benefits include social benefits and personal integrative benefits (Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Chen *et al.*, 2015). Personal integrative benefit is defined as achievement of social status and social identity and gaining the opportunity of self-expression as dialogic co-creation engagement on social networks provides a venue for customers to contribute their knowledge towards the brands and products. By showing their expertise to help and influence other customers, an individual can receive a sense of self-approval (Liang *et al.* 2012). Social benefit is generally derived from the relational and social ties that develop from interacting with brands and other customers. Through these interactions, customers can enhance a sense of belonging in their social community.

Hedonic benefits, including a sense of fun, relaxation, enjoyment and pleasure, derive from the dialogic co-creation engagement (Hsieh and Lin 2012; Kauffman *et al.* 2010). Nambisan and Baron (2009) identify hedonic benefits as the mentally satisfying experiences that develop from three type of situations. First, when customers positively communicate with other customers about their understanding of a product's idiosyncrasies and their experience using the product, they enjoy the conversations. The second type of situation that forms hedonic benefits is when a problem is solved through interaction with the brand or other customers. The third source of hedonic benefits from co-creation engagement is when customers participate in entertainment activities on social media, hedonic emotion is released from the customer's mind.

#### **4.4.2 Purchase intention**

Purchase intention can be understood as the customer's mental stage of developing a willingness to purchase an item (Kim and Ko, 2010; Wells *et al.*, 2011; See-To and Ho, 2014; Erkan and Evans, 2016). Purchase intention is considered as another outcome of customer dialogic co-creation engagement since the primary aim of marketing communication is to enhance customers' possibility of buying the marketed product or brand in future (Hutter *et al.*, 2013). Payne *et al.* (2008) and See-To and Ho (2014) indicate that the value co-creation experience can be

considered as a kind of customer learning process that helps customers to enhance their understanding about the company and its products. When customers engage in such a process that is facilitated by a firm, it may increase their purchase intention. Specifically, in the social media context, it is suggested that when many positive comments about a product are exposed to potential customers, these will influence the potential customers' expectations about the product. Such positive expectation will increase customers' willingness to purchase this brand confidently (See-To and Ho, 2014). However, if there is a substantial quantity of negative discussion and complaints about the product among customers on social media, these will influence their trust in the brand and product, which may reduce their desire to make a purchase decision in future (Lee and Song 2010).

#### **4.5 Summary**

The main contribution of this chapter is the identification of the key components of three stages (antecedents, process, outcomes) of customer engagement in the dialogic co-creation process for value formation on social networking platforms. A conceptual foundation framework for this study was established and is displayed in Figure 4.1.

This conceptual framework (Figure 4.1) is established based on C-D logic (Figure 3.1, p46), which includes the five characteristics (customer perspective, customer logic, value formation, service provider's offerings and customer ecosystem). In stage one of Figure 4.1, the identified antecedent factors represent customer's logic towards engaging in value formation process. Stages two and stage three of Figure 4.1 outline customer value formation process by identifying the types of dialogic co-creation activities that customers engage in and the positive outcomes customer gain from this engagement. In addition, the dialogic co-creation activities that are facilitated by fashion brands on social media can be considered as the service provider's offerings. Furthermore, Figure 4.1 demonstrates that customer value formation process appears in customer ecosystem. The details of each stage in Figure 4.1 will be explained as follows.

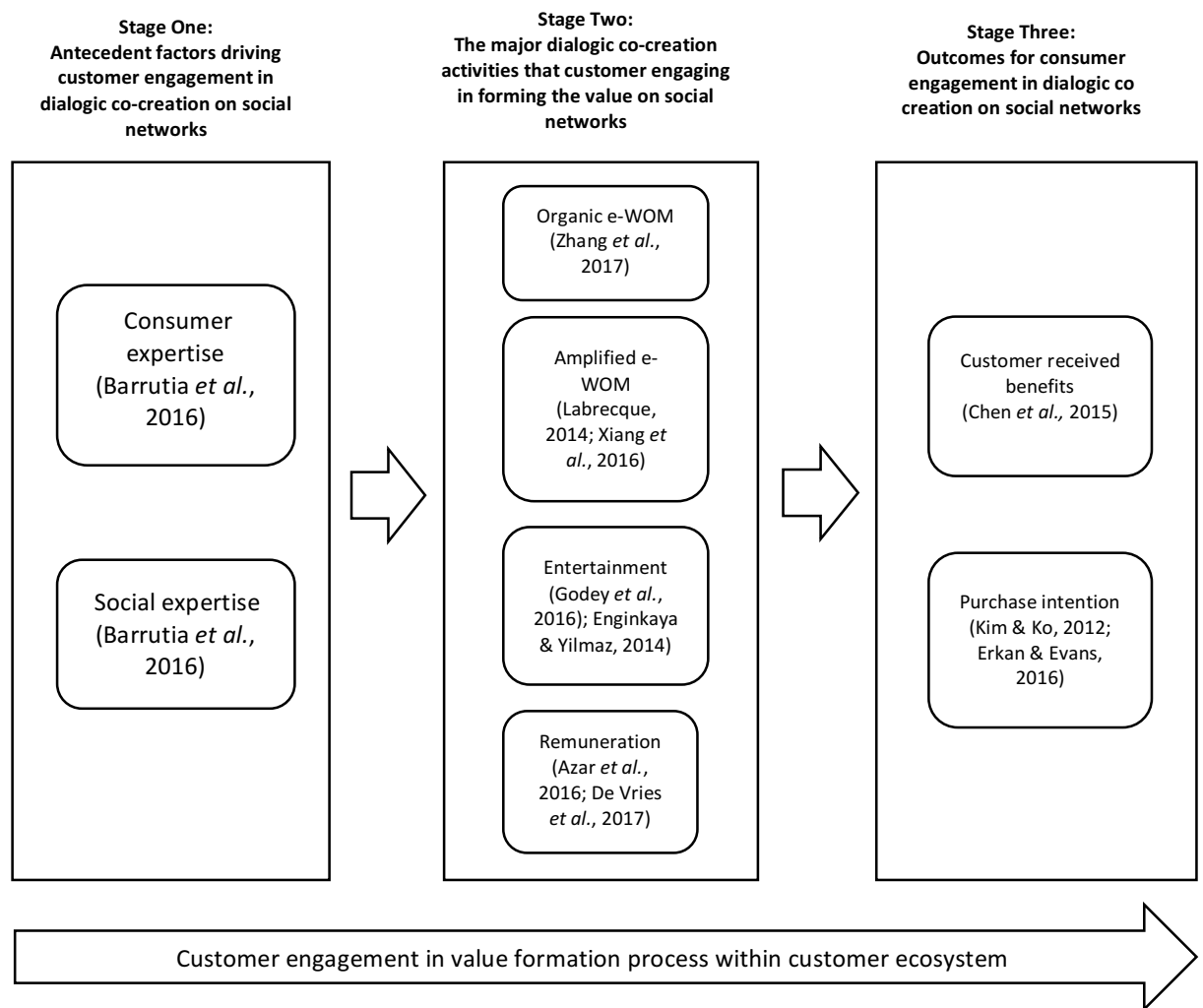
First, by investigating how customer engagement in dialogic co-creation on social networking platforms occurs, this framework has considered from customer's perspective by identifying the antecedent factors that motivate customers to engage in activities. This antecedents also represent customer logic that influence their choice and behaviour. In the extensive literature on consumer participation, it has been recognised that value creation requires customers' combinative capabilities (e.g. Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2013; Stephen and Toubia, 2010). Therefore, according to Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013) and Barrutia *et al.* (2016), consumer expertise, social expertise and innovativeness are the key consumer capabilities for value co-creation in an online activity context. However, since innovativeness refers to a tendency to be a technology pioneer (Parasuraman, 2000), which is not closely related to the current study's context, it is proposed that consumer expertise and social expertise are the main antecedent factors influencing customer engaging in co-creation dialogues with brands and other customers on social networking sites.

Second, the most important process in value formation is that customers actively participate in brand-facilitated activities (Choi and Ko, 2016). Nowadays, social networking sites provide new opportunities for customers to engage in dialogic co-creation activities with brands and other customers (Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Gummerus *et al.*, 2012; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). Social media marketing (SMM) is a two-way communication in which it is possible to interact with and among customers (Brodie *et al.*, 2013). There are four dominant dimensions of SMM activities (organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertainment and remuneration) in which customers can participate in dialogic co-creation with fashion brands and other customers on social networking sites. These social media marketing activities can be deemed as the offerings that brands provide for their customers to generate value. More importantly, these brand-facilitated activities cater to customer's preferences rather than brand's preferences. According to C-D logic, customers engage in the value formation process within customer ecosystem. In this specific situation, customer ecosystem includes customers, brands and other customers who have engaged in the dialogic co-creation activities.

Third, the value that customer generated by engaging in the dialogic co-creation activities has been considered at the third stage. Prahalad and Ramswamy (2004) identified the different types of benefits that can be obtained from customers' actual interaction in co-creation engagement. Chen *et al.* (2015) pointed out that utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal benefits are the three dimensions of value that consumers gain from co-creation activities. In addition, purchase intention, encompassing measures of ongoing engagement with the brand, represents an alternative consumer outcome (Li *et al.*, 2013).

Fourth, customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities on social networking platform is within customer ecosystem, which is involved customer, brands and other customers in it. To date, this framework of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation on social networking platforms has not been empirically examined. The next chapter develops the measurable model and its relationships with the hypotheses for each stage of the conceptual model.

Figure 4.1: Conceptual framework based on the literature review



## Chapter 5 Conceptual model and Hypotheses Development

### 5.1 Introduction

Based on the basic conceptual framework constructed in Chapter 4, this chapter outlines a set of related research hypotheses that link the three stages (antecedents, process, outcomes) of customer engagement in the value formation process through dialogic co-creation activities on social networking platforms. As these hypotheses specify the interrelationship of the selected and justified survey constructs, they lead to the conceptual model to be examined, refined and validated empirically by the subsequent research step.

In terms of the first stage, as the motivations of fashion customers' engagement in dialogic co-creation with brands and other customers in the social networking environment are diverse and complex, several antecedent factors that have a significant influence on driving customers to engage were reviewed and discussed in Chapter 4. Following Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013) and Barrutia *et al.* (2016), this research selected two measurable constructs (consumer expertise and social expertise). These two constructs were chosen as previous studies have rigorously proved that consumer knowledge has an essential impact on customer engagement in value co-creation activities (Alden *et al.*, 2016; Ma and Chan, 2014; Mahr and Lievens, 2012). Moreover, a consumer's social abilities on virtual platforms have been identified as one of the core influencing factors by most of the studies in this field (Barrutia *et al.*, 2016; Zolkepli *et al.*, 2015; Xu-Priour *et al.*, 2014; Naylor *et al.*, 2012). More significantly, the investigation of the customer value formation process in this study is based on C-D logic, which emphasises the exploration of customer logic to understand customer behaviour. In order to test the effects of these identified antecedent factors on influencing customer engagement in a series of dialogic co-creation activities on social networking sites, the second section of this chapter (Section 5.2) will define the relationships between the identified antecedent factors and a set of dialogic co-creation activities that customers engage in.

Furthermore, the second stage outlines the interactional and communicational activities that are the main processes of customer value formation on social networking sites. Four constructs (organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertainment, remuneration) represent the typology of dialogic co-creation activities that the majority of customers prefer to engage in on social networking sites with brands and other users (Zhang *et al.*, 2017; Labrecque, 2014; Xiang *et al.*, 2016; Godey *et al.*, 2016); Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014; Azar *et al.*, 2016; De Vries *et al.*, 2017). Specifically, with respect to dialogic co-creation activities, the current study is mainly focused on how different content and topics appeal to customers' participation and response in terms of liking, commenting and sharing brand posts. The measurement items of each construct have been selected as these items describe the content and topics of each dialogic co-creation customers engage in from the customers' perspective.



In the third stage, as previous scholars have recognised that customers may receive tangible and intangible benefits as consequences of engaging in value co-creation (Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Foster *et al.*, 2010; Li *et al.*, 2013; Hajli, 2014; Hajli and Lin, 2014; Chen *et al.*, 2015; Zhang *et al.*, 2016), this will be discussed. Moreover, within the social media or online fashion shopping context, another outcome of customer purchase intention has been assumed by scholars such as Kim and Ko (2012) and Erkan and Evans (2016); therefore, Section 5.3 will illustrate the relationships between the different types of dialogic co-creation activities that customers engage in and the outcomes that customers received from the engagement. Finally, a set of research hypotheses that demonstrate the relationships between different research constructs in the integrative conceptual model are provided in Section 5.4.

## **5.2 Antecedent factors and customer engagement in dialogic co-creation**

Based on the aim and context of this thesis, it is necessary to ascertain the antecedent factors that motivate fashion customers to engage in a series of brand-generated dialogic co-creation activities. According to Wagner *et al.* (2017), the motivation for customer engagement in social networks is the customers' desire to reply and comment on a brand post. As the major four types of social media-based dialogic co-creation activities (organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertainment, remuneration) facilitated by fashion brands mainly focus on information exchange and social interaction, past research has indicated that customers who engage in content and dialogue creation are able to narrate their opinions and experiences, as well as communicate with others (Blank 2013). These capabilities and competences tend to be associated with a customer's individual knowledge of the brand and product and the quality of relationships in the customer's ecosystem (Pera *et al.*, 2016). In addition, Wolny and Mueller (2013) propose that fashion customers are more willing to engage in interaction and co-creation activities when they have more related skills, abilities and opportunities to do so. In addition, Blank (2013) assumes that a user's capacity of writing the interesting sentences and expressing personal opinions may be influenced by his/her educational level and social status. The result of his research indicates that either informational, social or entertainment content is generated by young users who have relevant expertise. However, the majority of social and entertainment content is generated by users who earn lower incomes. Therefore, he suggested that the social status is not related to users who prefer generating informational content on social networks. Therefore, customers' educational level and social status will be considered and investigated in this thesis. The following two sub-sections specify the influence of consumer expertise and social expertise on customer engagement in different dialogic co-creation activities.

### **5.2.1 Customer expertise and customer engagement in dialogic co-creation**

With regard to this research context, customers share information about products or brands via e-WOM, which is one of the most influential dialogic co-creation activities (Grönroos and Voima, 2013). Lee and Koo (2012) claim that a customer's subjective knowledge will have a greater influence on their perception and behaviour than other types of resources. The dialogues on the social networking site during the co-

creation process encourage fashion customers to share their shopping experience and express their opinions about the product, which results in interactive processes of learning. Brodie *et al.* (2013) suggest that customers who are knowledgeable about the brand or product are more active in sharing information, resources and experience with each other through e-WOM in a brand's online community. This is consistent with Packard and Wooten's (2013) finding that customers who have more information and knowledge in terms of the specific product are more willing to contribute and share product information to others than the general customers. Packard and Wooten (2013) also point out that people who have less consumer knowledge may decrease their motivation to transmit information via word-of-mouth. As these people believe that they are insufficiently knowledgeable about product information, their opinions about the product may be of no use to others, so they are less willing to engage in word-of-mouth activity. These people are also afraid that their unprofessional opinions and suggestions may not be accepted by others. Melé *et al.* (2010) explain that customers tend to engage in co-creation practices for practical reasons that are related to their need to share information, previous experiences, useful skills or competencies that they believe might be helpful to others. Furthermore, except for the willingness to share knowledge, the lead users are more eager to engage in interactive activities in order to gain advance information than the regular users (Mahr and Lievens, 2012). Since e-WOM activities are classified as organic and amplified content in this study, it follows that organic e-WOM naturally occurs among customers (Libai *et al.*, 2010). For instance, fashion shoppers are more likely to make comments below the brand's post on social networking sites than the ordinary customers (Kulmala *et al.*, 2012). Thus, the first hypothesis is:

H1a: Consumer expertise will have a positive effect on driving customers to engage in organic e-WOM on a SNS.

Amplified e-WOM occurs when marketers use a celebrity endorsement strategy to accelerate customer interaction (Kumar *et al.*, 2010) or when customers receive a direct reply from brands or celebrities (Labrecque, 2014; Xiang *et al.*, (2016). Jin and Phua (2014) found that using celebrities to endorse a product can create amplified influence on fashion customers' intention to engage in discussions. Other researchers such as Chung and Cho (2017) also found that a celebrity endorsement can evoke customers' brand awareness, so that the parasocial interaction between customer and brand or customer and celebrity is fostered. Gong and Li (2017) indicate that customers have an increased willingness to develop parasocial interaction with a celebrity they admire. In other words, if a customer is attracted to a particular celebrity, he/she is driven to pay more attention to that celebrity's news and more eager to receive interaction from the celebrity (Hartmann and Goldhoorn, 2011). With regard to the second situation of amplified e-WOM activities, Lu *et al.* (2014) mention that brand awareness can be considered as a kind of brand knowledge, as a customer's brand awareness is reflected in whether he/she is capable of identifying and remembering a specific brand's or product's information. If a customer is familiar with a particular brand or product, no matter whether he/she obtains this information passively or actively, their brand awareness of this

brand/product is higher than customers who are not familiar with it. Fashion shoppers who know a particular brand or celebrity will have higher passion for, and pay more attention to, the brand's facilitated interactive activities than other users (Wolny and Mueller, 2013). Thus, the second hypothesis is:

H1b: Consumer expertise will have a positive effect on driving customer engagement in amplified e-WOM on a SNS.

### **5.2.2 Social expertise and customer engagement in dialogic co-creation**

Social expertise is defined as the degree to which customers receive intelligent social support for co-creating value (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). Barrutia *et al.* (2016) indicate that consumer knowledge and expertise may be enriched through the interaction in a customer's social context. In a virtual environment, although customers can either consume or produce information individually in a democratic and voluntary manner (Ståhlbröst and Bergvall-Kåreborn, 2011), through his/her social collaborative effort, a customer can extend co-creation engagement beyond dyadic interactive experiences (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010) to a multi-dimensional social interaction (Brodie *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, social networks are part of the customer's operant resources, which means customers tap in to their own knowledge in their social context to achieve more positive value (Chandler and Vargo, 2011). In a customer's social context, they not only receive intelligent social support, but also find proximity, affiliation, social belonging and bonding through social networking, which may influence their motivation to engage in C2C interaction via e-WOM (Brodie *et al.*, 2013). Smith *et al.* (2007) held another point of view: customers would like to be useful and give practical advice to others on social media based on their previous experiences. Wolny and Mueller (2013) provided a similar argument, suggesting that fashion customers are influenced by others (friends, family, peers or other users) engaging in e-WOM on social media. They pointed out that fashion customers sometimes have the desire to provide suggestions for others or advise their friends to make a wise purchase decision on social media (Wolny and Mueller, 2013). Moreover, they specified that fashion customers may feel compelled to engage in e-WOM activity if they feel they are indebted to other users who have contributed valuable information on social media. This valuable information not only includes advice about personal fashion style, but also contains advice about the purchase of fashion products. In addition, Xu-Priour *et al.* (2014) point out that Chinese customers who live in a collectivist culture would like to be influenced by their social reference groups through peer discussion on social media. Thus, it can be proposed:

H2a: Social expertise will have a positive effect on driving customer engagement in organic e-WOM on a SNS.

Furthermore, Zhu *et al.* (2012) have proved that a customer's attitude towards the brand is not only influenced by the brand's attributes, but is also affected by his/her reference group members' opinions and suggestions. Customers tend to accept information from their trusted resources such as reference group members (Narayan

*et al.*, 2011). When a customer begins to discuss a product or brand among his/her social reference group, he/she is unintentionally endorsing a product or brand to others (Sheth and Kim, 2018). Young customers are easily influenced by their reference group members (friends, family, peers) when forming attitudes towards a brand (Hamilton *et al.*, 2016); therefore, when a customer sees his/her friends follow or interact with a brand, he/she may be motivated to engage in the discussion with the brand as well. Aral and Walker (2011) also point out that when a customer notices his/her reference group members are engaging with a particular brand, he/she tends to be interested in that brand and this may encourage him/her to engage in the interaction. Sheth and Kim (2018) explain that customers are indirectly exerting pressure on their reference group members to engage in e-WOM with a brand when they have been seen to interact with brands on social media. Although there are few studies that have proved that a customer's social expertise may influence their motivation to interact with a celebrity, Vivek *et al.* (2012) indicate that customers usually follow their reference group members' preferences and behaviours on social media. Based on this evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2b: Social expertise will have a positive effect on driving customer engagement in amplified e-WOM on a SNS.

In terms of dialogic co-creation engagement, brands invite customers to participate in entertainment activities on social networking sites (Dolan *et al.*, 2015). Entertainment activities aim to release or reduce customers' pressure in their 'real life' through posting funny games and videos on social media (Lee and Ma, 2012). Although little evidence supports the view that customers' motivation to engage in a brand's facilitated entertainment activities is influenced by their social expertise, as mentioned before, the majority of social media users are inclined to participate in a brand's activity due to influence from their reference groups (e.g. friends, family, peers) (Naylor *et al.*, 2012). Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002) found that customers who share similar social identities in their reference group tend to follow the same social group norms. In other words, people would like to act as these reference group members' actually act (Vivek *et al.*, 2012). In Doran's (2002) study of consumer behaviour, he found that Chinese customers displayed a preference for allowing reference groups to influence their online engagement behaviour. Given that, social identification may stimulate group-oriented attitudes and behaviours such as participation in online activities that other members engaged in (Zeng *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, when a customer has gains positive emotions such as satisfied, excited or glad from the brand's entertainment activities, they tend to post this emotion on social media, which may influence other users from his/her reference group to pay an attention to the brand or activity. Passing the positive emotions gained from the brand over social media may cause other users to develop similar emotions about the brand (Sheth and Kim, 2017). Thus, the following hypothesis was developed:

H2c: Social expertise will have a positive effect on driving customer engagement in entertainment activities on a SNS.

With regard to the dialogic co-creation of remunerative activities, there are few empirical studies that have examined the influence of customers' social expertise on customer engagement in remunerative activities on social media. According to Cvijikj and Michahelles (2011), this type of brand-generated posts usually includes the brand/product information directly or indirectly. However, through the provision of economic incentives and special rewards, customers are attracted to engage in this type of dialogic co-creation activities on social media (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011; Dolan *et al.*, 2016). In order to gain these rewards, customers are required to contribute their own generated comments or engage in the interactive activities on social media (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). Hence, it can be assumed that customers who have social expertise (social support) easily co-create the dialogues together with their reference group members to receive the economic rewards. Moreover, customers consider their social expertise as a kind of social resource or social capital that can be integrated and exchanged in co-creation activities (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). Therefore, customers can utilise their social expertise to exchange the tangible or intangible rewards from their engagement in the dialogic co-creation of remunerative activities on social media. Based on these arguments, another hypothesis is:

H2d: Social expertise will have a positive effect on driving customer engagement in remunerative activities on a SNS.

### **5.3 Customer engagement in dialogic co-creation and outcomes for customers**

The most important process of value co-creation between customers and brands is that customers can actively participate in brand-facilitated activities (Choi and Ko, 2016). In order to attract more customers to engage in these activities and interact with brands, a set of social media marketing strategies have been utilised by fashion brands (Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Gummerus *et al.*, 2012; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). Specifically, there are different types of content included in brand-generated posts (Wagner *et al.*, 2017). The topics of organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertainment and remuneration have been recognised as the four major types of activities that customers would like to participate in with regard to dialogic co-creation with brands and other users on social networking sites.

Moreover, customer engagement in a setting of dialogic co-creation may lead to the creation of effective consumer benefits (Chen *et al.*, 2015). Zhang *et al.* (2016) point out that customer engagement in value co-creation activities may result in generating useful values if their needs have been satisfied during this process. This created or co-created value can be considered as a kind of benefit that is received after customer's contribution (Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Hollebeek, 2013; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). Kao and Feng (2013) also claim that the customer interactive experience can generate an effect on the customer benefits (e.g. hedonic benefits, social benefits, self-esteem benefits, learning benefits) received. Prahalad and Ramswamy (2003) identified the different types of benefits that can be obtained

from consumers' actual interaction in co-creation engagement. Chen *et al.* (2015) pointed out that utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal benefits are the three dimensions of value that consumers gain from co-creation activities. For instance, the higher the level of customers' active participation in dialogic co-creation activities, the better the opportunity they have to acquire product information (Jahn and Kunz, 2012), develop relational ties with others (Nambisan and Baron, 2009), and have a hedonic experience that allows them to enjoy pleasant and relaxed emotions from dialogic co-creation (Chen *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the following sub-sections will establish the relationships between customer engagement in different types of dialogic co-creation activities and the benefits that customers can receive from the engagement.

In addition, there is another alternative outcome from dialogic co-creation that needs to be considered: customer purchase intention. Customers' engagement in dialogic co-creation activities may help them to gain a better understanding of the brand and its products. Such product cognition may increase a customer's willingness to purchase the product in future (Li *et al.*, 2013; See-To and Ho, 2014). Thus, the relationships between customer engagement in different types of dialogic co-creation activities and the influence of customer purchase intention will also be examined.

### **5.3.1 Customer engagement in organic e-WOM activities and the outcomes**

Organic e-WOM is also called peer-to-peer interaction in which customers are involved in discussions related to the topic of product or brand information on social media (Chu and Sung, 2015). The positive aspect of e-WOM is that it is considered to create a variety of benefits for customers (Fernandes and Remelhe, 2016). However, Doh and Hwang (2009) pointed out that negative e-WOM can also generate a positive effect on influencing customer attitudes, as the negative comments from other customers are considered as credible messages for customers. Customers deemed negative e-WOM as useful information that assists them to avoid an unsatisfactory shopping experience (Wolny and Mueller, 2013).

In terms of receiving benefits, customers can gain utilitarian benefits through exchanging brand-related information and sharing previous purchase experiences on social networking sites (Steffes and Burgee, 2009; Lee *et al.*, 2012a). Chen *et al.* (2015) explicate that the online brand community provides a virtual place for those customers who have the same interests to share their information, knowledge and resources among the group members. Customers engaging in such an online community can receive more valuable, richer and more trustworthy information such as product discounts and product reviews. Doherty and Ellis-Chadwick (2010) point out that through gaining high quality information from other users' opinions or suggestions, customers can reduce the risks and uncertainty about decisions to purchase.

Furthermore, e-WOM participation can satisfy customers' interpersonal benefits, as they may be accepted and approved by other customers when their opinions or

suggestions are useful to others (Lee *et al.*, 2012a). Customers can also expand their social capital by developing a new relationship with other customers through e-WOM on social networking sites (Chen *et al.*, 2015). Liang *et al.* (2012) mentioned that a customer's social status within their social community can be maintained and enhanced through their contributions to the discussions and interactions with the brand or other customers. However, during the C2C interactions, some verbal abuse may occur on social media as customers may hold different opinions and try to convince each other. Adjei *et al.* (2010) suggested that negative e-WOM among customers may have an influence on a customer receiving satisfaction.

In addition, customer interaction in the value co-creation activities can be considered as a mentally stimulating experience that can generate hedonic value for customers through the discussion and exploration process (Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Chen *et al.*, 2015). Engaging in e-WOM can also help customers to pass their time quickly when they are bored and lonely (Chen *et al.*, 2015). However, the conflicts and arguments during customer interaction may lead to the destruction of a customer's value (Mahr *et al.*, 2014).

Furthermore, a customer's purchase intention is highly influenced by other's opinions and suggestions through peer-to-peer interaction (Chu and Sung, 2015). As Cheema and Kaikati (2010) summarised, information sharing via e-WOM is a crucial resource that customers rely on. The advice from others is more effective in influencing a customer's purchase decision than the traditional marketing channels (e.g. advertisements). Furthermore, Adjei *et al.* (2010) proved that negative e-WOM would force customers to abandon their purchase intention and turn their attention to other brands or products. Therefore, it suggests that customers will develop purchase intention by interacting and learning from the positive experience of e-WOM (Chu and Sung, 2015). Based on the above discussions, two hypotheses are formed:

H3a: Customers engaging in positive organic e-WOM activities on a SNS will increase receipt of (utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal) benefits.

H3b: Customers engaging in positive organic e-WOM activities on a SNS will enhance customer purchase intention.

### **5.3.2 Customer engagement in amplified e-WOM activities and the outcomes**

Customer engagement in amplified e-WOM can generate three types of customer benefits (Kim and Song, 2016; Lee and Jang, 2011) and influence a customer's purchase intention (Chung and Cho, 2017). In terms of the utilitarian benefits, female customers consider amplified e-WOM as a reliable and credible source of information about the product or brand (Wei and Lu, 2013). This is because if a brand or celebrity mentions a product on a SNS, this product endorsement is broadcast simultaneously to potentially millions of followers (Jin and Phua, 2014); thus, customers can easily find the useful information if they follow the brand or celebrity. Additionally, brands also release additional product information such as

product promotions, product sales and monetary rewards on social media, which assists customers to receive more economic benefits (Chen *et al.*, 2015). However, when celebrities are involved in conflicts or negative issues, their endorsements will be judged by the customers. This may generate a negative effect on customers' attitudes and purchase intentions (Banister and Cocker, 2014).

Furthermore, with regard to customers' interpersonal benefits, as brands usually personify themselves to get close to customers (Sheth and Kim, 2017), characterising brands can attract customers who have similar characteristics (Kwon and Sung, 2011). Thus, customers can establish a friendship and reinforce the connection with brands via interactions on social media (Kwon and Sung, 2011; Kim and Song, 2016). Labreque (2014) also highlighted that when customers are involved in direct two-way communication with brands, they are developing a parasocial relationship with the brand at the same time. However, if a brand becomes involved in a crisis, social media will amplify the negative impact on the brand and its relationship with customers (Yannopoulou *et al.*, 2011).

In addition, customer engagement in amplified e-WOM can create an emotional connection with brands and celebrities (Sheth and Kim, 2018). Through engaging in e-WOM activities with brands or celebrities, customers can be gratified by communicating with these figures who are difficult to get in touch with in real life. Interactions with celebrities on SNSs bring hedonic value such as gratification, relaxation, enjoyment and emotional relief enabled by temporarily escaping from mundane routines (Lee and Jang, 2013).

Moreover, brands pretend to be a 'human face' to connect with their customers, which can effectively influence customers' attitudes and purchase intention (Xiang *et al.*, 2016; Sheth and Kim, 2018). The more frequent the interaction between brand and customers or celebrity and customers, the higher the potential that customers' desire to buy the product from the brand (Sheth and Kim, 2018; Boerman *et al.*, 2017). In conclusion, two relevant hypotheses can be developed:

H4a: Customers engaging in positive amplified e-WOM activities on a SNS will increase customers' receipt of (utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal) benefits.

H4b: Customers engaging in positive amplified e-WOM activities on a SNS will enhance customer purchase intention.

### **5.3.3 Customer engagement in entertaining activities and the outcomes**

Entertainment plays an important role as shared and consumed content on social networking sites (Heinonen, 2011). The entertainment activities on SNSs involve a variety of entertaining and enjoyable content, such as online games, cartoons, jokes, daily horoscopes and human-interest stories (Taylor *et al.*, 2011). According to previous studies of customer engagement in entertainment activities on social media, the major benefit for customers is receipt of hedonic value, including being entertained and amused (Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014; Rohm *et al.*, 2013), and



passing boredom and lonely times (Shu and Chuang, 2011). Moreover, the value of entertainment content is embedded in its ability to fulfil customers' needs for escapism, hedonistic pleasure and aesthetic enjoyment (Muntinga *et al.* 2011; Dolan *et al.*, 2015).

In addition to the hedonic benefit, customers can also receive utilitarian benefit from the engagement. Swani *et al.* (2013) found that entertaining content attracts more customers' likes than other types of content, and can stimulate e-WOM and become viral. In other words, entertaining content can attract potential customers to follow the brand and spread the brand's information on social media. Muntinga *et al.* (2011) proved that entertainment activities can motivate customers to create, contribute and consume the brand-related information on social media. However, De Vries *et al.* (2012) demonstrated the negative effects of entertainment content on Facebook. Their research found that entertaining content is marginally significant and negatively related to the popularity of social media content, as it did not influence the number of comments made on the content (De Vries *et al.*, 2012).

Moreover, Heinonen (2011) claimed that entertainment activities are also associated with the social connection as there is a possibility that it requires multiplayer to engage in an online game. Therefore, entertainment activities provide the opportunity for customers to get to know new friends or maintain their relationship with the reference group members through engaging in the entertainment activity together. Park *et al.* (2009) also mentioned that entertainment activities can drive users to participate in social interaction to some degree, which may satisfy customers' interpersonal benefits.

Finally, the entertainment content that satisfies customers' hedonic benefit may give customers a good impression of the brand (Azar *et al.*, 2016), and thus trigger the customers' buying potential (Mabry and Porter, 2010). Thus, the related hypotheses are formulated as:

H5a: Customers engaging in entertainment activities on a SNS will increase customers' receipt of (utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal) benefits.

H5b: Customers engaging in entertainment activities on a SNS will enhance customers' purchase intention.

#### **5.3.4 Customer engagement in remunerative activities and the outcomes**

Remunerative activities refer to brand-generated content related to rewards and economic incentives (e.g. prizes, coupons and promotions) that are commonly shared and disseminated across SNSs (Azar *et al.*, 2016; De Vries *et al.*, 2012; Muntinga *et al.*, 2011). Customers may engage in brand-facilitated activities on SNSs as they expect to gain some kind of reward such as economic benefits or personal needs (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011). Through this engagement, customers can be satisfied by receipt of utilitarian benefits (economic rewards). In addition, remunerative posts refer to specific activities that are intended to promote a brand and its products,

which also provide utilitarian benefits (informational benefit) for customers (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, De Vries *et al.* (2012) found that remunerative activities can motivate customers to generate and contribute brand-related content on social media. If a customer has received an economic benefit, such as a prize, product samples or coupons, they will be stimulated to provide feedback or leave positive comments on the brand page. Thus, remunerative activities can prompt customers to share brand information, which may benefit other customers.

In addition, this type of content is expected to gratify a user's hedonic benefit once they gain the rewards on social media (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011). Muntinga *et al.* (2011) explained that remunerative activities can also bring customers enjoyment and a pleasurable experience on social media. Dolan *et al.* (2016) claimed that remunerative activities on social media not only fulfil a customer's expected economic benefits, but also offer specific gratification for customers.

Furthermore, remuneration posts are found to be highly influential and exhibit high engagement through facilitating liking and comments, which satisfy customers' interpersonal benefit (Leeflang *et al.*, 2014). Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) found that remunerative content has a positive effect on encouraging customers to generate comments. They explained that brands facilitate remunerative activities, which aim to involve more customers in this experience. Thus, customers may also gain social benefits when they engage in remunerative activities with other customers.

In addition, remunerative brand posts that are intended to promote and advertise a brand and its products (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011), may enhance a customer's purchase intention. However, Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) and Lee *et al.* (2013) found that social media activities, which include economic or remunerative content such as a product mention, price mention or deals and promotions, have a negative impact on customer behavioural engagement, such as a customer's consumption intention. Thus, two hypotheses can be proposed:

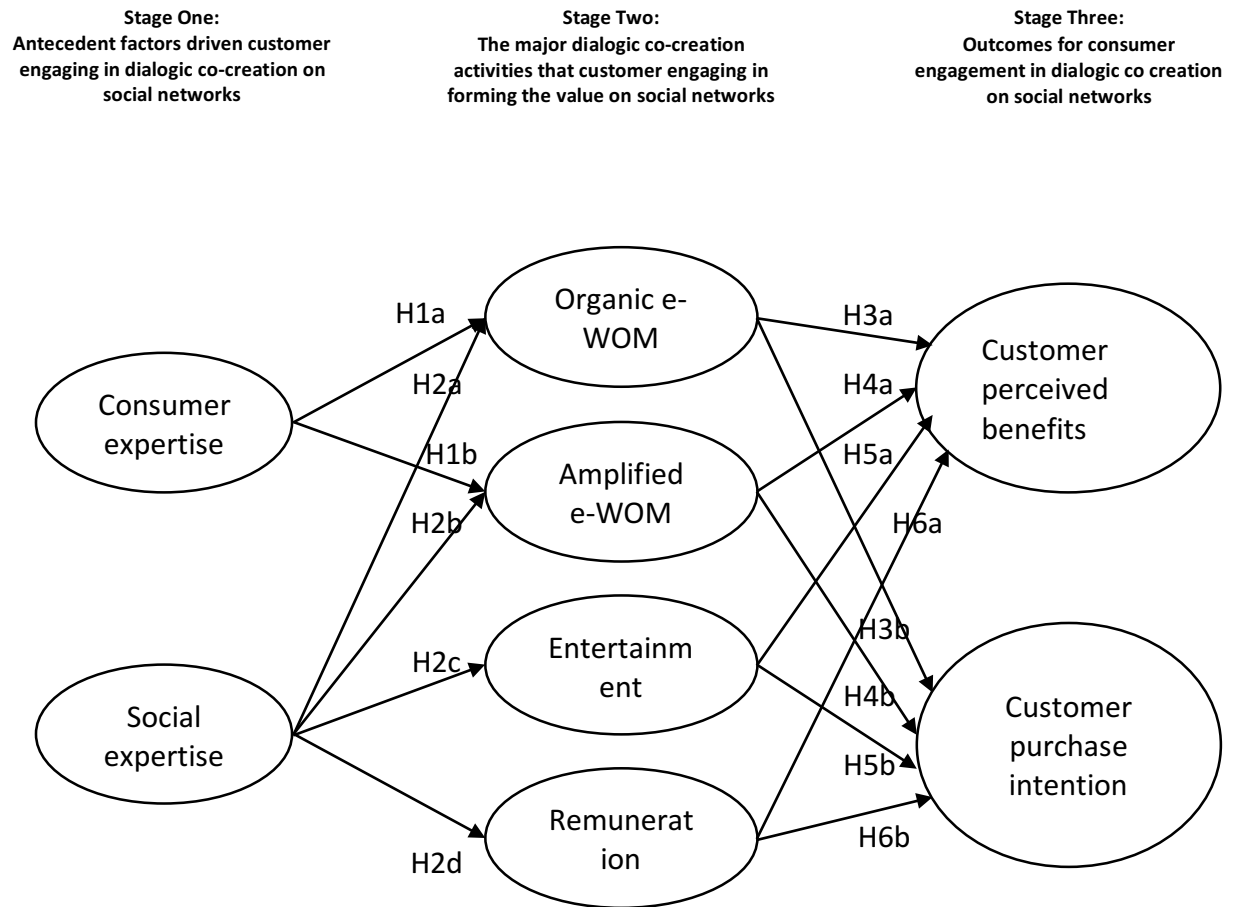
H6a: Customers engaging in remunerative activities on a SNS will increase customers' receipt of (utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal) benefits.

H6b: Customers engaging in remunerative activities on a SNS will enhance customers' purchase intention.

## 5.4 Summary

This chapter has illustrated the precise relationships between the antecedent factors that drive customers to engage in dialogic co-creation and the different types of dialogic co-creation activities. It has also described the hypotheses in terms of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation and the outcomes of receiving customer benefits and influencing customer intention. The following figure (5.1) displays the different relationships between the identified survey constructs in the established integrative conceptual framework.

Figure 5.1: Conceptual model with the developed research hypotheses



## Chapter 6 Research Methodology

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide supporting evidence to illustrate the methodology employed to achieve the purpose and objectives of this thesis. First, a philosophical position based on the research paradigm is discussed and chosen (Creswell, 2003) (Section 6.2). Different philosophical positions influence the relationship between the researcher and the perspective of data interpretation (either objective or subjective). Since the phenomenon of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation in Chinese social networking environments remains an unclear discourse with limited empirical study, this study took a research paradigm of post-positivism to guide the methodological design. In line with the post-positivist's logic, which indicates that researcher can explain or measure the phenomenon by both collecting the exploratory qualitative data and detecting the developed hypotheses (Schurr, 2007). Then, following the description of the research methods, the data collection process that was used in this thesis is discussed (Section 6.3). Conducting qualitative netnography served as the first step to gaining an in-depth understanding of customers' online social behaviour on Chinese social networking platforms. The findings from the netnographic study assist in answering the relevant research questions and supplement the overall research findings. The object selection, data collection procedure and data analysis methods used in this stage are illustrated in Section 6.4. Next, based on the conceptual framework, a quantitative online survey was employed to test the hypotheses. The questionnaire design, sampling strategy, data collection process and data analysis procedures is outlined in Section 6.5. A summary of the methodology is provided in Section 6.6.

### 6.2 Research philosophy

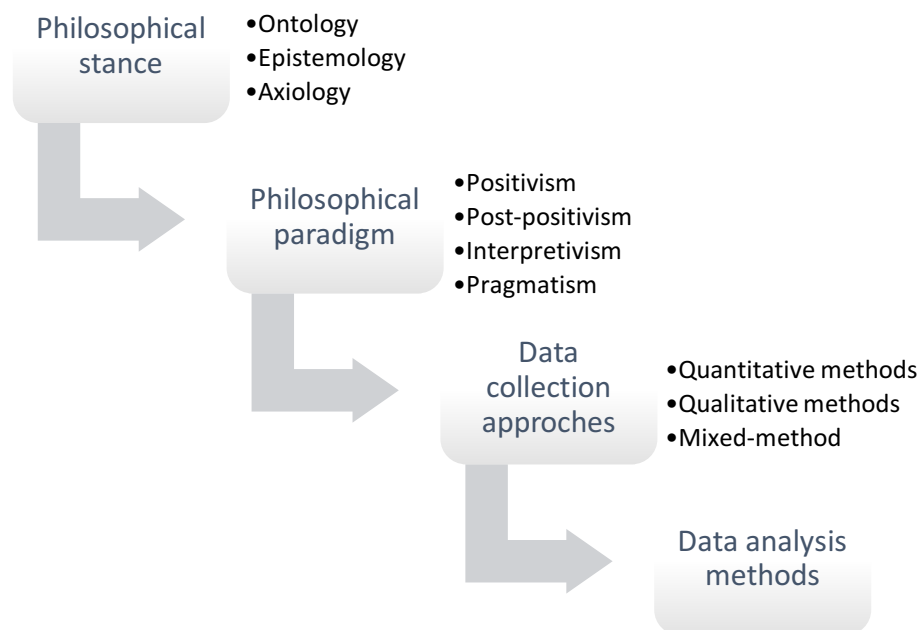
It is important for social science study to align methodology with the appropriate philosophical stance when conducting research, since it can guide the researcher to explore and understand the nature of social phenomenon, generate new findings and advance existing knowledge effectively and comprehensively (Holden and Lynch, 2004; Hirschman, 1986). Moreover, the research philosophy is the basic stance that enables the researcher to justify the methodology and to demonstrate the primary purpose of the selected methods (Bartunek *et al.*, 1993; Burrell and Morgan, 2017). Hughes and Sharrock (2016) stated that research philosophy should not be considered as a theory but as a set of mental activities, including thinking skills, that enable researchers to discover new knowledge and search for answers from reality rather than simply reproduce others' ideas.

Both Tronvoll *et al.* (2011) and Creswell (2017) point out that selection of the philosophic paradigm influences the subsequent research design. Saunders *et al.* (2009) also contend that the philosophical ideas support the research assumptions, which affect the researcher's point of view about a particular issue and invariably influences the decision when planning a research strategy and choosing research methods. Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2008) emphasise the importance of a philosophical stance in research, arguing that without this philosophical underpinning, researchers

cannot guarantee the quality of the research work. They provide three reasons for the importance of a philosophical stance in social science studies. First, it provides comprehensive and useful guidance for researchers to identify the appropriate research strategy and methods that can assist them in interpreting the evidence and discourse of the findings to answer the research questions. Second, it allows researchers to consider different research methods and data analysis techniques, thereby avoiding inappropriate approaches at the early research stage. Third, it increases the possibilities for researchers to explore and evaluate innovative and creative research methods that can be adopted in the research.

Furthermore, according to Creswell (2003), in order to design an appropriate research strategy to explain how the research data can be collected and analysed, four steps should be followed. First, the researcher needs to evaluate and claim certain philosophical assumptions, including what the researcher will explore and how they will explore to address the enquiry. These assumption claims can be called 'philosophical stance' or 'theoretical perspective' (Lincoln and Guba, 2000; Mertens, 2010). There are three representative philosophical stances associated with marketing and consumer behaviour research: ontology, epistemology and axiology, which will be discussed in the following sub-sections. Secondly, researchers need to select a philosophical paradigm that is consistent with the selected philosophical stance. Generally, there are three common types of philosophical paradigms: positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism. Positivist is related to the quantitative approach, while interpretivism is associated with the qualitative approach. A pragmatist worldview allows researchers to select different research approaches and techniques to address the complex or unexplored research question. Thirdly, based on the philosophical paradigm selected, a researcher can choose the research methods to accomplish the data collection process. Finally, researchers need to identify the data analysis techniques. With respect to the current thesis, the research will follow Creswell's (2003) research design steps to illustrate the methodology applied in this research (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Research design steps



Source: based on Creswell (2003)

### 6.2.1 Philosophical stance

It is essential to understand and identify the particular philosophical stance within the philosophical paradigm that determines the entire research methodology design (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). Ontology, epistemology and axiology are the representative and elemental philosophical paradigms. Creswell (2003) states that ontology is concerned with what knowledge the researcher seeks to learn about; epistemology refers to how the researcher learns this knowledge; axiology is about the value gained from the research exploration process; and methodology is related to the process used to address the research enquiry. Creswell (2003) emphasises that the ontological and epistemological stances have more impact on a researcher's view of the same natural or social reality. Therefore, this section focuses on a discussion of the ontological and epistemological perspectives that guided the researcher when considering the research design.

Ontology is a branch of research philosophy that address problems in terms of the nature of reality, whereas epistemology is related to the researcher's beliefs and knowledge in academic study (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). Scotland, (2012) explain that ontology is related to the researcher's relationship with the nature of reality and brings forward questions about the meaning of reality and how natural or social knowledge can be gained. Two types of ontological stances are positivism/realism and constructionism/interpretivism (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Potter, 2000; Sayer 2010; Sayer 2000). Ontological positivism is the belief that there is no difference between the natural world and the social world that we live in. It does not consider a human's consciousness and perceptions; instead, the nature of reality is an objective, tangible and single structure. Based on this philosophical position, in order to explore and learn about objective reality, methods such as experimental study,

research models and testing hypotheses are adopted. In terms of customer value formation, the ontological realist standpoint of customer value only emerges when customers actually engage in interaction. In other words, they believe that value can only be co-created through the exchange of multiple resources (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Conversely, ontological constructionism highlights that the nature of reality is complex, holistic and subjectively constructed (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Based on an ontological constructionist's viewpoint, customer value is not only the concrete benefits but also the norms and meanings. However, underlying the ontological constructionist approach is the notion that customer value is always co-created within a customer's social context (Edvardsson *et al.*, 2011). According to this perspective, researchers apply different theories and techniques to understand the complex customer value formation process.

While ontology emphasises the reality of the natural world, epistemology is considered as a set of meanings attached to the nature and basis of knowledge (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008). In other words, the epistemological stance concerns the relationship between the inquirer and the knowledge, which requires the researcher to propose different assumptions and discover the meanings of the reality. The mainstream epistemological paradigms are conventionalism, constructivism, positivism, realism, and pragmatism (Easton 2002). Conventionalism insists that the reality is agreed by convention, which is constructed by human actors (Easton 2002). Similarly, constructivism holds that reality is only described by human actors (Easton 2002). On contrast, positivism positions reality as a regular system that can be analysed (Easton, 2002). Analogously, realism believes that reality is independent from the social construction, which needs to be explored through examination. Pragmatism contends that reality is related to different objective and subjective layers. It stands on the practical viewpoint for research inquiry by using different methods (Feilzer, 2010). According to C-D logic, customers are able to generate value when they engage in the experience (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). The generated value is not always tangible but is attached to the meaning. Moreover, the current challenges of investigating customer value formation are associated with complicated circumstances and the unexposed context. In order to cope with these situations, the epistemological stance is more suitable to be employed in customer value formation research; in particular, epistemology related to pragmatist standpoints was selected to analyse the current topic of customer value formation, which transcends the monistic philosophical viewpoint. The next section discusses different epistemological paradigms and justifies the appropriate one for this research.

### **6.2.2 Research Paradigms**

Several types of research paradigms were discussed in the previous section; however, with regard to marketing and consumer behaviour, previous studies usually adopted positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism as the most common research paradigms to guide the research.

Epistemological positivism believes that social reality is ruled by universal laws and discovered truth (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, the positivist paradigm guides the researcher to test theories through observable variables in order to gain trusted data. Furthermore, Hunt (1991) claims that positivism assumes that consumer behaviour can be detected and predicted through measurement of the affected variables. Positivism is based on a deductive logic that aims to detect specific hypotheses and formulate theory followed by quantitative data collection. The quantitative data is used to examine and confirm the hypotheses. Positivism usually relies on a quantitative approach such as surveys and experiments.

In terms of customer engagement in value formation, many researchers study empirically to identify causal relationships and develop a model to summarise the customer engagement experience in value creation or co-creation. For instance, Nambisan and Baron (2009) tested the influence of different benefits on customers' motivation to engage in virtual co-creation activities. Füller *et al.* (2009) also identified a set of internal and external factors influencing customers' virtual co-creation of new product development. In addition, Laud and Karpen, (2017) examined the outcomes of customer engagement in value co-creation in the service system, while Buonincontri (2017) examined the consequences of tourists engaging in co-creating value with service providers. However, other researchers contend that a positivist paradigm in marketing and consumer behaviour research cannot detect the complex socio-cultural factors and reflect all kinds of customer value formation circumstances and customer performance (Dong *et al.*, 2008; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Baumann and Le Meunier-FitzHugh, 2015; Smaliukiene *et al.*, 2015).

Post-positivism extends the narrow perspective of positivism to a more flexible way to examine the problem (Ryan, 2006). Positivism holds the view that the research problems only need to be examined to get the particular answer. However, post-positivism realises that the traditional survey has its limits and the additional qualitative data can provide more evidences to explain the complex and uninvestigated research problem (McGregor and Murnane, 2010). As the dualistic logic is inadequate, post-positivism encourages researchers to apply mixed methods to understand the specific phenomenon (Ryan, 2006). It suggests that post-positivism usually has been adopted in consumer research, as researchers can not only use the quantitative study to understand the complex of consumer's logic and behaviour but also need to interpret people's thought through conducting the qualitative study (Hackley, 2003). Specifically, post-positivism enables researchers to conduct an exploratory qualitative study to gain an initial understanding of the research topic prior to test the developed hypotheses to confirm the research model (Ryan, 2006).

Regarding the study of customer engagement in value formation process, there are some studies have adopted the philosophical paradigm of post-positivism. Vega-Vazquez *et al.* (2013) illustrated consumer behaviours in the service co-creation experience and examined the consequence of the value co-creation process from the customer's perspective by conducting 18 individual interviews and analysing 547 valid survey items. Groeger *et al.* (2016) established a holistic model including the



components of antecedents, non-paying consumer engaging activities and values from both firm and consumer's perspective through collecting the qualitative interview data and quantitative survey data. Choi *et al.* (2016) employed a mixed method to evaluate the value co-creation process between customers and luxury fashion brands, and examined the outcome of brand value and customer purchase intention from the co-creation process. In this respect, adopting a post-positivism will enhance the opportunities for the researcher to explore the reality from different viewpoints (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The interpretivist paradigm is different to positivist and post-positivist beliefs as it focuses on exploring and understanding people's perceptions, emotions, conscious, attitudes and behaviours by collecting, interpreting and analysing the data to construct social reality (Walsh and Downe, 2006). Therefore, from an interpretivist perspective, an inductive logic that flows from a specific situation to general phenomena guides the researcher to collect the data from a subjective standpoint. Generally, qualitative methods such as observation and interviews are largely conducted within the interpretivist paradigm (Guba and Lincoln 1994). In terms of marketing and consumer behaviour research, since people's behaviour is sometimes irrational and unpredictable, the interpretivist paradigm provides more insight and understanding about people's complex psychological status as it focuses on observing and analysing every individual's perceptions and behaviours (Moisander and Valtonen 2012). For example, Pongsakornrunsilp and Schroeder (2011) conducted netnographic study to demonstrate the process of individual consumers engaging in the value co-creation process at a football fan club.

Jaakkola and Alexander (2014) used a case study approach to discover the drivers, types and outcomes of consumer engagement in the value co-creation process. Baumann and Le Meunier-FitzHugh (2015) conducted individual interview to present a dyadic model of the value co-creation process between customer and salesperson. Through these qualitative research methods, scholars gained in-depth findings about customers engaging in the value co-creation experience. However, interpretivism investigates reality through narrative data that have not been measured and confirmed. The entire exploratory process may be influenced by a researcher's subjective knowledge and personal experiences.

Based on the discussion of these three epistemological perspectives, it is known that positivism and post-positivism rely on an objective attitude to obtain the knowledge from the reality, while interpretivism explores and seeks to understand the in-depth meaning of reality from a researcher's subjective standpoint. However, Pragmatist holds another viewpoint to address the relationship between the researcher and the study process (Morgan, 2007). Pragmatism defines as "reasoning from phenomena, understood as presumed effects, to their theoretical explanations in terms of underlying causal mechanisms" (Haig, 2005, p.372–373). In other words, pragmatic paradigm guides the researcher to employ multiple methods, which can provide the best way to get answers from the reality of the research questions (Morgan, 2007). The distinctive focus for pragmatism is the concentration on methods that can be used to provide a solution for the research problem. Thus, pragmatism supports

researchers employing a variety of research methods to address the research questions (Creswell, 2003).

Although both the post-positivism and pragmatism suggest researchers to adopt mixed methods, these two philosophical paradigms follow different research logics. Post-positivism is consistent to positivism, which follows deductive logic, while pragmatism follows abductive logic (Hackley, 2003). Post-positivism emphasises the quantitative study as the predominant study in whole data collection process, while pragmatism believes that the multiple data can be collected by different research methods to solve the research problem (Hackley, 2003). Based on the above arguments, it is clear that the post-positivism is better suited to the current study. The qualitative netnographic study will be firstly conducted to identify the antecedent factors that drive customers to engage in different dialogic co-creation activities and identify the different of topics of dialogic co-creation that customers prefer to engage in on a Chinese social networking platform. The following quantitative questionnaire study will be conducted to examine the relationships between the identified antecedent factors and customer engagement in different dialogic co-creation activities and the relationships between customer engaging in dialogic co-creation activities and the positive outcomes.

The following section presents the pragmatic paradigm and the multi-method adopted for this study to achieve the research aim and objectives. Table 6.1 outlines the differences in the four paradigms discussed above with regard to the epistemological stance, philosophical logic, research methods and data.

Table 6.1: Comparison of philosophical perspectives and research paradigms

Paradigm	Positivism	Post-positivism	Interpretivism	Pragmatism
<b>Epistemological stance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on generalising the phenomena to simplest law</li> <li>Examine causality</li> <li>Objective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the reality by going beyond measuring the concept to seek the deep meanings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret the participants' views of the circumstances</li> <li>Explore the social phenomenon deeply</li> <li>Subjective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address the research question practically</li> <li>Both objective and subjective points of view</li> </ul>
<b>Logic</b>	Deductive	Deductive	Inductive	Abductive
<b>Methods</b>	Quantitative methods such as survey, experiment	Quantitative methods as dominant, combined with qualitative methods	Qualitative methods such as interview, case study, observation	Both quantitative and qualitative methods
<b>Data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large samples</li> <li>Measurement</li> <li>Highly structured</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative data</li> <li>Quantitative data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small samples</li> <li>In-depth evaluations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple data from different methods</li> </ul>

Source: Based on Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998)

### **6.2.3 The mixed methods strategies**

The mixed method approach has been adopted by various fields of social and behaviour study (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2012). Scholars in these fields also provide a specific definition and explain the characteristics of the mixed method approach (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2012; Frels and Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Neuman (2013) mentioned that social researchers usually explore a social phenomenon through several perspectives rather than from single angle. This research method is called “triangulation” in qualitative and quantitative social studies. Neuman (2003) categorised four types of triangulation. The first type is about the survey measures and adopts a variety of measures to detect the same phenomenon. The second type is related to observation whereby several observers are employed to collect the observational data. The third type of triangulation is adopting different theories to plan the research design and the final type is about the methods, in which both qualitative and quantitative studies are conducted. This type of triangulation is also called “mixed methods” study (Cresswell, 2003). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2007) define the mixed method approach as combining qualitative and quantitative viewpoints and approaches to collect data and analyse the results so that a depth and breadth understanding in terms of the research problem is achieved. Their definition emphasises the research design and outcomes of the study.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) conclude that there are four key requirements to conduct a mixed method study. First, the researcher needs to collect qualitative and quantitative data related to the research questions. Second, the collected qualitative and quantitative data should be integrated, embedded mixed concurrently or sequentially. Third, the data collection process needs to be designed rigorously and based on the selected philosophical stance and related research theories. Fourth, the researcher should provide persuasive data analysis by using qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques and methods. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2012) mention that the qualitative and quantitative data should not be incompatible in the thesis, which requires the researcher to choose the appropriate methods that can assist in analysing the complex research problem. Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013) highlight that quantitative methods can assist a researcher to resolve the research problem in terms of the relationship between different variables but cannot adequately explain the reason behind the phenomenon. Contrarily, the qualitative approach can address research questions such as why or how something happened. Therefore, the mixed method can fill the deficiencies on the part of the separate methods.

According to the mixing level, there are partially mixed methods and fully mixed methods; depending on the time orientation, there are sequential, concurrent and transformative strategies; and according to the essence of the method, there are equal status mixed methods and dominant status mixed methods. Based on these three dimensions, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, pp. 69–72) concluded that there are six major mixed method research designs based on these three dimensions.

Table 6.2 lists explanations of these six types of mixed methods' strategies. Based on the explanation of different mixed methods' strategies, the explanatory sequential strategy that the qualitative study conducted in the first stage and followed by quantitative study is the most appropriate to be selected to guide the study design in this thesis. The precise of research design of this study will be discussed in Section 6.3.

Table 6 2: Explanations of six types of mixed methods' strategies

No.	Mixed Methods' Strategies	Explanation
1	The convergent parallel strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The qualitative and quantitative data collection processes are conducted concurrently.</li> <li>• Both qualitative and quantitative methods are essential and prioritised.</li> <li>• The data analysis is separated</li> <li>• The qualitative and quantitative data are converged during the overall discussion and interpretation of the findings</li> </ul>
2	The explanatory sequential strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The qualitative and quantitative data collection process is conducted in two separated stages.</li> <li>• Quantitative method is conducted at first and followed by the quantitative data analysis.</li> <li>• Qualitative method is used in the next stage in order to explain deeply towards the results from the quantitative study at first stage.</li> </ul>
3	The exploratory sequential strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The qualitative and quantitative data collection process is conducted in two separated stages.</li> <li>• Qualitative exploratory study is conducted in priority and followed with the qualitative data analysis.</li> <li>• Quantitative study is conducted at second stage to test the conceptual model built from the literature review and qualitative study.</li> </ul>
4	The embedded strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently.</li> <li>• Followed with either qualitative or quantitative study</li> </ul>
5	The transformative strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The qualitative and quantitative study can be conducted concurrently or sequentially.</li> <li>• The qualitative and quantitative data can be</li> </ul>

		analysed concurrently or sequentially according to the transformative conceptual framework
6	The multiphase strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This strategy allows researcher to conduct several stages of qualitative and quantitative study either sequentially or concurrently</li> </ul>

Source: Based on Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, pp. 69-72).

In addition, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) also evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of all kinds of mixed methods conduction. Table 6.3 points out the key advantages and challenges of conducting mixed methods study, which remind researcher to pay attention for the mixed methods design.

Table 6 3: Advantages and Challenges of mixed methods research

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address the weakness of conducting a single qualitative or quantitative method.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is challenge for a single researcher to conduct both qualitative and quantitative study concurrently.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide variety of evidences from quantitative or qualitative findings to achieve research aim.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It requires researcher to study about multiple research methods and data analysis methods. Understand how to mix the qualitative data and quantitative data appropriately.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can add more insight understanding from qualitative study that quantitative research may miss.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Methodological purists criticise that it is difficult to combine the qualitative and quantitative paradigm together.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can generalise the knowledge from the quantitative study that qualitative research may not able to do.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time consuming</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can develop a more complete conceptual framework to inform the practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It requires researcher to address the conflicting results from qualitative and quantitative study.</li> </ul>

Source: Based on Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, pp. 12-15)

### 6.3 Research design

A research design can be considered as an outline or a process for conducting a marketing and consumer behaviour research project (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2006). Specifically, a research design is a practical plan or a flow chart for a study, applied as a guide for data collection and data analysis (Creswell, 2003). A comprehensive research design can guarantee that the data collection process will be conducted efficiently and the specific research problem can be resolved (Denegri-Knott *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, a well-researched design influences whether successful research

outcomes can be achieved. There are a few steps that need to be considered when designing and implementing this process. Some scholars (e.g., Churchill and Iacobucci, 2006; Malhotra 1999; Holbrook, 1999) have provided a general guideline to follow when conducting marketing and consumer behaviour research.

Furthermore, Ritchie *et al.* (2013) mention that the role and ability of the researcher needs to be considered in the research process. The study topic involves a specific cultural background and a complex social phenomenon that requires the researcher to understand the research background. In the current study, the researcher investigated how customers engage in social media activities facilitated by international fast fashion brands on Chinese social networking platforms using mixed research methods. Therefore, the ability to conduct the different research methods and combine the results from those methods was demanded. Teddlie and Yu (2007) highlight that quality of research design and the following research outcomes strongly depend on the researcher's capabilities and study skills. In other words, when selecting the appropriate research methods, the researcher needs to consider his/her own capabilities to conduct the research.

Specifically, designing the research data collection and analysis process includes several stages from identification of the research problem to the final step of presenting the results and findings. The overall research design process is displayed in the flow chart below (Figure 6.2). With regard to the first step, in addition to identifying the research problem and aim, Carlile and Christensen (2004) suggest that the initial questions should be asked before designing the research methodology, which include whether this study will resolve the unexamined questions recommended by previous researchers; whether the selected methods can solve the problem completely or just address half of it; and whether the results of this study can contribute to the knowledge of relevant theory. In the second stage, the selection of research methods determines the way that the research leads to an understanding of the real phenomenon. Different methods cannot be defined as good or bad, but only less or more appropriate to the particular research problem and context (Silverman, 2001). Since social phenomena are a complicated system, pragmatism avoids standardised methods of interpreting or examining the reality, but supports employing a wide variety of research methods to investigate the research problem. Thus, the current research method design is in accordance with the pragmatic paradigm. Furthermore, an abductive approach was adopted to interpret the social phenomena within a conceptual model.

With respect to the current research, the identified research problem and aim, the philosophical paradigm selection, and design of data the collection strategy affected the selection of the data set and data analysis methods. Therefore, more details about the first, second and third step of the research design process are presented in the following sub-sections.

### 6.3.1 Research aim and questions

Matching the appropriate research methods to the research problem and aim is not always a direct and streamlined process, especially in consumer behaviour research where the specific research problem may evolve and be identified over time (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2006). Heinonen (2011) mentions that the phenomenon of consumer engagement on social media is observed and discovered step by step. The previously unknown phenomena of consumer engagement on social media can be understood and interpreted incrementally. As this phenomenon cannot be fully explained in advance, the specific research questions can assist the investigation process.

**The aim of the current study is to use dominant customer logic to investigate female fast fashion customer engagement in dialogic co-creation and value formation across Chinese social media platforms.**

In particular, this study sought to answer the research questions defined in Table 6.4. From the listed research questions, it is clear that the research methods were crucial to support the researcher in gaining sufficient data to answer the research questions thorough data analysis; therefore, the current study sought to conduct a mixed method approach to address a series of research questions. The following sections provide descriptions of the mixed method research design for this study.

Table 6 4: Research questions and the related research methods.

Research Questions	Research Methods
1. <i>What are the antecedent factors influencing customer engaging in dialogic co-creation activities on Chinese social networking platform?</i>	The first and second question require a <b>qualitative study</b> to understand customer logic towards dialogic co-creation engagement and to identify the major dialogic co-creation activities that customers prefer to engage on Chinese social networking site.
2. <i>What types of dialogic co-creation activities are popular for customers to engage on Chinese social networking platform?</i>	
3. <i>Whether the identified customer logic as the antecedent factors influence on customer engagement on dialogic co-creation activities?</i>	The third, fourth and fifth research questions assume a <b>quantitative method</b> to test the relationship between customer logic and customer engaging in dialogic co-creation activities; dialogic co-creation engagement and the outcomes.
4. <i>Whether customer engaging in categorised dialogic co-creation activities influences on customer benefits perceived?</i>	
5. <i>Whether customer engaging in categorised dialogic co-creation activities enhance customer purchase intention?</i>	



### **6.3.2 Mixed method research design**

In the first stage, a netnography approach was employed to understand the complex and distinctive social phenomenon of customers engaging in social media activities on the Chinese social networking platform, Sina Weibo. This assisted the researcher to understand customer logic for such engagement behaviours and categorise the themes of dialogic co-creation activities that attract customers to participate. This method is particularly suitable in this research context as there is a lack of understanding of Chinese customers' experiences of engaging in international fast fashion brands' social media marketing activities and interacting with brands and customers, which needs to be explored from the beginning. Subsequently, a quantitative study and online survey generalised the model of customer engagement in such situations through analysis of the large amount of data. There are four main steps in terms of the data collection process. Each step includes several targets.

The first step focused on deciding how to conduct the netnographic study, which included selecting the appropriate observation objects, choosing the data collection and analysis methods, and arranging and organising the netnographic findings. In order to ascertain the logic that motivates customers to engage in dialogic co-creation and the popular themes of different dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo, the researcher decided to collect and analyse selected brand-generated posts and customer-generated comments. As customer logic is something that only occurs to an individual and the researcher cannot directly acquire information on this aspect, Rageh and Melewar (2013) explain that observation of what the subject has expressed orally or in writing can easily and veritably lead to an understanding of their mindset and behaviours. Furthermore, through analysis and interpretation of brand-generated posts can allow the researcher to categorise the main topics of dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo that attract customers to engage.

The second and third stages are related to conducting a quantitative study. Four steps needed to be completed to prepare to carry out the online survey in the second stage, including designing the questionnaire and coding the survey measures and identified items from the literature review. The survey draft was released to conduct a questionnaire content assessment, which ensured the survey items' adequacy and reliability. After collecting the results from this process, the questionnaire was revised and the survey measures refined. In the third stage, the purpose was to release the online survey to the target respondents. As the aim of the quantitative online survey was to investigate the customer engagement phenomenon in a specific and distinctive research context, precise design of the sampling range was considered essential. A small sample was used to complete the reliability analysis and exploratory factor analysis, which aimed to reduce the survey items with low factor loadings. Then, the survey items were refined again and distributed to the large sample group. After validating the useful quantitative data, a series of quantitative data analysis procedures was conducted to build up the final structural equation modelling.

In the final stage, it concentrates on organising and summarising both qualitative and quantitative findings. Especially, researcher will answer each research questions and conclude the contributions to fill the research gap.

The following sections provide details of the research design with regard to the qualitative and quantitative data collection process.

#### **6.4 Qualitative Study: Netnography**

The qualitative research method, netnography, was selected and applied in the first stage of the current study to:

- (1) gain a preliminary understanding of fast fashion customer engagement in brand-facilitated activities and how customers interact with other users on the Chinese social networking platform, Sina Weibo;
- (2) understand the customer logic that motivates them to engage in dialogic co-creation with brands and other users on the Chinese social networking platform, Sina Weibo;
- (3) identify the topics and sub-topics of dialogic co-creation activities that customers prefer to engage in on the Chinese social networking platform, Sina Weibo.

Netnography is a kind of online ethnographic research approach that has been applied in marketing and consumer behaviour studies (Kozinets, 2010; Kozinets *et al.*, 2018). Since social media has become more widely available, customers adopt it as a medium to chronicle their daily lives, communicate within their social groups and share their ideas and opinions to other online users. Thus, to a great extent, a customer's self-expression is exposed in public. Customer conversations on social networking platforms involve a quantity of useful information and profile data such as name, preferences, and affiliations (Chu and Kim, 2011). Observation of customer-generated comments on social networking platforms can assist researchers to understand customers' emotions, behaviour and preferences towards online engagement (Boon *et al.*, 2015). As the researcher only interprets what customers have expressed through their comments on social media, a netnographic study is considered an important qualitative study strategy (Rageh and Melewar, 2013).

More importantly, Rageh and Melewar (2013) argued that netnography is the best qualitative method to study customer experience as customers express their opinions individually rather than being affected by others. Kozinets, (2010) mentions that netnographic study can provide abundant descriptions of the phenomenon of customer engagement in virtual communities or other online formats. O'Donohoe (2010) illustrated that netnographic study allows researchers to document and analyse the users taking part in co-creation activities in the natural environment and the netnographic data can reliably demonstrate the real situation. In addition, customer interactions and conversations on social media involve a high level of self-discourse, which can offer valuable implications for marketers to implement effective marketing strategies based on an understanding of their target customers (Kozinets *et al.*, 2018).

With respect to the first stage of data collection in this study, netnography is the most appropriate and adequate method to explore the phenomenon of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities with international fast fashion brands on Chinese social networking platforms for a number of reasons. Firstly, Chinese customers prefer using social networking platforms to search for fashion product information and leave product reviews on the fashion brand pages on Sina Weibo (Chinese Fashion Industry, 2014). Therefore, a netnographic study can reveal the customer engagement experience effectively and veritably compared to other traditional qualitative methods such as individual interview, which requires the customer to review and interpret their experience subjectively (Kozinets, 2010). Langer and Beckman (2005) explained that the netnographic data is usually collected through observation of the natural surroundings, which is not created artificially by the participants or the researcher. Thus, it is less interrupted than other methods. According to O'Donohoe (2010), netnography is a naturalistic method of capturing an individual's behaviour in virtual communities. It offers a channel for the researcher to observe customer engagement behaviour naturally and unobtrusively. Secondly, netnographic study allows the researcher to gain access to the virtual community and collect more users' data than other qualitative methods do. Researchers can easily return to the netnographic data anytime during the analysis process, as the data set is transcribed inherently. Finally, in marketing and consumer behaviour studies, there is some studies applied netnography to explore topics such as co-creation in virtual communities (Centeno and Wang, 2017; Schembri and Latimer, 2016; Skålén *et al.*, 2015), user-generated content (Kulmala *et al.*, 2012; Adjei *et al.*, 2010; Parrott *et al.*, 2015), brand communities (Zaglia, 2013; Pongsakornrunsilp and Schroeder, 2011). Therefore, a netnographic study is feasible to gain valuable findings through observing customer discussions unobtrusively or/and the researcher engaging in interactions actively.

The following sub-sections demonstrate the netnographic study design and Kozinets's (2010) netnographic data collection process, including selecting the observation object(s), collecting and analysing the data, research ethics evaluation, and checking data trustworthiness.

#### **6.4.1 Observation object selection**

The online information and resources from Chinese social networking platforms is abundant and overwhelming, which enhances the challenge for the researcher to select the observation objects. With regard to the first step in choosing the appropriate observational object, Kozinets (2010) proposed six criteria of object selection: (1) the object is relevant to the research context and research questions; (2) the object is active recently and regularly; (3) the object is interactive among all the participants; (4) the object provides substantial information; (5) the object is heterogeneous; (6) the object can provide rich and detailed data.

According to these criteria, and using purposive sampling as suggested by Kozinets (2012), the observation objects for the netnographic study in this thesis are the posts from fast fashion brands' (Uniqlo, Zara and H&M) Sina Weibo profiles and the

comments from their posts. Sina Weibo is the leading Chinese social networking platform, which integrates the diverse functions and services of Facebook and Twitter (Zhang *et al.*, 2015; Luo *et al.*, 2015). These fast fashion brands' Sina Weibo profiles were selected for this stage of the study for two primary reasons. Firstly, recently, micro-blogging services have received more scholarly attention as a free and relatively flexible medium for information sharing publicly compared to other media such as WeChat, including disseminating brand news and product information, consumer interaction, and dealing with after-sales service for customers (Zhang *et al.*, 2015; Luo *et al.*, 2015; Nguyen *et al.*, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2015; Yuan *et al.*, 2016). Secondly, these fast fashion brands' Sina Weibo profiles are at the top of fast fashion retailers' microblog ranking, and enjoy a highly active and successful site with respect to engaging consumers in social media marketing activities and achieving marketing purposes on the Sina Weibo platform (Chinese fashion industry, 2014). Uniqlo, a Japanese-based fast fashion brand, attracted 5,139,232 followers on its Sina Weibo page, far outstripping the rest of the fast fashion brands' Sina Weibo accounts. H&M (896,113 followers) and Zara (666,395 followers) ranked in second and third place respectively. Table 6.5 presents the observation objects' profile information.

As Kozinet's object selection criteria was followed when deciding to focus on these international fast fashion brands' Sina Weibo pages, the researcher believes that the netnographic data is adequate and reliable to answer the relevant research questions. Moreover, before the data collection process, the researcher conducted two weeks of unobtrusive observation, which aimed to gain a primary understanding of the objects' profiles, the diversity of the activities on the brand pages, and briefly browsing customer-generated comments from the brand posts. The time devoted in these initial observations provided the basic information of the selected objects as well as the active customers. The next section interprets the data collection methods and procedures recommended by Kozinets (2010) and other relevant netnographic studies.

Table 6 5: Observation objects' profile

<b>Selected brand</b>	<b>Number of followers</b>	<b>Initial post</b>	<b>Total posts till 1 Mar 2017</b>	<b>Average post/day during 1 Sep 2016 to 1 Mar 2017</b>
Uniqlo	5,139,232	28 July 2011	10432	6
H&M	896,113	4 April 2011	7344	4
Zara	666,395	27 May 2010	1481	0.65

Source: calculation from observation

As researcher followed Kozinet's object selection criteria to decide on focusing these international fast fashion brand's Sina Weibo, researcher believes that the netnographic data will be adequate and reliable to answer the relevant research

questions. Moreover, before the data collection process, researcher will have two-week of unobtrusive observation, which aims to gain a primary understanding of objects' profile, the diversity of the activities on its brand page, and the briefly browsing customer-generated comments from the brand posts. The time devoted in these initial observations provides the basic information of the selected objects as well as those active customers. The next section interprets the data collection methods and procedures that recommended by Kozinets (2010) and other relevant netnographic studies.

#### **6.4.2 Data collection process**

After selecting the observation objects, the second step of netnographic study is to collect the data. In order to find the appropriate data collection methods, the researcher reviewed 30 relevant journal papers that discussed netnographic study about the topic of co-creation in virtual communities and selected 11 papers deemed as references (see Appendix 2). According to these papers and Kozinets' (2010) illustration, there are three aspects that the researcher needs to consider with regard to netnographic data collection: the role of the researcher in the observation process; the timeframe for conducting observation; and the quantity of the netnographic data.

In terms of the researcher's role in the observation process, there are two major types of data collection methods: researcher non-participant (or unobtrusive observation) and researcher participating in observed activities. The first type also includes two forms: (1) the researcher only plays the role of observer and copies the textual and visual data directly from the objects; (2) the researcher inscribes and interprets the observed data.

The unobtrusive observation method was adopted for the current study. In other words, the researcher screen-captured textual and graphical brand-generated posts and copied the brand-generated comments and customer-generated comments from the selected international fast fashion brands' posts on Sina Weibo. However, some standards needed to be considered when selecting the brand posts and customer comments. Firstly, in terms of the brand-generated posts, as this study only focuses on female consumers, if the posts related to information about male's or children's products they were removed. Secondly, the selected customer-generated comments were examined to ensure the comment was written by real users and disqualified comments or irrelevant messages were discarded. Thirdly, in order to collect the diverse customer-generated comments, both the positive and negative comments were collected, but the focus was on the contents of these comments.

In terms of the decision about the timeframe for observations, most of the relevant studies spend from 1 to 12 months collecting netnographic data (Skålén *et al.*, 2015; Zaglia, 2013; Adjei *et al.*, 2010; Parrott *et al.*, 2015). The researcher spent six months (from 1 September 2016 to 1 March 2017) collecting the netnographic data to ensure sufficient and representative samples were collected. The reason that the

researcher decided to observe during this six months is because it covers essential Chinese festivals and holidays including the national holidays (from 1–7 October), Single Day (which is similar to Western Black Friday on 11 November), Double Twelve Day (another Chinese online shopping discount day on 12 December), New Year holidays (from 1–3 Jan) and the Chinese spring festival (in February). As brands usually facilitate special marketing activities on the different Chinese festivals to attract more customers, observation on these days could help the researcher to gain useful findings about Chinese customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities with international fast fashion brands and other customers on Sina Weibo.

In terms of the quantity of netnographic data, there is not a specific standard. It depends on the timeframe of the research (Kozinets, 2010). Initially, the researcher considered collecting and analysing all customer-generated comments and brand-generated posts from the selected international fast fashion brands' Sina Weibo pages. However, one single brand averaged 500 brand posts during the timeframe, and single posts usually have thousands of customer comments. Considering the timeframe available to conduct the netnographic study, this data collection strategy was not feasible. Therefore, the researcher selected a quantity of "hot" posts and top comments that gained more attention from customers. The hot posts from each brand page were ordered automatically by Sina Weibo according to the number of comments, shares and likes. The top comments are listed under the brand posts. Therefore, a total of 300 brand-generated hot posts (100 from each selected brand) were collected between 1 September 2016 and 1 March 2017. Three thousand customer-generated and brand-generated comments were also collected, 10 from each brand post. The collected netnographic data comprises a total of 322 pages. Appendix 7 displays a sample of the netnographic data: two brand-generated posts from Zara, H&M, and Uniqlo's Sina Weibo pages respectively (a total of six sample posts) and 10 customer or brand-generated comments from each post (a total of 30 customer or brand-generated comments) (see Table 6.6).

Table 6 6:Quantity of netnographic data

<b>Selected brand</b>	<b>The number of collected brand-generated posts</b>	<b>The number of collected brand and customer-generated comments</b>
ZARA	100	10x100
H&M	100	10x100
UNIQLO	100	10x100
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>30,00</b>

#### **6.4.3 The reliability and trustworthiness of netnographic data**

It is necessary to verify the reliability and validity of the netnographic data to ensure the achievement of trustworthy and rigorous findings (Kozinets, 2006; Adjei *et al.*, 2010).

Firstly, in terms of the netnographic data, the researcher screenshot the brand-generated posts and comments, and customer-generated comments directly from

the selected brand-generated posts on Sina Weibo. Moreover, in order to ensure the comments were generated by real and active users, the researcher checked the user's ID and user's homepage on Sina Weibo before selecting the comments. Generally, an active Sina Weibo user's homepage has recorded his/her previous posts, comments and likes and the length of use of the account. Thus, it was easy for the researcher to identify whether customer-generated comments on the brand posts came from a real user. Table 6.7 lists four major criteria the researcher used to identify real and active users on Sina Weibo. The comment from the users who did not meet these criteria were not selected.

Table 6 7:Criteria of selecting the trustworthy customer-generated comments

No.	Criteria
1	The users who have nickname and profile picture on Sina Weibo.
2	The users who have used this account on Sina Weibo at least three years.
3	The users who have commented, liked or shared fashion post on their personal homepage on Sina Weibo previously.
4	The users who have shared her personal life and selfies on Sina Weibo.

Secondly, with regard to the data analysis process, the researcher focused on coding, content analysis and categorising the collected brand-generated posts and comments and customer-generated comments. During the coding process, three types of coding approach were conducted: open coding approach (Kozinets *et al.*, 2014), axial coding approach (Skålén *et al.*, 2015) and selective coding approach (Hernandez and Handan, 2014). In the first step, the researcher conducted open coding by reviewing the netnographic data line-by-line and using different colours to highlight the key words that related to the identified antecedent factors (consumer expertise and social expertise) and dialogic co-creation topics (organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertainment and remuneration) from the literature. The aim of the open coding approach was to identify the key words in the text that are relevant to the identified themes from literature. In the second step, the researcher applied the axial coding approach to further analyse the content of the text. The aim of this step was to compare the highlighted text to the themes from the initial templates and ensure this content was categorised into the correct themes. During the axial coding process, the researcher also identified the sub-factors that motivate customer engagement and the sub-topics of each dialogic co-creation activity. New themes arose during this process. In the final step, the selective coding approach was employed to develop a new template by removing the irrelevant themes, revising the identified themes and establishing new themes. The coding samples for the netnographic data are displayed in Appendix 3.

Thirdly, in order to validate the reliability of the coding and categorisation through content analysis, the researcher reviewed the data four times to ensure the text had been coded and categorised into the appropriate categories. The identified and confirmed antecedent factors and the topics of dialogic co-creation activities were tested in a quantitative study.

#### **6.4.4 Data analysis and interpretation**

The valid netnographic data was examined during the data collection process and posts and comments directly relevant to the research theme were selected. In this stage, the collected netnographic data was analysed through a set of steps. First, a template analysis, which includes the coding, content analysis and categorisation methods (Kozinets, 2006; Brooks and King, 2014; Brooks *et al.*, 2015) was conducted. Brooks and King (2014) state that template analysis is a thematic organising and interpreting technique. Brooks *et al.* (2015) consider template analysis to be a type of thematic analysis that aims to build up a structure through the process of hierarchically coding and categorising the data. Burton and Khammash (2010) mentioned that utilising template analysis can help a researcher get a depth of understanding about customer motivations for posting opinions and reviews on social media. Template analysis can also assist a researcher to sort the different meanings derived from the interpretation into the categories (King, 2012).

As the objectives of the netnographic study in this research were to identify the antecedent factors that drive customers to engage in dialogic co-creation activities and to identify the major types of dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo, the template analysis assisted researcher to achieve these objectives. Moreover, the review of relevant studies investigating customer engagement in virtual communities or co-creation activities (Centeno and Wang, 2017; Schembri and Latimer, 2016; Skålén *et al.*, 2015; Parrott *et al.*, 2015; Zaglia, 2013) also conducted coding, content analysis and categorisation methods to analyse the netnographic data.

During the coding process, three types of coding approach were conducted: open coding approach (Kozinets *et al.*, 2014), axial coding approach (Skålén *et al.*, 2015) and selective coding approach (Hernandez and Handan, 2014). The application of different coding approaches were introduced in the data analysis process. Therefore, the 300 brand-generated posts and 3,000 customer-generated and brand-generated comments were analysed using template analysis. The procedure for the template analysis was based on Brooks and King's (2014) demonstration.

Firstly, the researcher is required to be familiar with the raw netnographic data (Brooks and King, 2014). After generally reading through the 300 brand-generated posts and 3,000 brand-generated and customer-generated comments, the researcher decided to code 10 brand-generated posts per day and spent 30 days analysing a total of 300 brand-generated posts. After that, the researcher began to code 30 brand or customer-generated comments per day and spent 100 days analysing the 3,000 comments.

Secondly, Brooks and King (2014) suggest researchers use some developed themes in the primary coding process, as these previous themes can accelerate the preliminary data coding process. Furthermore, they also mentioned that these themes can be revised, removed or refined during the coding process if they are not



appropriate to the current data. In terms of the 300 brand-generated posts, the main purpose of analysing this data was to identify and categorise the popular dialogic co-creation activities that customers prefer to engage in. A template (see Table 6.8) based on the literature review was adopted in the preliminary data coding process. Another initial template (Table 6.9) was also applied to code the brand or customer-generated comments. The purpose of analysing the brand-generated and customer-generated comments was to understand and identify the logic (antecedent factors) that motivates customers to engage in dialogic co-creation.

In this step, open coding was applied by reviewing the netnographic data line-by-line and using different colours to highlight the key words that related to the identified antecedent factors and dialogic co-creation topics. The aim of the open coding approach was to identify the key words in the text that were relevant to the identified themes. These selected brand posts were coded according to the different topics of the post content (see Table 6.8). Four dialogic co-creation activities were identified in the literature review: organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertainment and remuneration. Therefore, the brand-generated posts were colour coded to reflect this, while those that did not belong to the identified topics were coded as “others”. For instance, the brand posts coded as organic e-WOM were highlighted in yellow. The brand posts that mentioned information about celebrities, interaction with brands, or celebrities were coded as amplified e-WOM and highlighted in green. If the brand posts included creative and entertainment content such as music, games, and fun videos, they were coded as entertainment and highlighted in tiffany blue. The brand posts related to prize draws, promotions, special offers and discounts were coded as remuneration and highlighted in grey. The 3,000 selected comments were addressed according to a similar procedure. All of the selective comments were categorised into three groups (customers’ personal comments, customer-customer interactions, and customer-brand interactions) according to the comment’s content. Colour coding was also used to distinguish different antecedent factors from brand or customer-generated comments. For instance, customers’ personal comments revealing consumer expertise were coded and highlighted in pink.

Thirdly, an axial coding approach was employed to further analyse the text content. The aim of this step was to compare the highlighted text to the themes from the initial templates and ensure the content was categorised into the correct themes. During the axial coding process, the researcher also identified the sub-factors that motivate customer engagement and the sub-topics of each dialogic co-creation activity. Furthermore, new themes came up during this process. In terms of each topic, several sub-topics were identified in the literature review; therefore, the researcher coded the posts according to the content of the sub-topics. For example, organic e-WOM can be categorised into three sub-topics (product/brand information, transaction and delivery service, physical/online store information). The textual data was coded in different colours. Examples of each sub-topic are listed in Table 6.8. Furthermore, the sub-factors from the consumer expertise factor, including cognitive effort, analysis ability, memory, and elaboration were identified and coded in a set of colours. For instance, the comments showing a customer’s cognitive effort (i.e. a customer’s ability to identify a product’s characteristics and categories) were coded

and coloured in purple. In terms of the second group (customer-customer interactions), it was classified into customer interactions among their social reference groups (friends, peers, family) and customer interactions with brands or other customers (strangers). The details of each sub-factor's coding criteria are displayed in Table 6.9. In the final step, the selective coding approach was employed to develop a new template by removing the irrelevant themes, revising the identified themes and establishing new themes.

Table 6 8: Initial template of the dialogic co-creation activities on social networks

Topics	Sub-topics	Examples
1. Organic e-WOM (Zhang <i>et al.</i> , 2017)	1.1 Product/Brand information	The variety of the product offered.
		The quality of the product offered.
		The prices of products offered.
		The company's notoriety.
	1.2 Transaction and delivery service.	The ease of transactions.
		The security of transactions and its Internet site.
		The speed of the delivery.
	1.3 Physical/Online store information	Online store's activities
		New physical store launch
2. Amplified e-WOM (Labrecque, 2014; Xiang <i>et al.</i> , 2016)	2.1 Perceived brand's interactivity	Brand replies to customer enquires
	2.2 Celebrity endorsement information	Brand release celebrity endorsement information
	2.3 Perceived celebrity's interactivity	Brand facilitates direct interactive activities between

		customers and celebrity on social networking platform
3. Entertainment (Godey <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Enginkaya & Yilmaz, 2014)	3.1 The influential and creative contents	Jokes Daily horoscopes Human interest stories Anecdotes Teasers Slogans
	3.2 Fun games and videos	Humorous videos Wordplay Online games Cartons
4 Remuneration (Azar <i>et al.</i> , 2016; De Vries <i>et al.</i> , 2017)	4.1 Economic incentives	Discounts and promotions Prize draw
	4.2 Other rewards	Free products, samples or gifts

Table 6 9: Initial template of the antecedent factors drive customer engagement in dialogic co-creation

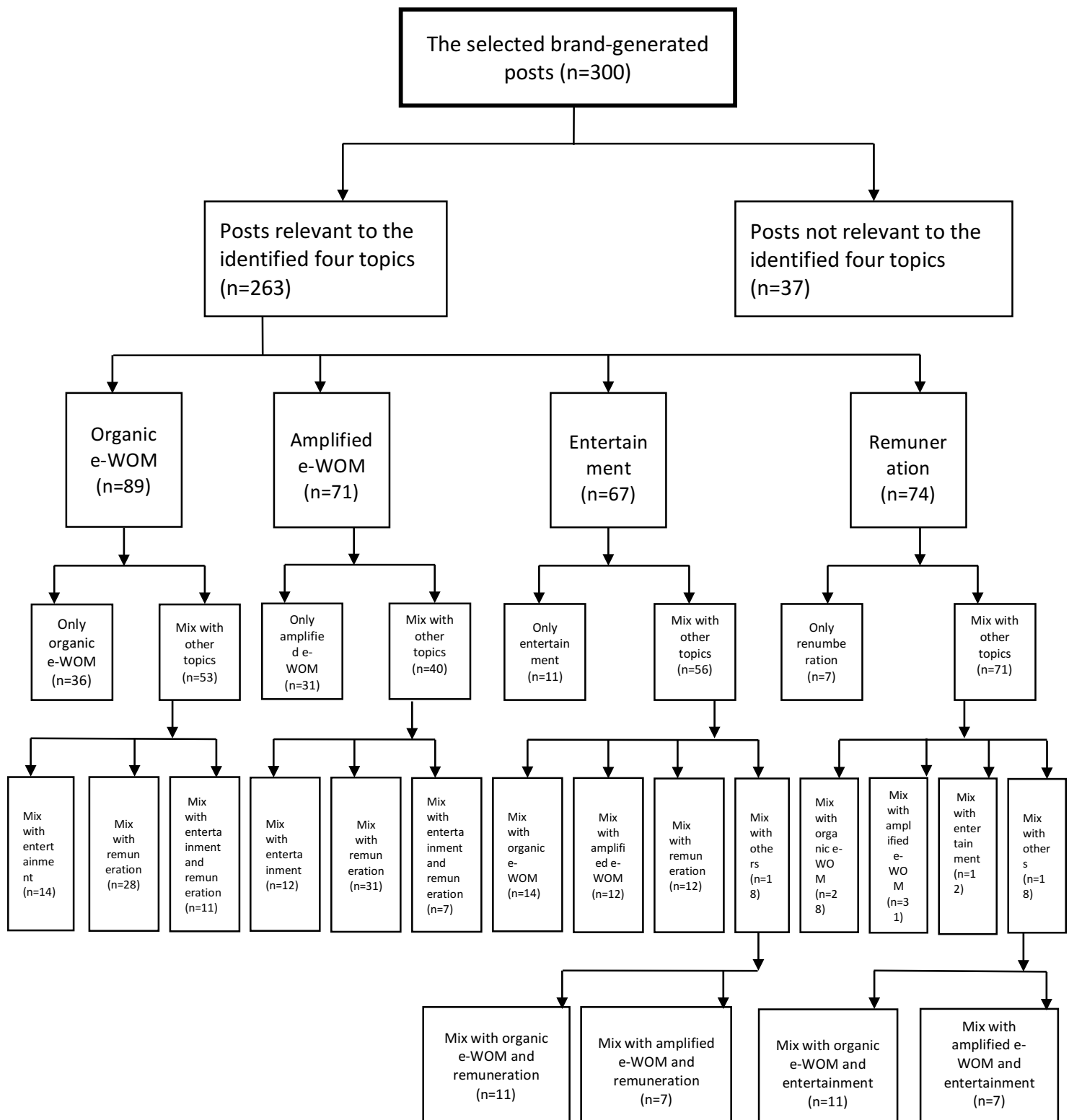
Factors	Sub-factors	Explanation
1 Consumer expertise (Barrutia & Gilsanz's 2013)	1.1 Cognitive effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer can identify the different categories of products and the product's characteristics.</li> </ul>
	1.2 Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer can analyse different product information from important, useful and relevant to unimportant, useless and irrelevant.</li> </ul>
	1.3 Elaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer have enough understandings towards the brands.</li> <li>Customer can distinguish whether the information list online is true or fake.</li> <li>Customer can distinguish which brand/product is best and which brand/product is worst</li> </ul>
	1.4 Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer can remember brand/product information and her previous shopping experiences.</li> </ul>
2 Social expertise (Barrutia <i>et al.</i> , 2014)	2.1 Individual reference groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer shares brand information/shopping experience or interacts with her friends or family members.</li> <li>Customer tags her friends or family members under the brand post.</li> </ul>

	2.2 Co-consuming groups: other users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer shares brand information/shopping experience or interacts with other customers</li> <li>• Customer provides her own opinions to other customers.</li> </ul>
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In the third step, the researcher formulated the coding template using the hierarchical coding or parallel coding methods (Brooks and King, 2014). Hierarchical coding is recommended to narrow down the broad themes into several sub-themes, while parallel coding is adopted in classification of themes of the same level (Brooks *et al.*, 2015). The hierarchical coding method was applied in formulating the template.

In terms of the 300 brand-generated posts, the researcher identified the brand posts that related to the four major dialogic co-creation topics (a total of 263 brand-generated posts were coded). In terms of the coded posts, the researcher divided the identified posts into four categories (organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertainment and remuneration). However, these posts were not always related to one single topic. For instance, the posts that related organic e-WOM developed into two groups (purely organic e-WOM content and mixed with other content). Then, in terms of those mixed with other content, the researcher identified and categorised them into three groups (mixed with entertainment content, mixed with remuneration content or mixed with both). Therefore, some of the posts may relate to several categories. According to this logic, the researcher coded and categorised the other three dialogic co-creation content. The netnographic data coding process is displayed in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2: Hierarchical coding and categorising process towards 300 pieces of brand-generated posts.



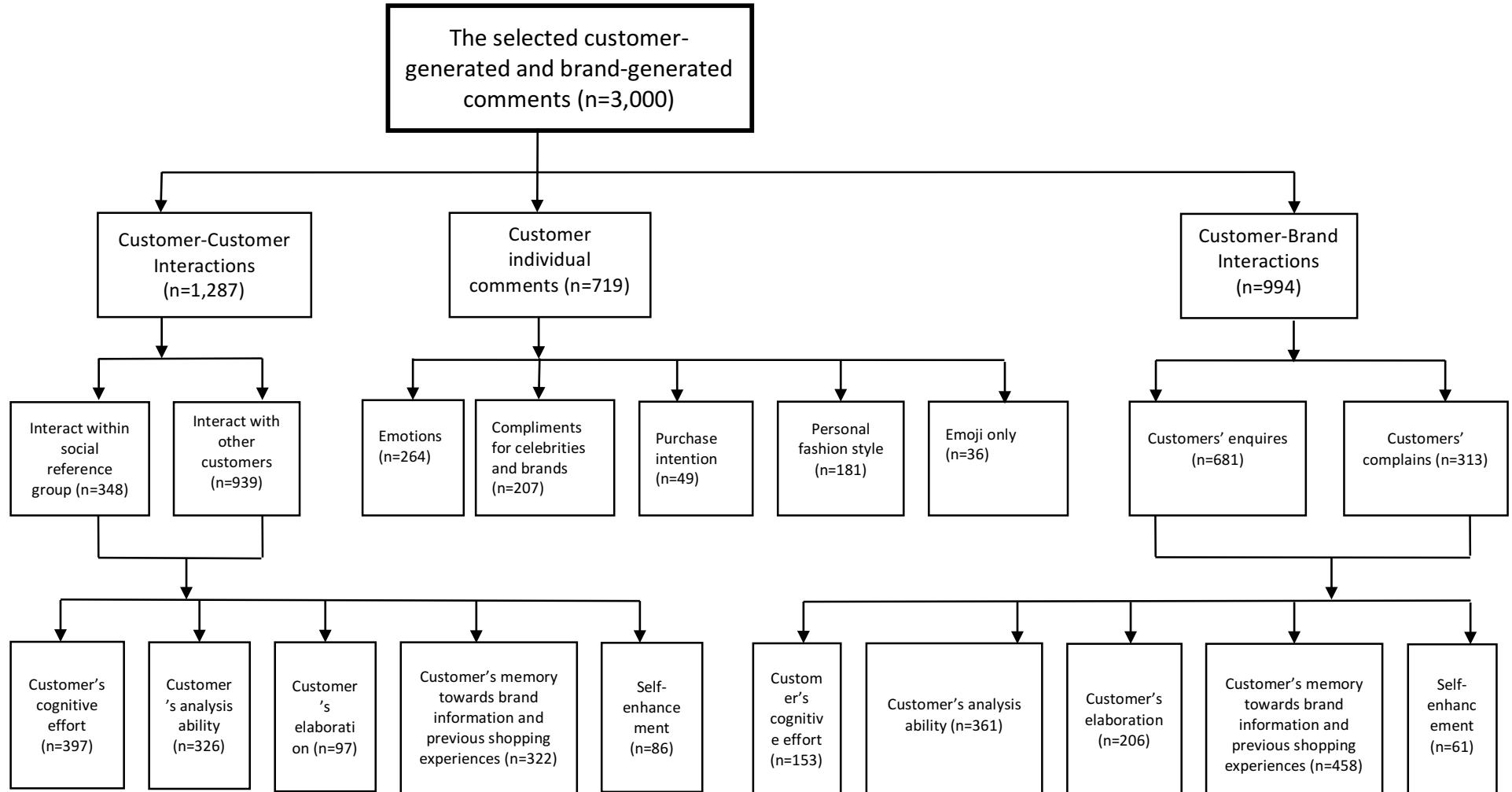
Source: Developed based on netnographic data



Furthermore, in terms of those selected brand posts only related to a single topic, the researcher precisely analysed the content of each post and categorised them into a series of sub-themes. For instance, the researcher analysed 89 pure organic e-WOM contents and categorised them into four sub-themes (product/brand information, online/physical store information, transaction and delivery service and product sustainability). In addition, the pure amplified e-WOM contents (n=72) were classified into three sub-themes (celebrity endorsement, perceived brand interactions and perceived celebrity interactions). The brand posts belonging to pure entertainment content (n=67) were classified into two sub-topics (influential and creative contents and funny games and videos). The brand posts related to pure remuneration content (n=74) were categorised into two sub-themes (economic incentives and other rewards).

The coding and categorising process in terms of the 3,000 selected comments are displayed in Figure 6.3. There are three main forms of comments: customer-customer interactions (n=1,287), customer's individual comments (n=719) and customer-brand interactions (n=994). From customer-customer interactions and customer-brand interactions, a customer's expertise (such as cognitive effort, analysis ability, elaboration of product information, memory about previous product categories and shopping experiences) was revealed. A sub-factor that reveals consumer expertise was also identified: customer's self-enhancement. However, as the content of these comments sometimes reflect two or more antecedent factors, they were coded and categorised into different identified antecedent factors a few times. Moreover, except for the identified factors and sub-factors, other types of customers' individual comments were identified under the brand-generated posts (customer's compliments for celebrities and brands, customer's emotions, customer's personal life, customer's purchase intention and emojis) (details will be discussed in Chapter 7).

Figure 6.3: Hierarchical coding and categorising process towards 3,000 pieces of selected comments



Source: Developed based on netnographic data

After the hierarchical coding process, the fourth step is to apply the developed template in further data analysis (Brooks and King, 2014). In this process, new themes can be identified and added to the initial template. In addition, the irrelevant themes can be removed or refined. In terms of the topics of dialogic co-creation activities, the researcher identified a new theme and recognised some sub-themes in each identified topic. For instance, the dialogic co-creation activities related to product sustainability and product recycling attracted customers' attention. However, even though the updated template is developed, the process of modifying it continues iteratively until the final comprehensive template is defined (Brooks and King, 2014). In terms of the template's display forms, Brooks and King (2014) suggest two ways to present a template: a textual list or a graphic mind map. In this research, the final template is displayed as a structural list and the researcher interpreted the findings using illustrative examples collected from the observation. The findings of the analysis of the netnographic study will be discussed in the next chapter.

#### **6.4.5 Research ethics**

Kozinets (2012) emphasises that ethical issues should be considered by the researcher during the process of conducting a netnographic study. He concluded that two main types of ethical problems may appear in online and consumer studies. First, researchers need to consider whether the online community or online social platform selected is a private or public area. Second, researchers are required to think cautiously about informed consent if they choose a private online platform to observe users' behaviours. In order to avoid ethical issues, Kozinets (2012) suggests that if the researcher is investigating a private online community, he/she is required to (1) inform the online community about his/her presence during the data collection process; (2) make sure the users' information is kept confidentially; (3) contact online community members and inform them that they are being researched; (4) be careful about the researcher's position on those online platforms that stand as the medium of private vs public sites. In terms of the current study, as the observational object (Sina Weibo) in this netnographic study is a completely public social networking platform, everyone can read content generated by the users. As Sina Weibo users usually register a pseudonym as their user name, during the netnographic data collection process, no ethical issues occurred.

#### **6.4.6 Member checks**

The last step of a netnographic study is to conduct member checks (Kozinets, 2012). The procedure for member checking usually occurs when all the data have been collected and analysed, which requires the researcher to present the findings to the online users whose comments have been researched. Member checks allow the researcher to confirm that the comments cited from the observation have the same meaning as the user intended. Furthermore, conducting member checks can assist the researcher to deal with ethical issues encountered in the data collection process. However, Kozinets (2012) contends that it is unnecessary to conduct member checks and present the data to the observed users when the data was collected entirely unobtrusively. Since the observation process in this study was completely

unobtrusive, no member checks were conducted at the end of the current netnographic study.

### **6.5 Quantitative Study: Online Survey**

In the second stage of the overall data collection process for this research, a quantitative study was conducted by releasing the online survey to test:

- (1) the relationships between the identified antecedent factors and different types of dialogic co-creation on a social networking site;
- (2) the relationships between customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities and the customer benefits received;
- (3) the relationships between customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities and the influence on customer purchase intention.

As stated in section 6.3.2, a self-administrated online survey is considered as the appropriate data collection method in this stage.

First, an online survey is deemed as an effective technique, widely-used in marketing and consumer studies, when the objective is to detect the latent variables identified in the proposed conceptual model (Ho and Dempsey, 2010; Leeflang *et al.*, 2014). Specifically, in terms of detecting the antecedent factors and consequences of customer value creation/co-creation engagement, relevant studies such as Füller *et al.* (2009), Nambisan and Baron (2009), Carbonell and Rodriguez-Escudero (2014), Groeger *et al.* (2016), Fung *et al.* (2016), Taghizadeh *et al.* (2016), Laud and Karpen (2017), and Buonincontri (2017) conducted online surveys to collect a large number of responses. They believe that statistically analysing the quantitative results can precisely measure the relationships between the antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement; the participants' logic and their behaviours; and the respondents' attitudes and their intentions.

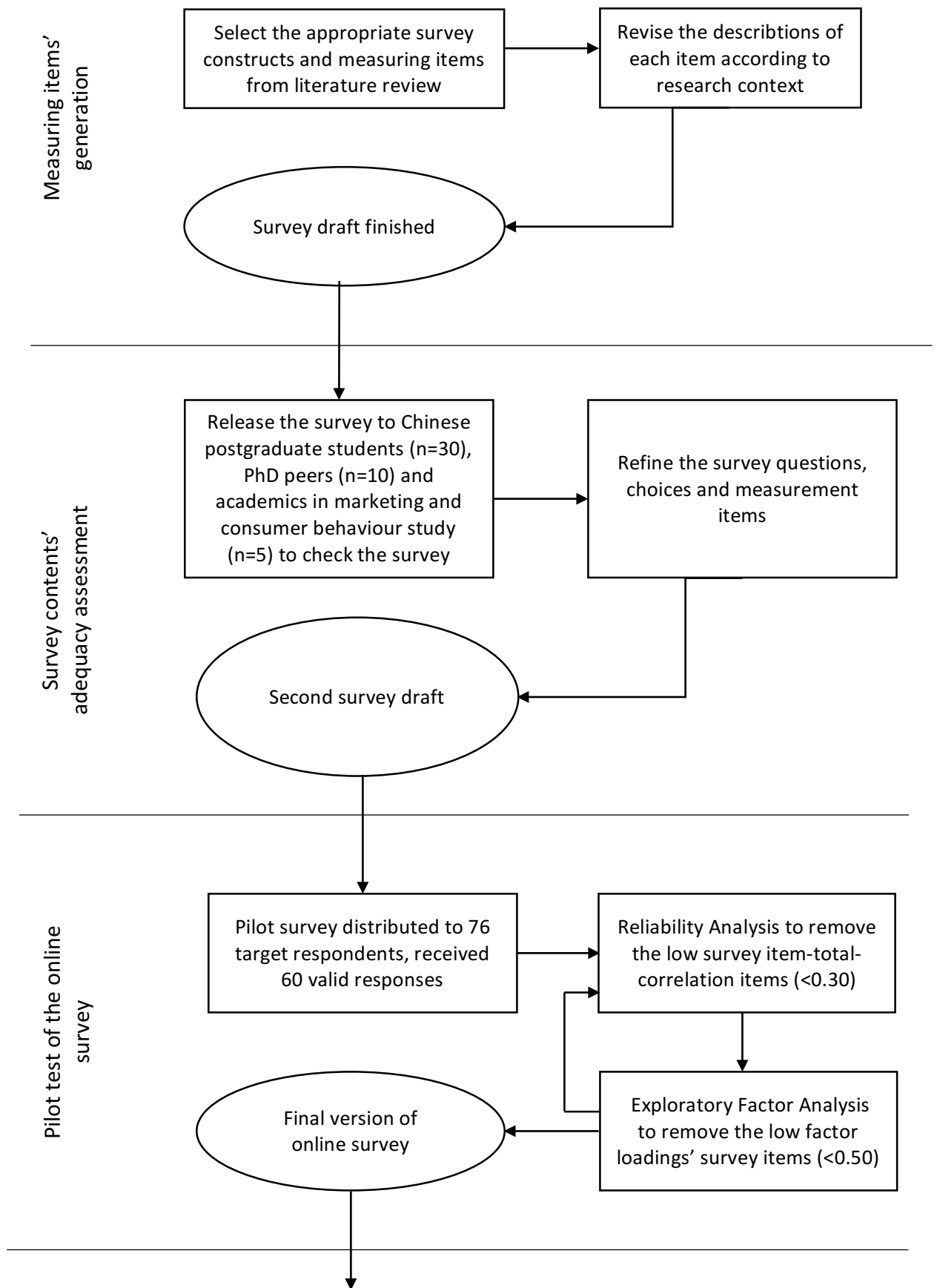
Second, if the target respondents frequently use online channels such as email, social media, and virtual communities, the researcher can gain access to these platforms to build a link with the target respondents (Wang *et al.*, 2012; Chu and Kim, 2011). This was considered as the relevant reason to employ an online survey for the current study as the target respondents are the social networking users. Thus, a social networking site-distributed online survey was the most appropriate way to get in touch with a large number of target participants without being limited to a certain geographical location (Lukas *et al.*, 2004).

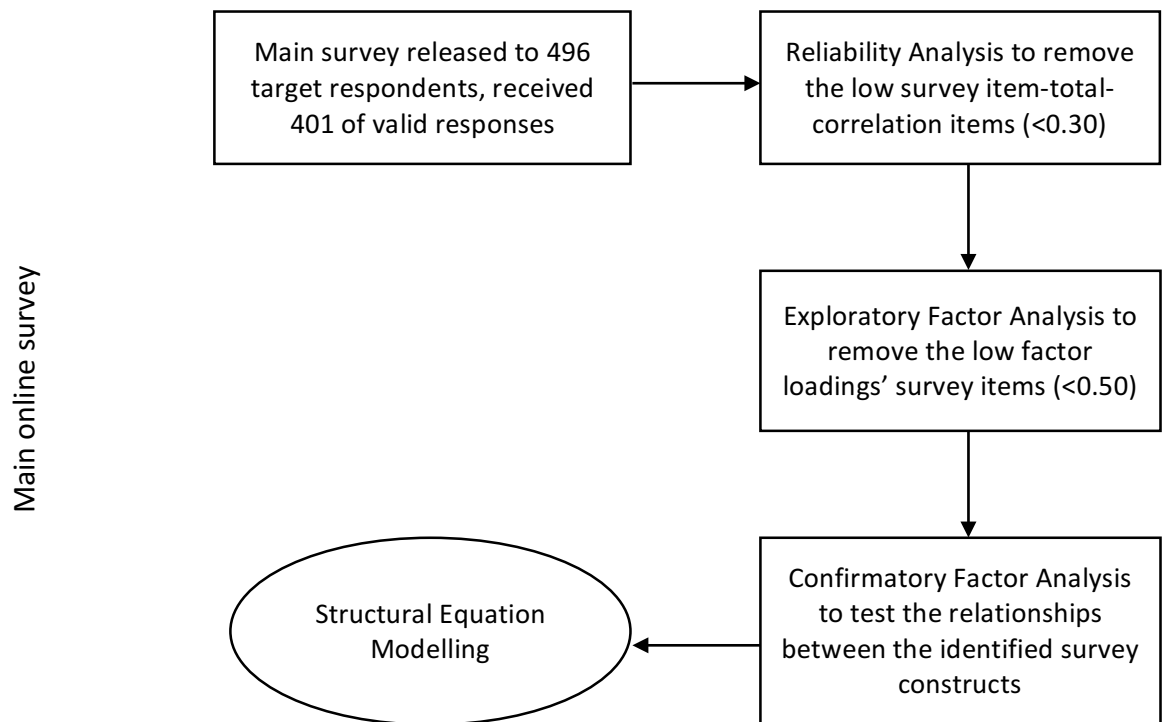
Third, an online survey is a low cost method of releasing a questionnaire via online channels as it doesn't need to be printed or posted to target respondents (Ilieva *et al.*, 2002). Fourth, an online survey is more flexible for participants to choose the time to respond compared to other survey forms (i.e. face-to-face, phone). Thus, an online survey may lead to a higher response rate compared to other survey forms (Burns and Bush, 2000). Fifth, employing the Chinese online survey tool Tongsun Questionnaire, the survey link can be shared to a variety of Chinese social networking platforms such as Sina Weibo, Tencent Weibo and WeChat. Moreover, the survey responses collected by this platform can be directly exported into the

quantitative data analysis software SPSS, which enhances the efficiency and accuracy of processing the data. Sixth, as the online survey tool can detect each respondent's IP address, it ensures participants who have already completed the survey will be unable to answer the questionnaire twice.

However, this method has attracted some criticism (Ilieva *et al.*, 2002). Significantly, it cannot guarantee the quality of the responses from participants. This is because the researcher cannot provide guidance instantly if participants have any queries or misconceptions during the process of completing the survey (McDaniel and Gates, 2013). Although the researcher's contact details are provided at the beginning of the questionnaire in case respondents have any questions about the survey and the study, not always are the participants get contact with researcher but just withdraw to answer the question. Therefore, the quality of an online survey is highly influenced by the response rate (Wright, 2005). Based on the critical evaluations of online surveys, the researcher provided a precise online survey design in order to ensure the quality of the questionnaire. Figure 6.4 displays the process of conducting the online survey in terms of survey design, data collection and data analysis. The following sub-sections describe these processes.

Figure 6.4: Process of conducting an online survey





### 6.5.1 Questionnaire design

The fundamental step when conducting an online survey is to carefully design the questionnaire based on a deep understanding of the current research topic and problems (Wright, 2005). Two sections were included in this self-administrated online survey. The first section aimed to gain the target participants' demographic information through seven related questions: respondent's age, educational level, personal monthly income, monthly spending on fast fashion shopping, the city tier the respondent lives in, the frequency of checking a brand's information on Sina Weibo; and the fast fashion brands the participant follows on Sina Weibo. These questions were designed according to the demographic characteristics described by Chinese market reports. For instance, PwC (2016) pointed out that 52% of Chinese social networking users are young females aged between 25 and 34. They are well-educated with high incomes and they spend their leisure time engaging with fashion brands' activities on Sina Weibo. Moreover, KPMG (2014) specified that the majority of Chinese social networking female users who check the fashion brands' information on SNSs and regularly shop online for fashion items live in urban areas. Beijing (75%), Shanghai (71%) and Guangdong (66%) have the highest online shopping penetration of the country's administrative regions

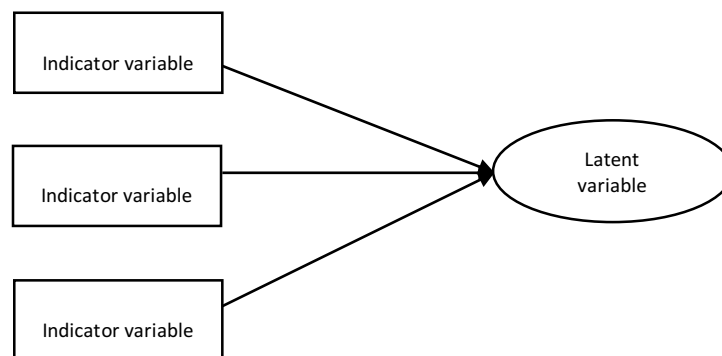
After receiving the target respondents' demographic profile, the second section aimed to gain insight into the relationship between a customer's logic and the influences of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities facilitated by fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo. It also tested the different benefits customer received from such engagement behaviours and the influence on purchase intention

based on the dialogic co-creation engagement. In order to develop a set of reliable and valid survey measures, the researcher followed the paradigm developed by Churchill (1979) to select the domain of constructs and the initial measurement items. Finally, the content adequacy of the first survey draft was assessed.

#### 6.5.1.1 Domain of constructs

Theoretical constructs are also called “latent variables” in a quantitative measurement model. The measurement items that belong to respective constructs are called “observed variables” or “indicator variables”. Prior to selecting the appropriate theoretical constructs, a discussion in terms of the form of the measurement model is required (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2006; Coltman *et al.*, 2008). Generally, there are two types of quantitative measurement model: formative and reflective. The difference between these two models is based on the relationship between the latent variables and the indicator variables (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2006). In the formative measurement model (see Figure 6.5), the latent variable that is constructed by multiple measurement items cannot be detected directly, but can be assessed by the indicator variables (Diamantopoulos *et al.*, 2008). In other words, the latent variable is influenced or formed by the indicator variables. As the different indicator variables will produce a unique effect on the latent variable, the indicator variables are not interchangeable. The causal relationship between latent variable and indicator variable can be positive, negative or neutral (Coltman *et al.*, 2008).

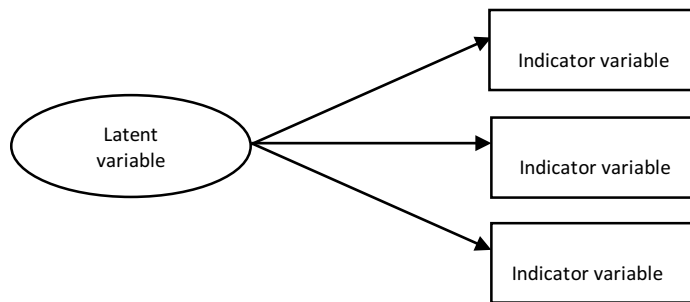
Figure 6.5: Sample of formative measurement model



However, the reflective measurement model (see Figure 6.6) does not focus on examining the effect of indicator variables on the latent variable, but it shows how the latent variable reflects on its indicator variables (Diamantopoulos *et al.*, 2008). In other words, a measurement item changed in the latent variable will influence all indicator variables simultaneously. More essentially, the reflection from latent variable to indicator variables must be positively related (Diamantopoulos *et al.*, 2008).



Figure 6.6: Sample of reflective measurement model



Based on this discussion, the measurement model used in this study is a reflective measurement model, which demonstrates the influence of the indicator variables on the latent variable. Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer (2001) emphasised that, in order to operationalise the reflective measurement model, it is essential to identify the valid and reliable latent variables and indicator variables that are appropriate to the current study. This includes the following considerations: (1) whether the existing survey constructs from previous empirical studies can be directly employed in the current study; (2) whether the identified constructs need to be adapted to suit the research context; (3) whether the measurement items from the constructs can be used directly. The researcher selected the existing theoretical constructs from relevant empirical studies and justified in the literature review (in Chapter 4). The conceptual framework and the hypotheses that proposed the relationships between the identified latent variables and indicator variables are outlined in Chapter 5. The definitions of each of the selected constructs are illustrated as follows.

- **Consumer expertise**

Consumer expertise was originally defined as a customer's capability of finishing a product-related task (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987 p. 441). Dholakia *et al.* (2004) further explained that product-related tasks can include missions like solving product-related problems and contributing practical suggestions and ideas to influence others. Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013) explain consumer expertise in the context of online shopping as a customer's ability to collect and organise a variety of product information from online platforms and utilise these resources to understand and evaluate product information and make a purchase decision.

- **Social expertise**

Social expertise refers to a customer's ability to motivate himself/herself to identify social and brand-related groups and interact within these groups (Alden *et al.*, 2017, p.5910). Barrutia *et al.* (2014) define social expertise as the customer's social capital and social support gained from his/her social context.

- **Organic e-WOM**

Organic e-WOM is defined as customers' interactions and communications related to personal shopping experiences, and individual opinions related to a brand/product. These peer discussions are without any commercial purpose and are initiated

spontaneously by customers rather than triggered by marketers on SNSs (Zhang *et al.*, 2017; Swani *et al.*, 2017).

- **Amplified e-WOM**

Amplified e-WOM occurs when marketers facilitate a set of campaigns (such as product promotions, advertising, celebrity endorsements) to evoke customer engagement in social media activities (Labrecque, 2014). Moreover, customers perceive brand interactivity directly, efficiently and quickly on social media, which attracts more customers to involve in the discussions (Xiang's *et al.*, 2016).

- **Entertainment**

An entertainment post refers to brand-generated content that does not include product information but focuses on making customers feel enjoyment, pleasure, amused (Godey *et al.*, 2016; Enginkaya and Yilmaz 2014). The major types of entertainment content include funny videos, brand anecdotes, inspired slogans, humorous teaser, and interesting wordplay.

- **Remuneration**

Remuneration content contains economic benefits and incentives offered by the retailers and brands to their customers. Social media activities such as raffles, prize draws and competitions can foster customer engagement and interaction with brands (Azar *et al.*, 2016; De Vries *et al.*, 2017).

- **Customer benefits**

Three major forms of customer benefits (utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal) construct the customer benefits that can be received from dialogic co-creation activities (Chen *et al.*, 2015). Utilitarian benefits refer to economic and learning benefits. Interpersonal benefits include social benefits and personal integrative benefits. Hedonic benefits are deemed as mentally satisfying experiences.

- **Customer's purchase Intention**

A customer develops a willingness to purchase an item based on their understanding of the brand/product (Kim and Ko, 2012).

#### **6.5.1.2 Initial pool of items**

After identifying the domain of constructs, the next step is to collect and organise a range of initial items (measurement scales) comprising the measures of the latent variables and indicator variables. In the formative measurement model, a single item from the variables can lead to different outcomes (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001). Thus, it is essential to identify the appropriate items that are aligned with the current study. Noar (2003) suggested that the measurement items should avoid (1) extremely lengthy items; (2) double-barrelled items; (3) lack of readable items; (4) ambiguously defined items. According to these standards, 59 items that were validated from empirical studies were employed in the online survey. Items generated from the relevant literature were captured and refined to suit the

research context based on the netnographic study. The following table (6.10) displays the selected constructs with the original items, refined items and item codes. A content adequacy assessment of these selected and refined measurement items was conducted in next step to ensure the accuracy and consistency for operationalising the constructs and their relevant measurement items. The results of this assessment are described in the next section.

Table 6 10: Survey constructs and the measurement items from the literature review

(Items in blue are from original literatures, items in black are refined based on current research context and netnographic data)

Stage One: Customer logics influence on customer engagement in dialogic co-creation				
Constructs	Variables	Items codes	Measurement items (variable description)	References
Consumer expertise	Cognitive effort	CE01	I automatically know which brands of this product/service to buy. I automatically know which brands to follow on Sina Weibo.	Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013)
		CE02	I am quite loyal to one brand of this product/service. I am quite loyal to one brand and only follow that brand on Sina Weibo.	
		CE03	I can find my preferred brands of this product/service on the Internet without much effort. I can find my preferred brands of this product on Sina Weibo without much effort.	
		CE04	I can immediately identify the brands of this product/service I want, even if mixed with others that are similar. I can immediately identify the brands of this product I want on Sina Weibo, even if mixed with others are similar.	
	Analysis	AN01	I enjoy learning about this product/service. I enjoy learning about this product on Sina Weibo.	Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013)
		AN02	I usually search for the latest information on this product/service before buying it. I usually search for the latest information of the brands and products on Sina Weibo before buying it.	
		AN03	I keep current on the most recent developments in this product/service. I keep current on the most recent updates of the brands and products on Sina Weibo.	
	Elaboration	EL01	I have enough knowledge on this product/service to verify that advertising claims are in fact true. I have enough knowledge on this product to verify that brand post on Sina Weibo claims are in fact true.	Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013)
		EL02	After collecting the information I need, I find it easy to know which is the best product/service among those offered on the site.	

			After collecting the brands and products information I need on Sina Weibo, I find it easy to know which is the best product among those offered on the site.	
		EL03	I know what brands are best and worst for this product/service. I know what brands are best and worst for this product.	
	Memory	ME01	I can recall specific attributes of this product/service. I can point out the specific attributes of this product I want.	Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013)
		ME02	When studying several alternative offers for this product/service I can recall the differences between them. When studying several alternative offers for this brand and product on Sina Weibo, I can recall the difference between them.	
		ME03	I can recall almost all existing brands of this product/service from memory. I can recall almost all brands and products information from Sina Weibo.	
Social expertise	Individual reference groups: family, friends	ID01	People around me know much about how to acquire this product/service online. People around me know much about how to acquire these brands and products information on Sina Weibo.	Barrutia et al., (2016)
		ID02	I usually speak with colleagues and friends about how to use the Internet for this product/service. I usually speak with colleagues and friends about how to use the Sina Weibo for gathering the brand and product information.	
		ID03	I get useful information on the Internet through colleagues and friends. I get useful information on Sina Weibo through colleagues and friends tag me in.	
	Co-consuming groups: brands or other brand users.	CO01	I communicate online with the company and/or other brand users via Twitter, Facebook, etc. I communicate with the brand and/or other brand users on Sina Weibo.	Alden et al., (2016)
		CO02	I spend time on brand websites interacting with other consumers about the brand or other topics. I spend time on brand's Sina Weibo interacting with other consumers about the brand or other topics.	
		CO03	I participate in online discussions with the company and/or other brand users on one or more websites.	

			I participate in online discussions with the brand and/or other brand users on Sina Weibo.	
		CO04	I offer my thoughts about the brand online via one or more brand websites to the company and/or other brand users. I offer my thoughts about the brand online via Brand's Sina Weibo to the brand and/or other brand users.	
Stage Two: The major types of dialogic co-creation activities that consumer get engage on social networks				
Organic e-WOM	Product/Brand information	PR01	I discuss the variety of the product offered. I discuss the variety of the product offered on the brand's Sina Weibo.	Zhang <i>et al.</i> , (2017)
		PR02	I discuss the quality of the product offered. I discuss the quality of the product offered on the brand's Sina Weibo.	
		PR03	I discuss the prices of products offered. I discuss the prices of products offered on the brand's Sina Weibo.	
		PR04	I speak of the company's notoriety. I speak of the company's notoriety on the brand's Sina Weibo.	
	Transaction and delivery service.	TR01	I discuss ease of transactions. I discuss ease of transactions on the brand's Sina Weibo.	
		TR02	I discuss security of transactions and its Internet site. I discuss security of transactions and its mobile app on the brand's Sina Weibo.	
		TR03	I speak of the rapid delivery. I speak of the rapid delivery on the brand's Sina Weibo.	
	Physical/Online store information	PH01	I will tell my friends and relatives about my experiences with this store on the Internet. I tell others about my shopping experiences with this brand on the brand's Sina Weibo.	
Amplified e-WOM	Perceived brand's interactivity	PE01	[Brand] will talk back to me if I post a message. Brand will talk back to me if I post a message on brand page on Sina Weibo.	Labrecque, (2014)
		PE02	[Brand] would respond to me quickly and efficiently. Brand would respond to me quickly and efficiently on Sina Weibo.	

		PE03	[Brand] allows me to communicate directly with it. Brand allows me to communicate directly with it on Sina Weibo.	
		PE04	[Brand] listens to what I have to say. Brand listens to what I have to say on Sina Weibo.	
	Parasocial interaction	PA01	Mogujie.com shows me what other members are like, especially some celebrities I'm interested in. Brand's post on Sina Weibo shows me what other members are like, especially some celebrities I'm interested in.	Xiang <i>et al.</i> , (2016)
		PA02	The interaction with other members on Mogujie.com makes me feel comfortable, especially with some celebrities I hardly contact in real life, as if I were with friends.  The interaction with other members on Sina Weibo makes me feel comfortable, especially with some celebrities I hardly contact in real life, as if I were with friends.	
		PA03	I found myself comparing my opinion about products and brands with what other members said, especially with some celebrities' opinions. I found myself comparing my opinion about products and brands with what other members said, especially with some celebrities' opinions on Sina Weibo.	
Entertainment	Entertaining contents	EN01	I like the influential and creative contents on SM which were generated by the brands. I like the influential and creative contents on Sina Weibo which were generated by the brands.	Enginkaya & Yilmaz, (2014)
		EN02	Games and / or videos created by brands, provides opportunity for me to have fun time over SM. Games and / or videos created by brands, provides opportunity for me to have fun time on Sina Weibo.	
		EN03	I think the entertaining content provided by a brand on SM positively influences the customer attitudes and company's image. I think the entertaining content provided by a brand on Sina Weibo positively influences the customer attitudes and company's image.	
		EN04	Content of X brand's social media seems interesting. Content of X brand's Sina Weibo seems interesting.	Godey <i>et al.</i> , (2016)

Remuneration	Rewards	RE01	I interact with brands on Facebook in order to access discounts and promotions. I interact with brands on Sina Weibo in order to access discounts and promotions.	Azar <i>et al.</i> , (2016).
		RE02	I like to interact with brands on Facebook as they offer contests and games from which I can access free products or other special offers. I like to interact with brands on Sina Weibo as they offer contests/ games/sweepstakes from which I can access free products or other special offers.	
		RE03	I can receive rewards. I can receive rewards from engaging in brand’s activities on Sina Weibo.	De Vries <i>et al.</i> , (2017)
		RE04	I can receive incentives. I can receive incentives from engaging in brand’s activities on Sina Weibo.	
		RE05	I can receive gifts (such as free-samples, coupons, etc. I can receive gifts (such as free-samples, coupons, etc. from engaging in brand’s activities on Sina Weibo.	
		RE06	I can get something in exchange for my participation/ contribution. I can get something in exchange for my participation/ contribution on brand’s Sina Weibo.	
Stage Three: Outcomes from customer engaging in dialogic co-creation on social networks.				
Consumer benefits	Utilitarian benefits	UT01	I get product/service information through the OGB site. I get brand/product information through Sina Weibo.	Chen <i>et al.</i> , (2015)
		UT02	I resolve uncertainties/doubts regarding buying products/services. I resolve uncertainties/doubts regarding buying brand’s product.	
		UT03	I buy products/services at a low price or great discount. I buy brand’s products at a low price or great discount.	
		UT04	I get specific products/services that I want. I get specific products that I want.	
	Hedonic benefits	HE01	I gain a sense of happiness from OGB process I gain a sense of happiness from engaging in brand’s Sina Weibo.	
		HE02	I enjoy the pleasant and relaxed emotion gained from OGB	



			I enjoy the pleasant and relaxed emotion gained from engaging in brand's Sina Weibo.	
		HE03	I feel the enthusiasm of OGB sites pick me up. I feel the enthusiasm of engaging in brand's Sina Weibo pick me up.	
		HE04	I pass my time away on OGB, when bored I pass my time away on engaging in brand's Sina Weibo when bored.	
	Interpersonal benefits	IN01	I get sufficient social support or help from other OGB members I get sufficient social support or help from other Sina Weibo users	
		IN02	I gain acceptance and approval from other members I gain acceptance and approval from other Sina Weibo users	
		IN03	I stay in touch with other OGB members I stay in touch with other Sina Weibo users	
		IN04	I impress other OGB members I impress other Sina Weibo users.	
Purchase intension		PU01	I would like to purchase LV. I would like to purchase the products from the brands that I follow on Sina Weibo.	Kim and Ko, (2012)
		PU02	I would like to recommend LV to others. I would like to recommend the brands' products that I follow on Sina Weibo to others.	
		PU3	I would use the Internet for purchasing a product. I would use the Internet for purchasing a product from the brands that I follow on Sina Weibo.	Erkan and Evans, (2016)

### 6.5.1.3 Content adequacy assessment

It is useful to check the content adequacy of the measurement items before releasing the survey to target respondents (DeVellis, 2012). Malhotra and Birks (2007) also suggested that it is necessary to carry out a survey content assessment to recognise and eliminate any problems. Thus, this assessment aimed to (1) ensure the specific description of the items represents the domain of the construct; (2) check the questionnaire layout, the clarity of wording, and the completion time.

Hennink *et al.* (2011) advised that a convenient sample can be employed in a pilot test, which may be outside the target respondents. Based on these suggestions, the researcher asked for feedback from two groups of academics. The first group included five academics and 10 PhD students who were conducting marketing and consumer behaviour studies at the University of Manchester. They were asked because the previous studies suggested that academics have always been considered to play the role of judge for assessing survey content based on their professional knowledge (Zaichowsky, 1985; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). The academics of this panel were provided a survey draft and the assessment sheet (see Appendix 4) to give feedback. The definitions of the survey constructs and the selected measurement items belonging to each construct were included on the assessment sheet. The panel members were required to assess and comment on each item in terms of whether the items are representative of the constructs and whether they were clearly described. They were also asked to provide suggestions about the questionnaire's structure, the design choice and the ease of completing the survey.

The researcher organised the feedback from the first group in terms of four aspects. First, the assessment aspect is related to whether the measurement items are suitable to represent the construct. Four academics commented on item ID03, "I get useful information on Sina Weibo through colleagues and friends tag me in" as not representative of the social expertise construct as the description of item is more related to the benefit that customers gain from their social group. According to their suggestions and the netnographic findings, this item was revised as "my colleagues/friends usually tag me in the fast fashion brand's post that included useful information". Furthermore, seven academics commented on item EN03, "I think the entertainment content provided by a brand on Sina Weibo positively influences the customer attitudes and company's image", stating that it was not relevant to the entertainment content construct but it is the effect of entertainment content. Consequently, this item was removed. Secondly, most of the academics gave feedback on the clarity of the wording. Six academics suggested that as this questionnaire focused on international fast fashion brands, it would be better to specify it rather than generally use the term "brands". For instance, item CE01, "I automatically know which brands to follow on Sina Weibo" could be revised as "I automatically know which international fast fashion brands to follow on Sina Weibo". Thirdly, four academics suggested that items CO03 and CO04 repeated the content of item CO02, and could be deleted. Fourthly, seven academics pointed out that items RE03, RE04 and RE05 were more like the description of customers receiving economic benefits, rather than the topic of remunerative activities. Therefore, the

researcher accepted this suggestion and dropped these three items from the questionnaire. Moreover, five academics commented on the use of past tense about the items of customer benefits received, as this was a customer's post-evaluation about the outcome of their engagement in dialogic co-creation. As a result, the researcher used the past tense in those items. Three academics expressed concern in terms of the time it took to complete the survey and suggested the researcher conduct a pilot study and employ exploratory factor analysis to identify the low factor loading items and reduce the number of statements in the survey. In terms of the survey's structure, eight academics suggested that compared to listing all the statements together, it is better to provide a brief introduction about the three stages of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation. The researcher accepted these suggestions and revised the structure of the questionnaire (see Appendix 5).

As the target respondents of this online survey were mainland Chinese fast fashion customers, the researcher decided to translate the survey into Chinese to ensure the participants could fully understand the survey's content. In order to assess the survey's content adequacy in the Chinese version, 30 Chinese postgraduate students who are studying Fashion Marketing at the University of Manchester were employed. The invitation to conduct a survey assessment was posted on several social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, Sina Weibo) using the snowball sampling strategy to contact target respondents. They were invited to comment on the validity, clarity, and completion time.

The feedback from this assessment helped the researcher make some minor changes. Finally, the Chinese version of the online survey was established. Consistent with the relevant studies (i.e. Zhang *et al.*, 2017; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2012), the survey items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree). After the survey content adequacy assessment, the online Chinese version was released on this website <https://wj.qq.com/s/1925128/3812>

### **6.5.2 Sampling strategy**

Before releasing the questionnaire, the particular target population should be taken into account (Neuman, 2013). According to Fowler (2013), the sample in a quantitative study is considered as the segment of selected respondents that can represent the characteristics of the whole population. Furthermore, different sampling strategies will influence the sample selection procedure (Kothari, 2004). Generally, there are two major types of sampling methods: probability and non-probability sampling (Fowler, 2013). A probability sample is defined as "a segment of the population that has been chosen using a random selection approach" (Bryman and Bell 2007, p. 182). In other words, each unit in the whole population has a possibility of being selected. The advantage of this sampling method is reducing the sampling error as far as possible. Conversely, Teddlie and Yu (2007) explains that the non-probability sampling strategy is based on subjective selection criteria to employ the target population as the study sample. It implies that some target units have a higher possibility of being selected than others. Black (1999) also suggested

researchers use a non-probability sampling technique to gain a sufficient sample with appropriate characteristics for the study. The respondents employed from the non-probability sampling strategy can generate useful and reliable results for the research findings. Thus, this study used a non-probability sampling strategy to identify the target population.

Furthermore, in terms of the non-probability sampling strategy, four types of sampling methods can be classified: purposive, convenience, quota and snowball sampling (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). Purposive sampling means that the researcher selects particular criteria that match the study purpose (Sandelowski, 2000). Convenience sampling allows the researcher to identify and employ respondents who are easily accessible (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). Quota sampling aims to select the target sample based on geographic areas such as cities, districts, regions (Sudman and Blair, 1999). Snowball sampling is also called “chain referral sampling”, which identifies the target sample for the study within the researcher’s social network, then the identified respondents spread the survey invitation to others from their social groups (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) suggested that the snowball technique is a very effective method as it does not have any geographical restrictions. According to the understanding of different sampling strategies, the purposive and snowball sampling strategies were both adopted in this study as the potential target sample for this study was social media users, whom the researcher found difficult to get in touch with in real life.

The researcher firstly set up a list of respondents’ selection requirements to identify the purposive sample. Specifically, the researcher informed the potential participants at the beginning of the online survey. If the potential respondents failed to meet these criteria, they needed to withdraw the survey. Then researcher used the snowball sampling methods to collect the survey responses. The sample frame for the purposive sampling strategy and sample size are discussed in the following sub-sections.

#### **6.5.2.1 Sample frame**

The sample frame is a set of sample selection criteria based on the research context and research purpose that are designed to identify the target population (Ilieva *et al.*, 2002). Since this study focuses on customers engaging in social media marketing activities facilitated by international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo, the related figures assisted in defining the target population. According to Klarity report (2013), female Sina Weibo users occupy a large population of the total users who follow apparel brands on Sina Weibo. For instance, 80.7% of Zara’s and 73.9% of H&M’s followers on Sina Weibo are female. Moreover, PwC research (2016) also points out that the age group segment of Chinese female fashion consumers is between 24 and 35. In addition, as the social media users who engage in brand-facilitated activities on Sina Weibo may be potential customers, the target participants for this study were not only active consumers but also potential customers of the brand.

In conclusion, the following criteria were set as the sample frame for this study: (1) female Sina Weibo users currently living in mainland China; (2) aged between 24 and 35; (3) the users follow international fast fashion brands (such as Uniqlo, Zara or H&M) on Sina Weibo; (4) the users are willing to share their experience and opinions about following and interacting with fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo.

### 6.5.2.2 Sample size

The sample size is an essential issue to consider when conducting structural equation modelling as it influences obtaining reliable results (Hair *et al.*, 2006). Sue and Ritter (2011) suggested that the sample size should be ten times larger than the constructs being tested in the study. Evans and Mathur (2005) recommended that it should include 5–10 valid responses per variable, up to 300. Hair *et al.* (2006) suggested the sample size should be around 150–400 for structural equation modelling while Hinkin *et al.* (1997) suggested that the ratio of measuring items to sample size should be 1:4 or 1:5. However, in order to gain a precise sample size number, this study adopted a common equation (see Figure 6.7) developed by Cochran (1977).

Figure 6.7: Equation for calculating sample size

$$N = \frac{z^2(pq)}{e^2}$$

Where:

N refers to the sample size of the study

z refers to the selected confidence level

p refers to the estimate of variance

q equals to 1-p

e refers to margin of error

Source: Cochran (1977)

The current study aimed to obtain a 95% confidence level. This estimated parameter is recommended by Burns and Bush (2000). It also considers a 50% variance and a 5% margin of error. Based on this calculation, the recommended sample size is 384. With reference to sample sizes from previous studies conducted with a similar research topic (Laroche, 2012; Kim and Ko, 2012; Chang *et al.*, 2015; Hudson *et al.*, 2015; Shen and Bissell, 2013), this study aimed to collect a minimum of 400 usable and valid responses.

### 6.5.3 Data collection process

The data collection procedure for this online survey included two parts. As it is essential to create a well-written online survey with specific questions and clear measurement items (Evans and Mathur, 2005), prior to releasing the main survey, the researcher conducted a pilot test using the sampling strategies and sample

frame. The aim of conducting this pilot test was to evaluate the reliability of the measurement items and eliminate the low factor loading items. Based on the results of the pilot test, preliminary findings and refinement of the questionnaire for the main survey was possible (Zikmund, 2003). The following sub-sections introduce the process of conducting both the pilot test and the main online survey.

#### **6.5.3.1 Pilot test**

In order to test the statistical properties of the measurement items, carrying out a small scale test is recommended before releasing the main survey to the large sample (Andrews *et al.*, 2007). Pavlou and El Sawy (2011) suggest that the sample size of a pilot test can be 10% of the whole sample. De Vaus (2013) advised that the sample size of pilot test can be generally small – less than 100 valid responses. Fink (2015) considered a sample size of between 10 and 40 in pilot study was acceptable. Therefore, a pilot test of the online survey was conducted between 1 August 2017 and 31 August 2017. Seventy-six responses were collected during the time frame. However, 16 questionnaires were removed from the sample due to the low quality of responses and large quantity of missing data. Finally, 60 valid surveys were collected. Given the good reliability and validity results for the remaining measurement items, the final version of online survey was approved to be sent out to the target population.

#### **6.5.3.2 Main online survey**

The process of releasing the main online survey is as follow. Firstly, an invitation for the online survey was posted through the Chinese social networking site, Sina Weibo using the snowball sampling strategy to contact target respondents. According to Dillman *et al.* (2007), including a covering letter on the front page of the survey can secure a higher response rate. Before the respondents enter the online survey, they were shown the covering page clearly explaining the purpose of the survey and concisely pointing out the conditions of the target respondents by using closed ended questions. The potential respondents were asked to share the online survey with their reference groups at the end of the survey.

Moreover, based on Saunders *et al.*'s (2007) suggestion, people are more willing to take part in a survey with the topic they concerned with (Granello and Wheaton, 2004), so if the survey is delivered to a community with similar topic to the study, it may enhance the response rate. The researcher launched the survey on different social media platforms such as customer online community sites and customer online forums in China with the topic of online fashion shopping. This data collection strategy is consistent with previous studies (Jung *et al.*, 2015; Chang *et al.*, 2015; Wolny and Mueller, 2013).

Consequently, 496 survey were received during 1 September to 31 December 2017, and 401 responses were valid.

#### **6.5.3.3 Response rate**

Concerning the representativeness of the target population in the current study, receiving a high response rate is extremely important (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). However, in line with Fan and Yan's (2010) suggestions, the researcher needed to undertake data cleaning by checking the collected responses. Those surveys with incomplete responses, little variance of the answers, and a large number of missing responses needed to be excluded. The response rate is the ratio of total received responses to the high quality and completed surveys. After the questionnaire checking process, the response rate of the pilot test and main online survey was 76% and 81.2% respectively.

#### **6.5.4 Data analysis technique**

In order to rigorously analyse the quantitative data collected from the online survey, the structural equation modelling (SEM) technique was employed by applying SPSS-AMOS 23.0 software. The SEM technique is a widely-used statistical approach to test the hypotheses that were developed based on the conceptual model (Hair *et al.*, 1995). The superior advantage of the SEM technique is that it can examine a set of relationships between latent variables and observed variables simultaneously, especially when a variable acts as a latent variable in one relationship but changes to be an observed variable in another relationship (Byrne 2016). In addition, SEM can explicate the influences of different measurement items on the variables. Furthermore, prior to developing a SEM, SPSS 23.0 was used to conduct the exploratory factor analysis. The following sections provide the quantitative data analysis process for both the pilot test and the main online survey.

##### **6.5.4.1 Data analysis for pilot test**

The first step of data analysis in this stage is to conduct a reliability assessment in terms of a set of measurement items (DeVellis, 2016). The reliability assessment is always applied to evaluate the measurement items obtained from previous literature or generated from the qualitative study (Hair *et al.*, 2006). It is necessary to validate the reliability of the items as it can ensure these measures are consistent with the selected variables (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003). Specifically, the Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the consistency of the measurement items with selected variables (DeVellis, 2016; Hair *et al.*, 2006; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). Hair *et al.* (2006) suggested that the Cronbach's alpha of a measurement item that is equal or greater than 0.70 can be considered as satisfactory to be employed in the survey. If the item's Cronbach's alpha is lower than 0.70, it indicates that this item is not adequate to measure the corresponding construct.

The second step of data analysis in this stage is to conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which aims to refine the dimensions of each construct, remove the irrelevant measurement items and gain a more manageable structure for further model testing (Hair *et al.*, 2006). Principle component analysis and varimax rotation were selected to extract the items in EFA. The principle aim of component analysis is to cut down the number of variables by developing linear combinations that maintain as much of the original constructs' variance as possible. If the item's factor

loading is lower than 0.40, it needs to be removed (Conway and Huffcutt, 2003). The varimax rotation method aims to detect whether the factor is cross-loaded in multi-components (Hair *et al.*, 2006).

#### **6.5.4.2 Data analysis for main online survey**

Although the constructs and measurement items were validated during the data analysis of the pilot test, the reliability assessment and EFA were conducted again with the large survey sample (Hair *et al.*, 2006). The most essential step for the main data analysis is to conduct confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). CFA usually aims to assess the relationship between the constructs and to test the whole structural mode (Gaskin and Happell, 2014). Thus, the hypotheses of the predicted relationship between the latent variable and observed variable can be confirmed. The final structural path model was then established (Backhaus *et al.*, 2010). Accordingly, two models were presented after CFA: the measurement model and the structural path model (Gefen *et al.*, 2000).

### **6.6 Limitations of Method**

There are some limitations for the selected qualitative (netnographic) and quantitative (online survey) research methods.

First, the netnographic study is restricted to the time frame. The researcher only spent six months observing Chinese customers engaging in international fast fashion brands' Sina Weibo pages. However, although the selected time frame covered the most important festivals in China, it may only reflect that period of customer online engagement behaviour. Moreover, in terms of the selected observational objects, the collected brand-generated posts are the hot posts that received plenty of comments. However, there are some posts that were paid less attention or did not receive a single comment.

As the focus of the current study was to identify the popular dialogic co-creation activities facilitated by international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo, it did not analyse which types of brand-generated post yielded less effect on receiving customers' comments. If the researcher had taken these posts into account, the result may be slightly different. Furthermore, in terms of the collected brand and customer-generated comments, this study only collected the top 10 comments from each post; other customers' discussions that came up later in the posts were not included. Some continuous conversations that continued after the 10 comments may be interrupted. Therefore, the researcher needed to be careful to avoid misinterpreting these findings.

Second, in terms of the online survey, all the measurement items are adapted from previous empirical studies. However, as few empirical studies attempted to examine the construct of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation on social networking platforms, including its antecedents and the types of dialogic co-creation activities and its consequences, the selected measurement items may not comprehensively reflect the phenomenon in this research context. Although these measurement



items have yielded high factor loadings in previous studies, when they serve a different research context, they may generate different results. Moreover, the findings from the netnographic study may generate new constructs and measurement items, which could direct the attention of scholars in future studies.

## **6.7 Summary**

This chapter outlined the methodology employed in this thesis based on a justified philosophical stance. In line with pragmatism, both qualitative and quantitative studies were implemented. The qualitative (netnographic) study was conducted to understand Chinese customers' engagement behaviours when interacting with international fast fashion brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. The findings from the netnographic study can confirm whether the selected survey constructs and measurement items from previous empirical studies are suitable for use in this study. In addition, the netnographic findings can provide new discoveries about customer logic and customers' preferences for dialogic co-creation activities.

The quantitative (online survey) study was conducted at the second stage of the data collection process. A pilot test was released to 76 participants. Sixty valid responses were collected. The aim of pilot test was to ensure the measurement items were reliable and valid and to remove irrelevant measurement items. The remaining items were included in the main survey for which 401 valid answers were received. A set of data analysis approaches were used to analyse the quantitative data. The next chapter (Chapter 7) will report on the qualitative findings. The quantitative findings will be presented in Chapter 8.

## Chapter 7 Qualitative Research Findings

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter offers findings from the netnographic study. The netnographic study not only gained a preliminary understanding towards Chinese fast fashion customers' online social behaviours but also collected enough evidences to provide an in-depth illustration towards how customer engage in dialogic co-creation activities among international fast fashion brands and other customers on the Chinese social networking site, Sina Weibo. Template analysis is conducted manually to organise the netnographic data including the collected brand-generated posts and comments, customer-generated comments from selected international fast fashion brand pages (Zara, H&M, Uniqlo) on Sina Weibo.

A deductive approach is employed to guide the template analysis for the netnographic data. The reason for following a deductive logic in netnographic study is because the deductive approach firstly establishes a research model based on the literature, then develops or refines the research model based on the data analysis (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). The two initial templates that summarise (1) the antecedent factors regarding the motivations of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities on social media; (2) the different types of dialogic co-creation activities that customers prefer to engage in on social media firstly developed from literature review. Through an iterative process of reviewing, coding and categorising the data, two new templates have been revised and developed based on the literature review and will be presented in this chapter with precise explanation. Two developed templates are displayed and illustrated. The first template displays the identified antecedent factors and sub-factors that motivate customers to engage in the dialogic co-creation activities with international fast fashion brands and other customers on Sina Weibo (Section 7.2). The second template shows the major topics and sub-topics that customers prefer to engage in the dialogic co-creation with international fast fashion brands or other customers on Sina Weibo (Section 7.3). In presenting the results from these template, for reasons of credibility of the data, the textual and graphical examples of brand-generated posts and customer-generated comments are included.

### 7.2 Template of the identified customer logic that deemed as antecedent factors

The first template (Table 7.1) is developed to reveal customer logic (the antecedent factors) that motivate customer to engage in dialogic co-creation activities with international fast fashion brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. Before illustrating this template, it is necessary to briefly review again the definition of customer logic that influences customer engagement behaviours on social networking site. According to C-D logic, customer logic is considered as the antecedent factors that influence on customer's actions, practices and preferences (Heinonen et al., 2010). Heinonen and Strandvik (2015) emphasise that customer logic is an idiosyncratic factor affects how customers allocate their resources, make their decisions and take their actions to involve in overt activities facilitated by firm.

On social networking platforms, customer engagement behaviours are reflected in the action of “like”, “comment” and “share” brand contents (Gummerus *et al.*, 2012; Dessart *et al.*, 2015). Dessart *et al.* (2015) explicate that customer-generated comments on SNSs can reflect customer’s intrinsic level of enthusiasm towards the brand. Ashley and Tuten (2015) explain that a customer’s cognitive involvement in branded social media is associated with customer’s logic and customer’s emotion. Therefore, through the analysis of collected 3,000 pieces of customer-generated and brand-generated comments from selected brand posts, researcher can identify what are the key antecedent factors that reflect customer’s logic on engaging in dialogic co-creation on SNSs.

In the initial template (Table 6.6), there are two antecedent factors (consumer expertise and social expertise) that have been identified from the literature review. It has been proved by several scholars that consumer expertise is one of the essential drive that affect customer engagement behaviours on online social environment. Sawhney *et al.*, (2005) found that members from a professional online community are more discerning and more willing to share their information than the average users. Ridings *et al.* (2002) illustrated that knowledge exchange is one of the key motivation for customers engaging in online discussions, which have direct influence on perceiving customer value. Chiu *et al.* (2006) also noticed that information sharing among the virtual community users can directly influence customer’s purchase intention. In terms of consumer expertise, Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013) categorise four dimensions to evaluate consumer expertise. They are customer’s cognitive effort of product information, customer’s analysis ability, customer’s memory of product information, customer’s elaboration in terms of different products. Another antecedent factor that identified by previous studies is customer’s social expertise (Barrutia *et al.*, 2016; Paredes *et al.*, 2014; Alden *et al.*, 2016). There are three dimensions: customer interactions with their reference group (e.g. friends, peers); customer interactions with other customers and customer interactions with brands. Chu and Kim, (2011) found that customers who can provide assistance for their social groups (i.e. friends, peers family) are more likely to share their opinions and experiences. Moreover, except for the customer’s individual social connections, there are other customers and brands involved in the online social community (Nambisan and Baron, 2009).

Based on the analysis of collected 3,000 comments that were collected from the selected brand-generated hot posts on Sina Weibo, the antecedent factors of consumer expertise and social expertise are confirmed as the two major motives that drive Chinese customers to engage in the dialogic co-creation activities that facilitated by international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo. Through analysis of the comments that related to customer-customer interactions and customer-brand interactions, it was found that fast fashion customers who enjoy engaging in the interactive and brand-facilitated activities are also the social enthusiasts and opinionated users. Particularly, it found that Chinese fast fashion shoppers are keen to be involved in discussions with brands and other customers rather than interact with their social reference groups (i.e. friends, peers, family) on brand’s social networking page. Previously, scholars such as Wang *et al.*, (2012) proposed that

Chinese customers usually exchange shopping information within their established social connections (peers, friends, family) and their shopping intention is influenced by the peer pressure. More so, Chu and Choi (2011) pointed out that Chinese customers relied on fashion opinion leaders' suggestions in terms of product recommendations and product review to guide their future purchase. However, this data indicates that Chinese customers are more independent towards making fashion purchase decisions than previously thought and they are confident to stand out and share their own opinions in a public online social environment.

Specifically, from the comments related to customer-customer interaction, it shows that customers are very likely to share their opinions, fashion information, fashion taste, product reviews and previous shopping experiences with other customers. Especially, they like to use their expertise such as the product analysis ability to talk about the advantage and disadvantage of different brands and products. From the comments of customer-brand interaction, fast fashion shoppers seek to gain reply from the brands towards their enquiries and complains. However, most of the time, customers have not only perceived the feedback from the brands but also from other users who assist them to solve out the practical problems. Furthermore, other factors and sub-factors were identified that may influence customer's willingness to engage in dialogic co-creation activities on social networking platform based on the netnographic findings. For instance, the customers' individual comments that did not gain reply either from brands or other customers usually has included the contents of discussing customer's life style or personal life experiences, sharing their feelings, emotions or compliments towards brands or celebrities, expressing their purchase intention. The following sub-sections will explicate and explain the different factors and sub-factors in detail.

Table 7.1: template of antecedent factors that motivate customers to engage in dialogic co-creation on Sina Weibo

Antecedent factors	Types of comments	Identified antecedent sub-factors	Explanation from literature	New findings from netnographic data
<b>1. Consumer expertise</b> (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer-customer interactions</li> <li>Customer-brand interactions</li> </ul>	1.1 Customer cognitive efforts	Customer can identify the different categories of products and the product's characteristics (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013).	Customers not only can describe the item by text but also use the pictures that saved from the online platform or the photos they took from fitting room to assist them to identify the item that they want.
		1.2 Customer's analysis ability	Customer can analyse different product information from important, useful and relevant to unimportant, useless and irrelevant (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013).	Customers are not only good at analysing the different products' characteristics, but also very active to share their opinions in terms of the product's design, price, quality and function. They even provide the elaborative suggestions of the brand future development strategies and the critical evaluation towards brand's marketing strategies and customer service management strategies.
		1.3 Elaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer have enough understandings towards the brands.</li> <li>Customer can distinguish whether the information list online is true or fake.</li> <li>Customer can distinguish which brand/product is best and which brand/product is worst (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013).</li> </ul>	In addition to the previous explanation of customer's elaboration, customer can also distinguish whether the item that posted on brand's Sina Weibo is the same as the celebrity's wear.
		1.4 Customer's memory	Customer can remember brand/product information and her previous shopping experiences (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013).	Customers use their memories in terms of product information or previous shopping experiences to provide critical product reviews on Sina Weibo.

		1.5 Self-enhancement	Customer eager to gain related information or knowledge to enhance their expertise (Hammedi <i>et al.</i> , 2015).	Customers seek to gain more useful suggestions and assistance from brand or other customers to solve out their uncertainty in terms of product information and product selection. Moreover, customers are also seeking working opportunities from the brand on Sina Weibo.
<b>2. Social expertise</b> (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013).	Customer-customer interactions	2.1 Interactions with customer's social connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer shares brand information/shopping experience or interacts with her friends or family members.</li> <li>Customer tags her friends or family members under the brand post (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013)..</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>customers like to tag their friends and peers in the brand-generated post to share the relevant product information, provide recommendations or ask for their opinions under the relevant brand post.</li> </ul>
		2.2 Interactions with other customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer shares brand information/shopping experience or interacts with other customers</li> <li>Customer provides her own opinions to other customers (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>customers are more eager to interact with the other customers who have similar interests, attitudes or shopping experiences with them than their reference group members.</li> </ul>
	Customer-brand interactions	2.3 Interaction with brands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A mutual conversation between brand and customers (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the interactions between customers and brand are informal and casual, which not restricted to solve customer's problem</li> <li>customers consider the brands as their close friends to share their personal feelings.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Others</b>	Customer's individual comments that did not perceive any replies.	3.1 Showing personal fashion style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media users frequently post variety of photos on public virtual platforms (Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky, 2010)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>customers would like to attach the selfie of their daily wearing to demonstrate their personal fashion style on Sina Weibo.</li> </ul>
		3.2 Customer's emotional expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The certain types of customers' emotions that diffused on social media usually include amused, anxiety, awe and anger (Stieglitz and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>customers are willing to express their either positive or negative emotions to brands or the strangers on Sina Weibo.</li> </ul>

			Dang-Xuan, 2013).	
		3.3 Compliments expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media users may make a compliment or complain of the firm on social media to express their intrinsic psychological feeling (Barreto, 2014; Ma <i>et al.</i> 2015).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>customers will express the compliments to brands directly. These compliments are not only restricted to brand's product, the endorsing celebrities or product's models, but also focus on brand's background music and pictures that used on Sina Weibo.</li> </ul>
		3.4 Purchase intention expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When a customer commits to the brand or perceive value from the brand on social media, he/she has high opportunity to purchase the brand's product (Kim and Ko, 2012; See-To and Ho, 2014).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>customers will directly express their purchase intention towards the specific product if it is endorsed by their idol.</li> </ul>
		3.5 Using emojis and GIF pictures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leung and Chan (2017) explain that both social media users and marketers are more likely to use emojis to attract others' awareness and attention.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers use emoji or GIF picture to express their feelings.</li> <li>These expressions may not be related to the discussion's topic.</li> </ul>

### 7.2.1 Consumer expertise

According to the relevant literature, consumer expertise in an online shopping context refers to the customer's ability in terms of gathering the credible information from the brand-generated content or other customer-created contents on social networking platforms and utilising these resources to guide their future shopping experience (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013; Tsai and Men, 2013). Cheung and Lee (2012) found that users who possess a high level of consumer expertise are more likely to contribute practical advice to others in the social networking environment. While those users who have insufficient knowledge are less likely to engage in the online discussions, as they thought they cannot make any influence on others. Barrutia and Gilsanz, (2013) conclude four dimensions to evaluate consumer expertise, which are customer's cognitive effort, customer's analysis ability, customer's elaboration, customer's memory towards product information and previous shopping experiences. Researcher has recognised these four sub-factors from customer-customer interactions and customer-brand interactions on Sina Weibo. Specifically, Chinese customers who have the common interest in fast fashion shopping are likely to follow the international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo. They are actively engaging and sharing information by asking questions, providing reviews and debating on related issues. In addition, researcher has also identified other sub-factor such as customer self-enhancement that motivates Chinese customers to engage in social media marketing activities. The explanations of these five sub-factors of consumer expertise will be discussed as following.

#### 7.2.1.1 Customer cognitive efforts

Customer cognitive efforts defines as customer has sufficient product information to identify the different categories of products and the product's characteristics (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). From the netnographic data, researcher has identified 550 pieces of customer-generated comments that revealed customer cognitive efforts. Based on the textual content analysis of these comments, it indicates that Chinese customers have very high level of cognitive effort towards fast fashion products. They are not only able to identify the different products' characteristics but also can describe the details of feature such as the colour, the design, the material of their favourite items. For instance:

*Example 7.2.1.1a:*

*Luocha Xiaogedream: I have seen a floral print, square shaped scarf with bright colour on the website three days ago, but I cannot find this item now. Could you advise me how can I buy it online?*

*ZARA replied to Luocha Xiaogedream: Hi, dear, the product stock may change during the seasonal sale. Please keep your eyes on our official website if it is back to stock later. Thank you for your attention and we advise you to buy the item as soon as possible in case it will be out of stock again.*

*(From ZARA's Sina Weibo on 20 December 2016).*



*Example 7.2.1.1b:*

*Super XIXI: I have seen a post of a creased short dress in pink chiffon with long wide and flouncing sleeves and a pink floral pattern. I love that special design so much! Shall we go to try together this Sunday? @Xiaxiao5*

*Xiaxiao5 replied to Super XIXI: Yes, I have noticed that one as well.  
(From H&M's Sina Weibo on 13 January 2017).*

From these examples, it is easily found that when customer wants to enquiry of the related product information, they can use the proper words to describe the detail of the product design and characteristics and make sure the brand or other customer understand which item they are talking about. As Book *et al.*, (2018) illustrate that if a customer has very limited cognitive effort, they are unable to distinguish the product information, but may be easily to be influenced or persuaded by others. Xiao and Benbasat (2007) have also mentioned that customers usually are not able to deeply evaluate the different products from e-commerce platform due to their cognitive constraints. However, from these netnographic examples, it implies that Chinese fast fashion shoppers are able to scrutinise the product information with their high level of product cognitive effort, and further to catch the important details of the product information. More importantly, Chinese customers not only can use the vivid textual description to identify different product, but also use the graphic information (e.g. pictures or photos) to assist them to identify the variety of product's characteristics. For instance, some customers post the item's picture on brand's Sina Weibo to ask for more information (see in example 3). Other customers even post the photo that they took in the fitting room to let other customers know how the item looks like (see in example 4).

*Example 7.2.1.1c:*

*Zhenerlitterstar: I want this white polo-neck sweater! It looks very soft and comfortable! (comment with picture)*



*UNIQLO: Dear customer, thank for your attention. You can buy this item from our online store or physical store as well.  
(From UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 20 December 2016).*

*Example 7.2.1.1d:*

*Xlhuanxiatiandexiguameizi: I have tried this jeans in store. It is slightly wider than I thought. But I like the holes. (comment with picture)*



*UNIQLO: Dear customer, thank for your attention. We are very glad that you love our products.*

*Xlhuanxiatiandexiguameizi: 😊*

*(From UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 29 October 2016).*

### **7.2.1.2 Customer's analysis ability**

Customer's analysis ability is considered as customer's capability to analyse the product information that has gained from the online platform. As the online operant resources usually are too plentiful to make people feel overwhelmed, if a customer can analyse which are relevant, important and useful informative contents for themselves, they can effectively to perceive the useful and reliable information and guide their shopping journey (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). According to the netnographic findings, Chinese customer's analysis ability has been revealed as one of the essential dimension of consumer expertise from customer-generated comments. There are 687 pieces of customer-generated comments from the total collected comments that has shown their analysis ability towards the brand and product. Customers are not only able to identify which is their favourite fashion style but also can explain the reason of their preference (See the example 1 and 2). Moreover, customers are very active to share their opinions and reviews in terms of the product's design, price, quality and function with textual explanation or graphic demonstration. They can even provide the elaborative analysis of the brand future development and the critical evaluation towards brand's marketing strategies and customer service management strategies (See the examples below). The following examples were selected from Uniqlo's Sina Weibo as Uniqlo has put more efforts on

facilitating different topics of organic e-WOW activities than H&M and ZARA (this will be discussed in Section 7.3). When customers get engaged in these activities, they are using their product analysis ability to express their opinions.

*Example 7.2.1.2a:*

*Shaonvcixi: I like this shirt with V-neck, mid-sleeves and a rounded hem. It is both fashionable and comfortable. I can wear it either in working days or in casual dating. @UNIQLO (comment with picture).*



*LILILLUO replied to Shaonvcixi: I agree with you! I have bought the pink one! It is longer in back than the front side. I like this design. The cotton is very soft and makes me feel so comfortable!*  
*(From UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 24 January 2017).*

*Example 7.2.1.2b: Customer were getting involved in the discussions towards their understandings about French-style wear.*

*Haishiyaoxiangde: In my opinion, French-style wear is romantic, casually and low-key. But their behaviour is very elegant.*

*Baimafeiwangzino: My understanding of French style can be described as "Less is More". People's wearing is concise but classic. They would like to wear one-piece with exquisite accessories. The colours of their wearing usually are black, white, grey or honey. Although this fashion style is very traditional, it makes people look very charming.*

*202shuanzi: I agree with last comment. French style is always very classic. But I think they also add more innovative element in their product design increasingly. It is very classic and elegant. It makes people feel very comfortable like under the sunshine.*

*Zaijianhaiyangdeyu: In my impression, French style is suitable to the elegant women who have baby's skin as delicate as porcelain, slender body shape and spun-golden hair.*

*YechuanliHQ: French style is different from flamboyant-style. It is simplicity, elegance. It may not attractive but is comfortable!*  
*(From UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 27 October 2016).*

*Example 7.2.1.2c: Customers were sharing their opinions in terms of brand's strategy of future development.*

*AmilyAngelinababy: I believe a well-known brand it is not only focusing on selling the product but also influence, lead and educate their customers' shopping attitudes and behaviours.*

*Xiaomianyangiyuan: I always support this brand! I wish it could provide more learning channels for Chinses customers to know more about fast fashion and causal fashion.*

*Lanlingluan: I hope UNIQLO can provide the opportunity for us to learn more about professional fashion knowledge.*

*(From UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 26 October 2016).*

### **7.2.1.3 Elaboration**

Customer's elaboration is explained as customer's capability to distinguish whether the product information that listed on the online social environment is true or fake. More so, customer can differentiate the characteristics of different products and different brands (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). From the netographic data, there are 303 pieces of customer-generated comments are related to this dimension. For example, when the brand listed the different items in a Sina Weibo post, customer can distinguish the differences among these items. Moreover, customers can recognise the item is the same as what the celebrity has worn before even they just see the product picture from the post, as shown in the following two examples.

*Example 7.2.1.3a:*

*Yangyujiang: The pink trench coat in picture 1 is still not available to buy online.*

*Roar replied to Yangyujiang: Yes, it is available now. But it is not the pink one.*

*Yangyujiang: That's what I mentioned. I just saw the honey one but not the pink one online.*

*(From UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 6 February 2017).*

*Example 7.2.1.3b:*

*GUAGUA: WOW! Look at the picture 3, the red V-neck dress, I think it is the same one as Fan bingbing's (Chinese popular actress) dress that she worn in the Shanghai Fashion activity.*

*FANQIEJIANG replied to GUAGUA: Yes, I think so! She is the endorser for H&M this year!*

*(From H&M's Sina Weibo on 27 January 2017).*

### **7.2.1.4 Customer's memory**

The contents of customer's memory were included the brand/product information or customer's previous shopping experiences (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). There are 780 pieces of customer-generated comments that reveal customer's ability of remembering the details of product information or prior shopping experiences.

Based on the collected netnographic data, it showed that customers usually provide specific product reviews, which included a lot of details of the product information or their shopping experiences. Especially, they can remember more details of negative and unpleasant shopping experiences. In other words, customers usually contribute the information based on their perceptions and previous experiences. The below examples are customers' negative feedback that attract other customers' attentions.

*Example 7.2.1.4a:*

*ZANGWEICHLI: Look at the pink circle that I highlighted, it is a white scoring on my new red purse that I bought from ZARA last week! I did not pay attention at that time. But today I just suddenly realised the picture showed online was not the same as what I bought! Can anyone advise me whether this is a unique design or the quality issue? (comment with picture).*



*LINTONGTONG replied to ZANGWEICHLI: I think it is the quality issue!!! They always have this kind of problem! Just ask for exchange!*

*ZARA replied to ZANGWEICHLI: Dear Customer, could you send us the item reference number and your order reference number via private message on Sina Weibo? We will report and address your issue as soon as possible! Thank you for your feedback!*

*ZANGWEICHLI replied to ZARA: I do suggest you to be concerned about your product quality! I have shopped from the online stores many times. Every time when I received the item, there are some quality issues like this one!!*

*(From Zara's Sina Weibo on 12 September 2016).*

*Example 7.2.1.4b:*

*Nina-: I really want to give my suggestion to your physical store's customer service. First, I would like to perceive the guidance of selecting clothes' size from the salesman in store. However, the salesman only helped me to pick the clothes from the stock but never provide suggestion even I have asked. Second, when I back home, I felt that I have selected the wrong size. I planned to exchange it in the next day. But the salesman*

*just said they could not find the size that I want in stock even they did not search it. I cannot accept this quality of the customer service! Sales should take their responsibility to assist customers during their shopping experience!*

*ZARA replied to Nina-: Dear Customer, we do apologise for our customer service that bring you an unpleasant shopping experience! Could you tell us when and which physical store you have been to? Do you still remember the name or the appearance of the salesman who served you? Please could you provide the above information via private message on Sina Weibo? We will report your issue with relevant department. We will improve our customer service in physical store! Thank you so much for your feedback and suggestions!*

*(From Zara's Sina Weibo on 16 December 2016).*

This piece of comment from customer Nina- has attracted the other 43 customers to involve in the discussions. The other customers have all provided their opinions in terms of improving customer service in physical store based on their previous experiences. Therefore, it is noticed that customers are not merely share their negative shopping experiences to other customers on Sina Weibo, but also provide practical suggestions for brands. More so, based on brand-generated comments, it found that brands are also very politely and patiently to reply the customers' complaint and help them to address the issues.

#### **7.2.1.5 Self-enhancement**

The sub-factor of customer's self-enhancement is not the first time to be identified as the motivator that influence on customer engagement behaviour. The previous studies such as Balasubramanian and Mahajan, 2001; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004; Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Angelis *et al.* 2012; Wallace *et al.*, 2014 and Hammedi *et al.*, 2015 have already discussed it. Escalas and Bettman (2005) found that customers who are aspirational to gain the self-enhancement have stronger social connections with brands than the ordinary customers. Angelis *et al.* (2012) also found that the motivation of customer's self enhancement is related to customer's willingness towards participant in word-of-mouth. They further explained that those type customers can generate the positive outcome from customer experience. From the netnographic findings, research has collected 86 pieces of comments from customer-customer interactions and 61 pieces of comments from customer-brand interactions that reflected customers' willingness of self-enhancement. Specifically, customers seek to gain more useful suggestions and assistance from brand or other customers to solve out their uncertainty in terms of product information and product selection. Moreover, customers are also seeking working opportunities from their favourite brand on Sina Weibo. See the following two examples:

*Example 7.2.1.5a:*

*Littlecola: Does anyone know whether the size of the jeans in this series are smaller than the normal one?*

*Angela\_ replied Littlecola: Yes, they are. I need to get one size bigger than I usually buy. (From H&M's Sina Weibo on 10 November 2016).*

*Example 7.2.1.5b:*

*Wangsha: Please can I ask are there any vacancies in ZARA's head office? I am a big fan for ZARA. I really want to work for you!*

*ZARA replied to Wangsha: Dear customer, if you want to get more ZARA's recruitment information, please check this link. At the same time, you can register for our private message service to perceive the valuable recruitment information. Thank you for your preference and support!*

*(From ZARA's Sina Weibo on 7 October 2016).*

### **7.2.2 Social expertise**

Social expertise has been recognised as another antecedent factor that drives customers engage and interact with brands and other social connections on social networking platform (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013) found that customers would like to share their consumer expertise (i.e. consumption-related information, knowledge and attitudes) with other customers on online community. Yli-Renko *et al.* (2001) claimed that customers who have more social capital obtain higher opportunities on knowledge acquisition and are more willing to share knowledge and information with others. Lin and Lu (2011) suggested that social networking users normally prefer interacting with their familiar social groups (i.e. friends, peers, family) that have already known in their real life, rather than developing new connections. They also mentioned that the users who have more friends on social networking sites can perceive more recommendations and utility. However, Wang *et al.* (2012) argued that users' online social interactions not only among the people who known each other in real life, but also within the co-consuming groups (i.e. brands and other consumers). They also emphasised that peers have been acknowledged as the key social affection for user's cognitive attitudes and behaviours on social networking site. The netnographic results of this study found that Chinese customers' social expertise on Sina Weibo are very diverse, which can be mainly classified as customer-customer interactions and customer-brand interactions. Specifically, there are 1,287 pieces of comments are related to customer-customer interactions, which occupies 42.9% of the total collected comments. While customer-brand interactions are the second major type of customer's social expertise in this research context, which include 994 pieces of related comments. However, in terms of customer-customer interactions, the result shows that Chinese customers are more likely to co-create dialogue with other customers rather than their original social contacts (i.e. friends, peers or family). There are 939 pieces of comments are related to customer interactions with other users, while only 348 pieces of comments are constituted by customer interactions with their friends. The following sub-sections explains the details of these two types of social expertise.

### 7.2.2.1 Customer-to-customer interactions

The netnographic data (1,287 pieces of related comments) proves that customer-customer interactions are the key dimension of showing customer's social expertise on social networking environment. More importantly, the dialogic co-creation among the co-consuming groups enjoys the higher popularity than among the customer's previous social connections. In other words, it found that Chinese customers are more eager to interact with the other customers who have similar interests, attitudes or shopping experiences with them. When a customer left a comment under brand-generated post, the other customers will join in the discussion if the topic is related to them. This is consistent with previous studies such as Libai *et al.*, (2010) which have emphasised the importance of customer-to-customer interactions on social media marketing activities. Moreover, customers may develop the discussions from one topic to another distinctive topic in one co-created dialogue. Sometimes, one discussion topic is involved over 30 customers in it and attracted hundred pieces of customer-generated comments. For instance, a customer left a comment to complain about the speed of ZARA's online refund process, the other 23 customers joined this discussion to share their similar experiences. During this discussion, suddenly, a customer mentioned about ZARA has claimed TAIWAN as a country on their official website, then the discussion has changed from the complaint about ZARA's online refund's speed to the condemn ZARA's inappropriate statement on online platform.

#### *Example 7.2.2.1a:*

*Abracadabrace: I am very discontented with the online refund service! I have bought this item on 6 January and applied for the refund on the same day. Till now I have waited for a week, I did not get any responses! I have called the customer service but just been told to wait another 2 days. Could you advise me how long I can get my refund?*

*Mingzibeiqianzhanle replied to Abracadabrace: I have bought the item in store and applied for the refund as well. They rejected my application as they said the item is broken! I told them this was the same as what I bought, so I want to refund! Now I need to wait for another 2 days for their answer as well!*

*Fengmiplus replied to Abracadabrace: I got my refund, but I found that it left an item's money! How ridiculous it is! I cannot believe ZARA's treat their customers like this!!*

*ZARA replied to Abracadabrace: Dear Customer, we have addressed your issue on 11 January. You will get your refund in the next 7 working days. Please be patient and thank you for your understanding!*

*HALILUYA replied to ZARA: In your official website, you state that "we will open more new stores in the following 20 countries: Australia, France, Japan, Swiss and Taiwen...". What do you mean? Taiwan is a country?*

*Mifengplus replied to Abracadabrace: They addressed your issue? I still need to wait another two days!*

*Abracadabrace replied to Mifengplus: Yes, I have called their customer service so many times!!*



*Mifengplus replied to Abracadabake: I think many customers have the similar experience! We need to be more careful next time!*  
(Comments from ZARA's Sina Weibo on 11 January 2017).

Although the majority of Chinese customers would like to interact with other customers, some of them like to tag their friends and peers in the brand-generated post to share the relevant product information, provide recommendations or ask for their opinions. For instance:

*Example 7.2.2.1b:*

*Xiaohuang: @jitang this T-shirt is suitable to you.*

*Jitang replied to Xiaohuang: Are you sure? I think the design is too childish.*

*Xiaohuang replied to Jitang: Yes! You should try!*

(Comments from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 28 December 2016).

#### **7.2.2.2 Customer-to-brand interactions**

The netnographic findings also show that Chinese customers are used to co-create dialogue with brands on Sina Weibo. The interactions between customers and brand are not restricted to solve customer's problem but also focus on what the two actors can do for each other and co-creating the value together. Some of the brands personalise as customer's friend to interact with them informally and casually. Hsieh and Hsieh (2015) mention that customers are the co-producer to contribute their knowledge and opinions to service provider through the dialogic co-creation. Chinese customers very actively provide quality feedbacks and suggestions to the international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo. Additionally, Chinese customers also consider the brands as their close friends to share their personal feeling. The following three examples can represent these three types of customer-brand interactions. The first example is related to customer's enquiry for brand and received brand's reply. In terms of the first example, customer not only complained an issue related to clothe quality but also require brand to improve its product quality. On the other side, brand also replied to its customer politely. Such positive C2B interactions can generate benefits the both actors. The second example is concerned with the brand asking customers' opinions and the customers' feedback. Through analysing the second example, it can see that UNIQLO considers its customers as friends, which makes customers feel close and comfortable. Therefore, many customers would like to interact with UNIQLO to express their new ideas and opinions. The last example is about customer sharing their personal feelings to brand and gained brand's response. From this example, it reveals that customers not only report their issues to the brand but also share their personal feelings (e.g., happy, exciting) with brand on Sina Weibo.

*Example 7.2.2.2a:*

*Zhuoziguagua: Previously, the item from ZARA can be worn for a season, but now if wash it for few times, the cloth cannot be worn anymore! So, why you cannot improve your product quality?*

*ZARA replied to Zhuoziguagua: Dear customer, we are very sorry to hear your feedback, now we can offer you a refund if you bring your item and receipt to one of our physical store. Thank you for your support and understanding!*

*(comments from ZARA's Sina Weibo on 11 December 2016).*

*Example 7.2.2.2b:*

*UNIQLO: My dear friends, would you like to share your opinions which style you like best? Which item of this season you like best? Let's discuss together!*

*Shaonvcixi replied to UNIQLO: I like multi-styles! I like the knitwear from UNIQLO! 😍 It is time to buy the new clothes now!!*

*Muyangnv replied to UNIQLO: I like the simple style. But also need to be fashionable! (comment with picture).*



*(Comments from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 30 September 2016).*

*Example 7.2.2.2c:*

*H&M: Happy Chinese New Year! Let's go shopping during the holiday!*

*Yekong replied to H&M: Happy new year! But I still need to work today 😞*

*Shujian replied to H&M: Yeah! I am so happy today! My friend just gave a 50-yuan H&M's voucher! I am going to shopping today!*

*(Comments from H&M's Sina Weibo on 2 February 2017).*

### **7.2.3 Others**

Except for the dialogic co-creation between customer-to-customer and customer-to-brand, researcher has also recognised there is another type of customer-generated comment, which did not perceive any replies either from brand or from other users. Based on the netnographic data, there are 719 pieces of customers' individual comment. After a further analysis of these comments, researcher has classified 5 types of the major topics of customers' individual comments, which include customer's personal fashion style (181 pieces of comments), customer's emotions (264 pieces of related comments), customer's compliments (207 pieces of related comments), customer's purchase intention (49 pieces of related comments) and the customer-generated emojis or shared GIF pictures (36 pieces of related comments).

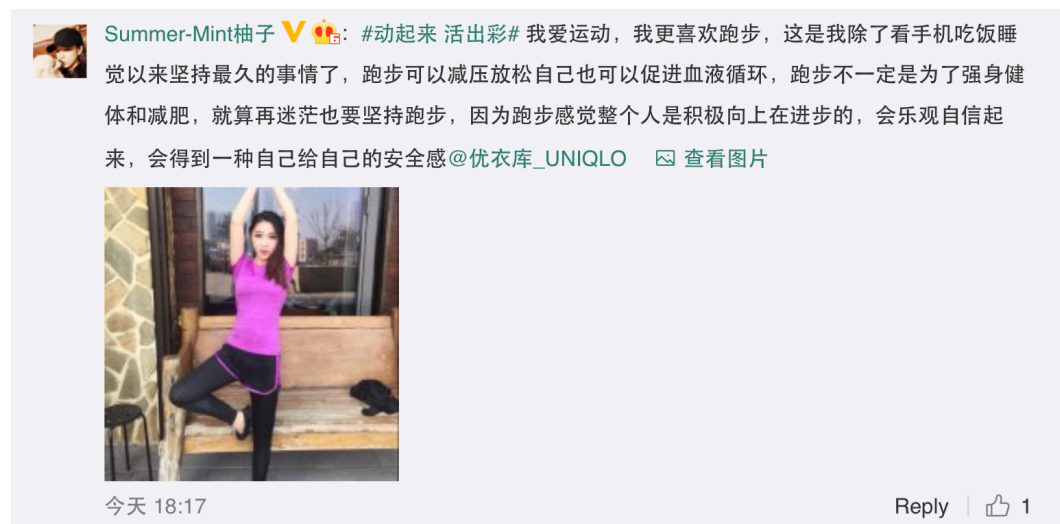
Although these dimensions are not discussed in the context of consumer expertise and social expertise by Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013), it has been commonly mentioned in the contents of social media users' written communications (Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky, 2010; Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013).

#### 7.2.3.1 Showing customer's personal fashion style

Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky, (2010) mentioned that social media users share plenty of photos to friends or strangers on online public area. This is similar as Chinese fast fashion shopper's habit. However, more specially, it has found that Chinese customers would like to attach the selfie of their daily wearing to demonstrate their personal fashion style. These selfies are not only taking in the outdoor environment but also shooting in private place such as at home, in office place or even in physical store's fitting room. When one customer post her selfie under brand's Sina Weibo post, other customers will follow her behaviour to attach their personal photos. It shows that Chinese customers are confident to show their own image on public online environment and present their fashion style to other customers even when there is no feedback perceived. For instance:

##### *Example 7.2.3.1a:*

*Summer-Mintyouzi: I like sporty style! I like running! This is what I insist in doing it everyday except for sleeping and eating! Running can help me release my tension and foster the blood circulation! Running is only for keeping fit but also for keeping a good mood! (comment with picture).*



*(Comment from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 20 January 2017).*

##### *Example 7.2.3.1b:*

*Nuomiqingshu: My second style (comment with picture).*



*(Comment from ZARA's Sina Weibo on 17 March 2017).*

### 7.2.3.2 Customer's emotional expression

Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2013) indicate that emotion diffusion is another kind of user information sharing behaviour in a social networking context. The certain types of emotion usually include amused, anxiety, awe and anger. They explain that users' emotion diffusion behaviour may be triggered by emotional contents on Social media. According to the netnographic findings, Chinese customers are willing to express their either positive or negative emotions to brands or the strangers. However, these personal emotions may not come up from their shopping experiences but from their up-to-date personal life. They consider brand's page on Sina Weibo as a space where they can express their feeling freely without any concern. For example:

*Example 7.2.3.2:*

*Xufei: What a lovely day today! 😊😊😊*

*(Comment from ZARA's Sina Weibo on 1 November 2016).*

*Lilonnoo: I don't want to work today!!!!*

*(Comment from H&M's Sina Weibo on 6 October 2016).*

*YUZHOU: I am so annoyed!!!! Today's horrible weather damaged my new shoes!!!!:(*

*Tachibaba: Same here!!! My new hat has been blown away! Unhappy!*

*Noob: Hahaha! Fortunately! I have stayed at home all day!*

*(Comments from ZARA's Sina Weibo on 4 February 2017).*

*KikiZlshan: So sad! I will be alone on the Valentine's Day!*

*Uniqlo replied to KikiZlshan: Hope you enjoy your day!*

*ObbeyHu: Me either! Miss U!!*

*Uniqlo replied to ObbeyHu: Why not go shopping in Uniqlo's physical store or online store? 😊*

*(Comments from Uniqlo's Sina Weibo on 14 February 2017).*

#### **7.2.3.3 Customer's compliments expression for brands, celebrities, models**

Another type of contents towards customers' individual comments is related to customer-generated compliments for brand. Scholars have explained that social media users may make a compliment or complain of the firm on social media to express their intrinsic psychological feeling (Barreto, 2014; Ma *et al.* 2015). Chinese fast fashion shoppers are very willing to express their praises to the brands even they did not give any replies. These compliments not only focus on the brand's products, the endorsing celebrities or product's models, but also are related to the background music, background pictures of brand's Sina Weibo. For instance:

*Example 7.2.3.3:*

*Anna\_SAP: ZARA is my favourite brands! I will always support ZARA!  
(Comment from ZARA's Sina Weibo on 13 October 2016).*

*Xiangtian: I like the background music! Make me feel very relax!  
(Comment from H&M's Sina Weibo on 1 January 2017).*

#### **7.2.3.4 Customer's purchase intention expression**

Previous studies demonstrated that when a customer commits to the brand or perceive value from the brand on social media, he/she has high opportunity to purchase the brand's product (Kim and Ko, 2012; See-To and Ho, 2014). However, few study has mentioned that social media users will speak out their intention to buy a product on brand page on social networks. The netnographic data also indicated that Chinese customers will express their purchase intention directly on brand's Sina Weibo, especially when they saw their idol wear the same item. For instance:

*Example 7.2.3.4:*

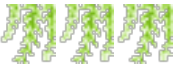
*Laoniang: OH! I want to get the same item as my idol!!  
(Comment from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 28 January 2017).*

*Fangfei: Finally, I can have the same clothes as my idol wearing!!  
(Comment from H&M's Sina Weibo on 8 September 2016).*

#### **7.2.3.5 Customer-generated Emoji**

The variety of emojis and GIF pictures have been found in customer-generated comments. Leung and Chan (2017) explain that both social media users and marketers are more likely to use emojis to attract others' awareness and attention. Based on this netnographic findings, it shows that Chinese customers use emojis or attach GIF pictures frequently to generate comments. Particularly, as these comments did not contain any textual information or related to the discussion's topic, so they had not received any replies from either brand or other customers. For instance:

Example 7.2.3.5:

Hulala: 

(Comment from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 27 September 2016).

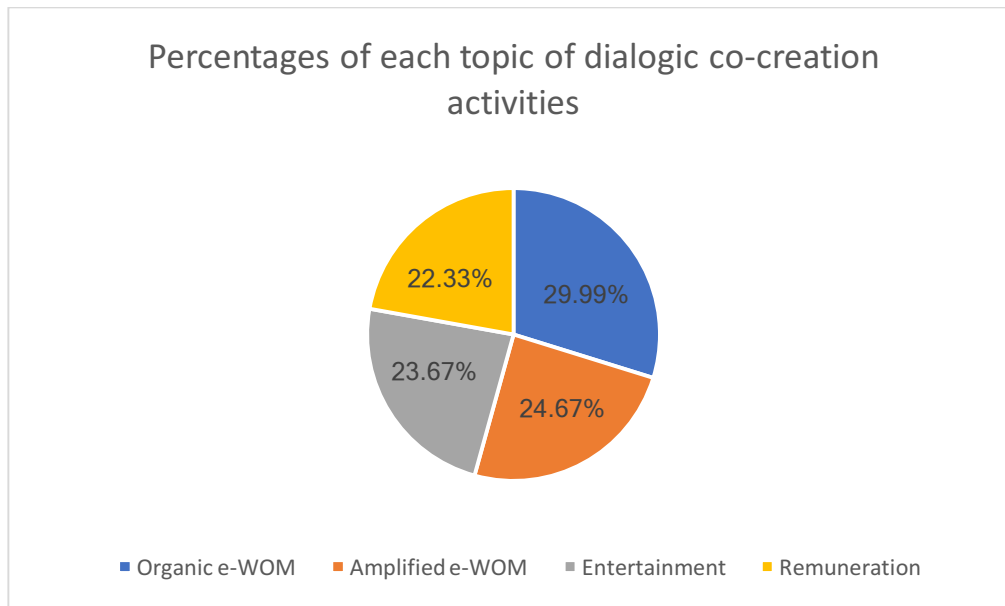
Huke: 

(Comment from ZARA's Sina Weibo on 22 December 2016).

### 7.3 Template of the major topics and sub-topics of dialogic co-creation activities

The second template (Table 7.2) displays the identified popular topics and sub-topics of dialogic co-creation activities that Chinese fast fashion shoppers prefer to engage with international fast fashion brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. According to the initial template (Table 6.7), there are four major topics that identified from the literature review, which include organic e-WOM (Zhang *et al.*, 2017), amplified e-WOM (Labrecque, 2014; Xiang *et al.*, 2016), entertainment (Godey *et al.*, 2016; Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014) and remuneration (Azar *et al.*, 2016; De Vries *et al.*, 2017). Based on the netnographic data (263 pieces of brand-generated posts related to one or few of these topics), these four topics have been confirmed as the most popular topics that perceived users' high attention through customer commenting, sharing and liking. Specifically, the topic of organic e-WOM is deemed as the most popular dialogic co-creation activity among these four identified topics, which occupies 29.9% of the total number of collected brand posts. The content type of remuneration stands at the second place, which has 24.6% of the collected brand posts related to this topic. The topic of amplified e-WOM is considered as the third popular topic which has similar percentage (23.6%) as remunerative activities. The entertainment activity seems has perceived less interests by Chinese customers but still enjoys 22.3% of the total number of collected brand posts (See Diagram 7.2.1).

Diagram 7.2.1: Percentage of each topics of dialogic co-creation activities based on netnographic data



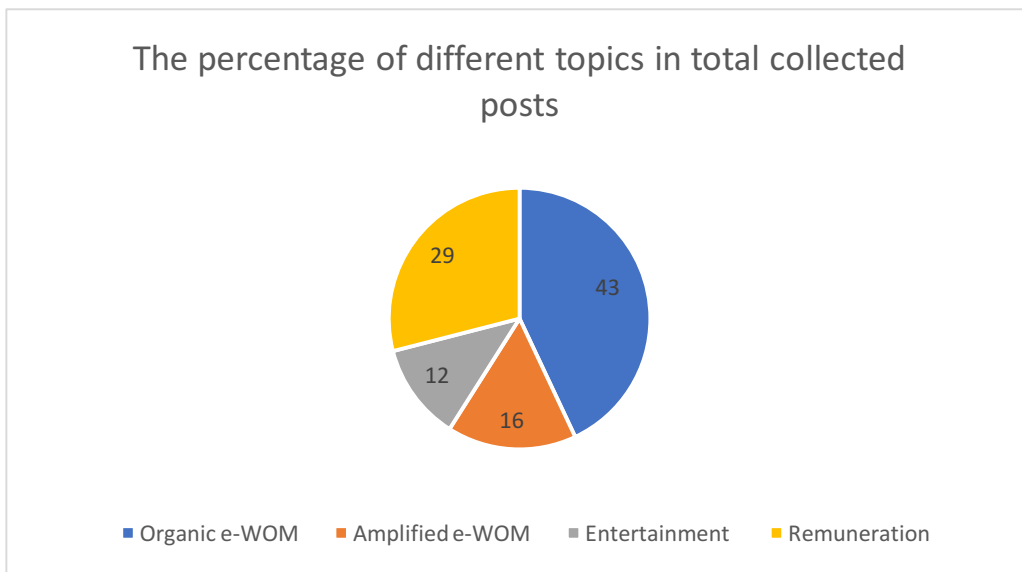
Source: based on netnographic data

In addition, there are three important findings after further analysed the contents of the collected 300 pieces of brand-generated posts from the international fast fashion brands ZARA, H&M and UNIQLO.

First, the netnographic findings indicate that the major four dialogic co-creation activities' topics did not appear in one brand-generated post solely but usually mixed with other topics. For instance, ZARA posted a set of new launched products' pictures and related information, asked customers to leave the comments about selecting their favourite one and telling the reason why to select this one. Then brand will select one of the customer who have left the comment to this post to send one of the listed product for free. Like such described brand-post, has included the topics of organic e-WOM and remuneration. More so, H&M generated a post about a celebrity who endorsed H&M this year and invited customers to leave comments to their idol. This post also attached a funny video that was irrelevant to the brand, product or celebrity. It can be recognised that such a post has included the contents of amplified e-WOM and entertainment. Actually, there are plenty of mixed-topics' brand posts on Sina Weibo. Table 7.2 has listed the different possibilities of the content topics that appear in one brand-generated post.

Second, in terms of the three selected international fast fashion brands (ZARA, H&M and UNIQLO), the researcher has analysed the topics of dialogic co-creation activities facilitated by each brand and has calculated the number of brand-generated posts related to different topics. If one post included several topics, it has been categorised repeatedly into different related topics. Based on this approach, it found that ZARA usually facilitates the dialogic co-creation towards the topics of organic e-WOM, which aims to invite customers in expressing their opinions and involve in the discussions about brand and its products. The diagram 7.2.2 shows that 43% of the total collected posts (100 pieces) from ZARA are related to the topic of organic e-WOM.

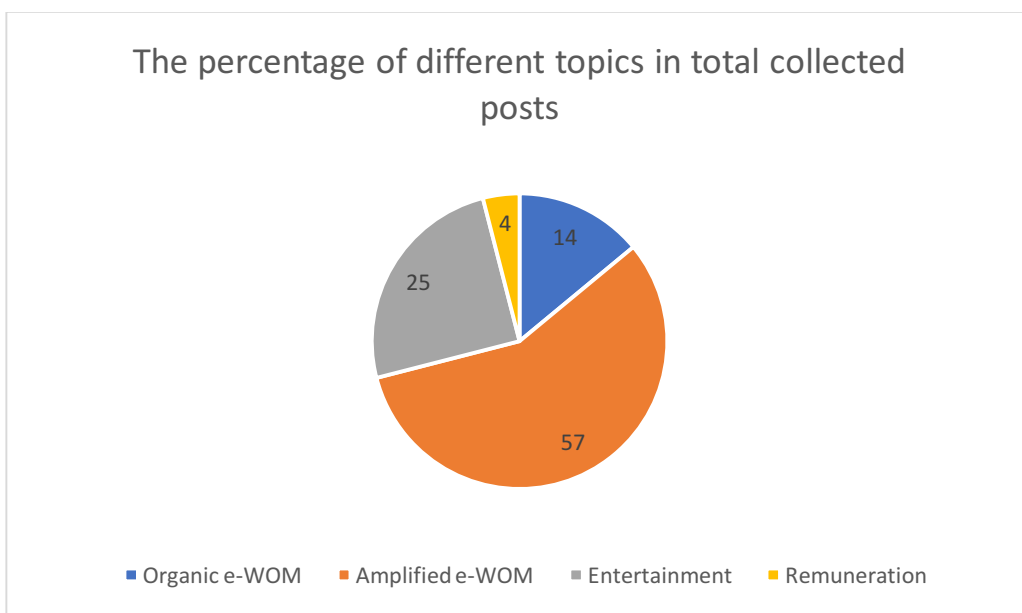
Diagram 7.2.2: Percentage of different dialogic co-creation activities from the collected ZARA's posts.



Source: based on netnographic data

While H&M is good at generating the posts related to amplified e-WOM, which lists the information of celebrity endorsement and asks customers to leave comments to their idols. It was calculated that there are 57% of brand-generated posts related to the topic of amplified e-WOM (See in Diagram 7.2.3).

Diagram 7.2.3: Percentage of different dialogic co-creation activities from the collected H&M's posts.

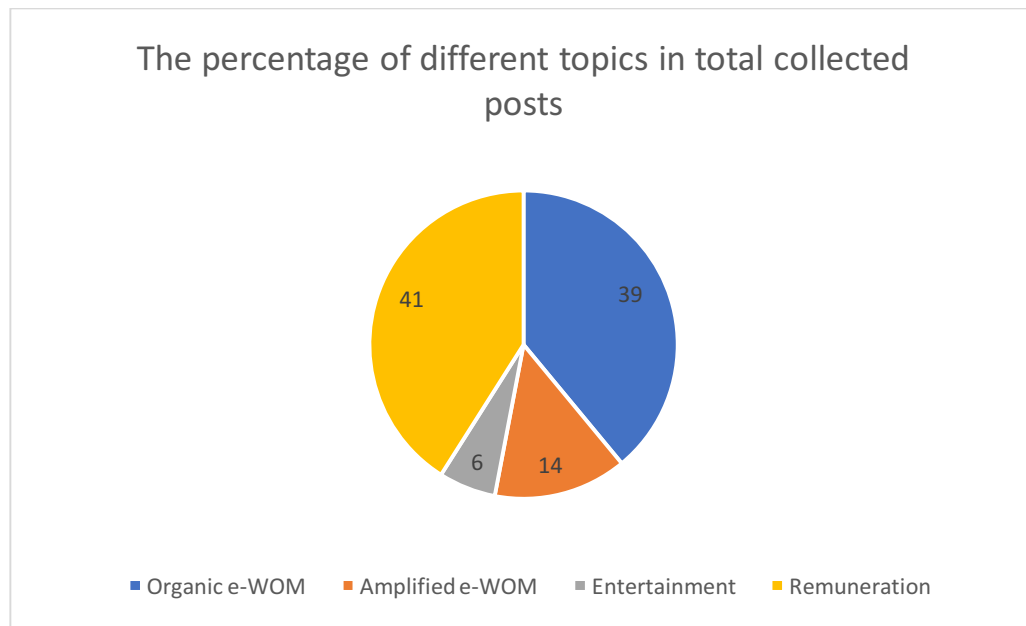


Source: based on netnographic data



In addition, researcher found that UNIQLO usually create the brand posts related to the organic e-WOM and remunerative activities. The percentage of the brand-generated posts related to organic e-WOM is similar as the percentage of the posted towards remunerative contents, which are 41% and 39% respectively (Diagram 7.2.4).

Diagram 7.2.4: Percentage of different dialogic co-creation activities from the collected UNIQLO's posts.



Source: based on netnographic data

Third, although the major topics of dialogic co-creation activities are consistent with the initial template (Table 6.7), the sub-topics emerging in each topic are slightly different. For instance, Zhang *et al.* (2017) proposed that the topics of organic e-WOM activities normally include product or brand's information, transaction and delivery service and physical store information. However, the netnographic findings show that the dialogic co-creation activities of organic e-WOM also include the topic of product sustainability. Therefore, the developed template will demonstrate the new sub-topics of dialogic co-creation activities. The following sections will illustrate the four topics and their sub-topics of dialogic co-creation activities with the specific explanations and examples.

Table 7.2: A developed template of the popular topics of dialogic co-creation activities that facilitated by international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo

Topics of dialogic co-creation activities	Types of dialogic co-creation contents	Identified sub-topics	Explanation from relevant literatures	Explanation based on netnographic findings
1. Organic e-WOM (Zhang <i>et al.</i> , 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only organic e-WOM contents</li> <li>• Mix with entertaining contents</li> <li>• Mix with remunerative contents</li> <li>• Mix with both entertaining and remunerative contents</li> </ul>	1.1 Product/brand information	Brand usually generate a post to introduce the new launch products' information and ask customers to express their opinions (Kim and Song, 2017).	Brands not only state the products' characteristics but also invite customers to vote which is their favourite item and what different fashion styles they can create by wearing the listed items.
		1.2 Transaction and delivery service	Customers discuss the security of transaction through the online platform or brand's mobile app (Zhang <i>et al.</i> , 2017).	Chinese customers also love to know how ease to use the variety of electronic devices such as mobile, tablet, laptop to purchase the item online.
		1.3 Physical/online store information	Brand provides very detail of the physical store's information including the store's address with the link of the directional map, the in-store's activities with the date (Zhang <i>et al.</i> , 2017).	Moreover, some of the posts even mention the stock's situation towards the specific item.

		1.4 Product sustainability	Brand launches and develops a product sustainability programme by recycling and remanufacturing the materials (Choi, 2017; Shen, 2014).	Fashion brands utilise the digital media to broadcast the product sustainability's information such as clothes recycling, clothes donation.
2. Amplified e-WOM (Labrecque, 2014; Xiang <i>et al.</i> , 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only amplified e-WOM contents</li> <li>• Mix with entertainment contents</li> <li>• Mix remuneration contents</li> <li>• Mix with both entertainment and remuneration contents</li> </ul>	2.1 Perceived brand's interactivity	Brand develops a parasocial relationship with customers on social media (Labrecque, 2014).	Brands usually personalise as a real person to invite customers to interact with them under the brand post. The brands also give effective replies and sufficient supports to the customers.
		2.2 Perceived celebrity's interactivity	Customers have direct conversations with celebrities or experts on social networking sites (Xiang <i>et al.</i> , 2014).	Customers are not only able to co-create dialogues with their idols but also can face-to-face interact with celebrities via online video chat application.
		2.3 Celebrity endorsement information	Celebrities' performances in public area influence their fans' thoughts and choices (Centeno and Wang, 2017).	Through the celebrity endorsement, customers are encouraged and persuaded to imitate their idol's fashion style and purchase the same items as their idol has.

3. Entertainment (Godey <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only entertainment contents</li> <li>• Mix with organic e-WOM contents</li> <li>• Mix with amplified e-WOM contents</li> <li>• Mix with remuneration contents</li> <li>• Mix with organic e-WOM and remuneration contents</li> <li>• Mix with amplified e-WOM and remuneration contents</li> </ul>	3.1 The influential and creative topics	The creative contents in the entertaining brand posts mention the slogan, teaser or word play (De Vries <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Dolan <i>et al.</i> , 2015).	A set of creative and meaningful topics that attract Chinese customers to engage in the dialogic co-creation activities. These creative ideas aim to call customers for actions.
		3.2 Fun games and videos	Digital games and videos (Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014).	Word play, slogan design, video design.
		3.3 General greetings and festival wishes from brand	Brands usually generate the messages such as “a greeting from us!”, “Happy Monday, everyone!”, “wish you a very happy Chinese New Year” to get close to their customers (He <i>et al.</i> , 2013).	Moreover, brands sometimes play a role as customer’s friend to ask what are their new year plans and wishes.
		3.4 Brand’s anecdote	Brands usually create the post that contains brand’s anecdote (De Vries <i>et al.</i> , 2012).	It includes brand’s development stories and brand’s employee’s stories.
4. Remuneration (Azar <i>et al.</i> , 2016; De Vries <i>et al.</i> , 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only remuneration contents</li> <li>• Mix with organic e-WOM contents</li> </ul>	4.1 Economic incentives	Brands provide the economic incentives for customers (Muntinga <i>et al.</i> 2011).	The economic incentives including the product discounts, prize draw and red porket.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix with amplified e-WOM contents</li> <li>• Mix with entertainment contents</li> <li>• Mix with organic e-WOM and entertainment contents</li> <li>• Mix with amplified e-WOM and entertainment contents</li> </ul>	4.2 Other rewards	Brands release free item, product sample, brand's gift (Muntinga <i>et al.</i> 2011).	In order to gain these gifts, customers need to engage in the activities or interact with other customers to win the prize.
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### 7.3.1 Organic e-WOM

Based on the analysis of 89 pieces of related brand posts, the results confirm that Chinese customers are likely to engage in dialogic co-creation related to the topic of brand or product information, online/offline shopping experience, transaction issues and delivery service. This is consistent with Zhang's *et al.* (2017) findings. However, in addition to these identified sub-topics of organic e-WOM activities, researcher also recognised a new sub-topic that has been propagandised by Chinese fast fashion shoppers on Sina Weibo, which is related product sustainability. Moreover, it found that the brand-generated posts related to organic e-WOM topic usually mixed with entertaining contents and/or remunerative contents. This following sub-sections will explain the sub-topics of organic e-WOM contents with examples and demonstrate how organic e-WOM contents combines with other topics that appear in one brand-generated post.

#### 7.3.1.1 Product/brand information

Most of the organic e-WOM activities are related to the topic of product/brand information. Although Hutton and Fosdick, (2011) previously found that the passive contents that only listed the product information for customers on social media are considered as the sufficient and useful marketing contents, the netnographic findings indicate that the brand-generated content needs to be active and interactive. Specifically, brands not only generate a post to introduce newly launched product information but also ask customers to express their opinions towards these products (Kim and Song, 2017). According to the relevant brand post, it found that in order to attract more customers to involve in the discussion, brands not only state the product characteristics but also invite customers to vote which is their favourite item and what fashion styles they can create by wearing the listed items. For example, UNIQLO create a topic to ask customers to discuss how to select the sweaters to match different hair styles, which has achieved 441 pieces of comments.

##### *Example 7.3.1.1:*

*#midnight U-radio# #which hairstyles are suitable in Autumn and Winter#  
The different haircut matching with different designs of sweater's neckline  
can create different fashion styles. #today's topic# Which sweater in the  
following picture you like the best? Vote your favourite one and tell us the  
reason. You may be selected to gain one piece of our new sweater!*



优衣库\_UNIQLO V

2016-10-26 21:05 come from 微博 weibo.com

#深夜U电台# #秋冬留什么发型好# 毛衣领口的设计和不同长度的发型搭配会碰撞出不同的风格。#今日话题# 长/短发的你，最喜欢搭配什么款式的毛衣领呢？投票并留言告诉我原因，就有机会获得一件针织新品！右戳参与投票：[长/短发的你，怎样搭配毛衣领？](#)



☆ Favorite

📷 248

💬 441

👍 39

(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 26 October 2016).

### 7.3.1.2 Transaction and delivery service

Zhang *et al.*, (2017) state that Chinese customers like to discuss the security of transaction through the online platform or brand's mobile app. More so, Chinese customers also love to know how easy to use the variety of devices to purchase the item online. According to the netnographic data, researcher found that some of the brand-generated posts have provided the transaction link of the product and mentioned about the delivery service. For instance, one of the H&M generated post not only has mentioned their new launch products in physical stores but also provided the link of the online store, which has attracted over 500 customers to leave their comments.

*Example 7.3.1.2:*

*Begin to count down the launching time of the KENZO AND H&M's collaborative products! I know you must be very excited about it! Everything is ready now, especially, our vivid design of the merchandise display in physical store! Tomorrow all the items will be in our physical stores. Here is the link of our online store! You can easily find what you want! Look forwarding to it! #KENZO#*



(Post from H&M's Sina Weibo on 2 November 2016).

### 7.3.1.3 Physical/online store information

Another identified sub-topic of organic e-WOM contents is about physical or online store information (Zhang *et al.*, 2017). The researcher recognised that some of the brand-generated posts provided detail of the physical store's information including the store's address with the link of the directional map, the in-store's activities with the date. Moreover, some of the posts even mentioned the stock situation towards the specific item. However, under this type of posts, there are lots of negative comments complaining about shopping experience in that physical store. The complaints generally focus on the salesperson's attitude and the service quality.

*Example 7.3.1.3: #officially launch# Haikou. Haihang Mingri Square. Address: GF Floor, Guoxing Street, Qiongzhan District, Haikou, Hainan Province. Here is the link of the map.*





ZARA V

2016-11-16 11:40 来自 微博 weibo.com

#正式开幕# 海口·海航日月广场 地址：海南省海口市琼山区国兴大道8号GF层  
(近兴丹路) [网页链接](#)



☆ 收藏

📎 6

💬 169

👍 49

(Post from ZARA's Sina Weibo on 16 November 2016).

#### 7.3.1.4 Product sustainability

The sub-topic of product sustainability is one of the new finding in this netnographic study. Choi (2017) and Shen (2014) mention that some of the international fashion brands such as Uniqlo, ZARA and H&M have already launched and developed a product sustainability programme by recycling and remanufacturing the materials. With the enhancement of social media usage, fashion brands can utilise the digital media to broadcast the product sustainability's information. However, as Rahman and Gong (2016) criticised that the Chinese fast fashion shoppers' environmental friendly consciousness is still staying in infancy stage. Although their sustainable awareness is rising currently, few of them are willing to engage in the product sustainability's activities or pay a premium for the eco-friendly products. According to the netnographic data, the researcher found that Chinese customers are increasingly interested in the product sustainability's activities. Although the brand-generated posts related to this topic did not receive the number of comments as many as the other topics, through the analysis of these comments, it shows that Chinese customers are willing to donate their old or damaged clothes to the physical stores. Moreover, under the relevant brand posts, customers usually left the comment to ask for more information about how these donated clothes can be recycled or remanufactured.

*Example 7.3.1.4a: Bring your unwanted clothes to our physical stores and donate them to our recycling box. We are cooperating with CEPF now! We will recycle these old clothes! #Recycle# #Join Life# Website Link*



ZARA

2016-12-7 12:00 来自 微博 weibo.com

带上您不再使用的衣物，捐赠至我们门店的回收箱。我们和CEPF(中华环境保护基金会)合作，合理回收利用，通过公益环保的方式延续废旧衣物的使用寿命。#Recycle# #JoinLife# [网页链接](#)



☆ 收藏

↗ 33

💬 105

👍 138

*Customer-generated comments on this post:*

*FLIUUFU: Could you tell me how these clothes can be recycled? I would like to know more about the recycling process!*

*TYluluWang: WOW! This activity is so meaningful! Could you tell me whether these old clothes can be re-manufactured?*

*(Post from ZARA's Sina Weibo on 7 December 2016).*

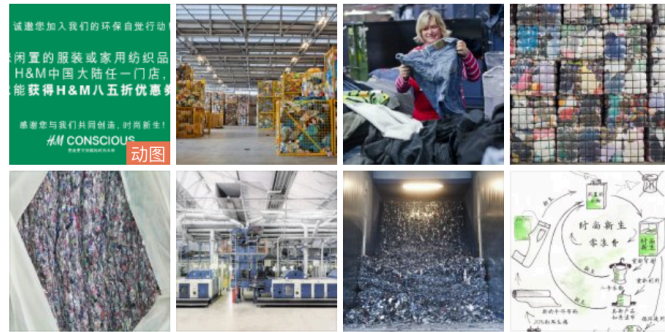
*Example 7.3.1.4b: H&M is the first company to launch the clothes recycling programme. We have kept this programme running for three years. Do you know where have these old clothes gone? What they have been changed to? We are cooperating with a German company called WOLFEN. They help us to categorise the old clothes. Thus, all these collected old clothes will be categorised into four ways including renewing, reutilising, recycling and producing energy. No matter which ways to remanufacture your clothes, it is doing good to the environment. Why not join us and donate your clothes to us?*



HM中国

2016-11-12 09:00 come from 微博 weibo.com

H&M是世界上第一家发起全球性旧衣回收倡议的时装公司，相关的旧衣回收项目已进行了三年多，你知道旧衣物都被送去了哪里？又变成了什么吗？在该项目的合作伙伴——位于德国WOLFEN的I:CO分拣站，它们会被分成四种途径：重新穿着、重新利用、循环使用和生产能源。无论哪一种，你的闲置衣物都能为循环再利用贡献绵薄之力。把旧衣交给H&M，何乐而不为？ [收起全文](#)



☆ Favorite

🔗 68

💬 94

👍 225

*Customer-generated comments on this post:*

*Sallypoew: I would like to donate all my old clothes? Could you give me more information, such as where can I donate my clothes?*

*OHILOY: Can I donate the clothes from other brands?*

*(Post from H&M's Sina Weibo on 12 November 2016).*

### 7.3.1.5 Only organic e-WOM contents

The brand-generated posts that only contain the organic e-WOM contents generally list the new launched products' picture and information, which includes the products' launch date, designer of this season and the theme or characteristic of this season's items. Moreover, brand also persuades customers to purchase the items either online or offline. For instance:

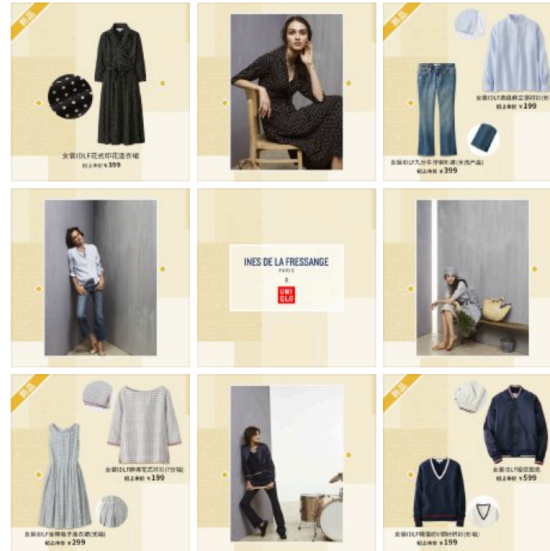
*Example 7.3.1.5: Valentine's Day is coming. Why not try a new fashion style to surprise your boyfriend? Miss U prepares a new series for you which is called UNIQLO X Ines de la Fressange. The French style that make you look both elegant and sexy must be able to satisfy your needs. The products will be launched tomorrow! Ready to buy!*



优衣库\_UNIQLO V

2017-2-3 12:00come from 微博 weibo.com

情人节将至，不妨换一个新形象给他一个惊喜呢！小优为你准备了UNIQLO X Ines de la Fressange合作款IDLF系列，浓浓的法式优雅与风情，总有一款适合挑剔眼光的你！明日上市，准备拔草吧~！



☆ Favorite

65

155

422

(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 3 February 2017).

### 7.3.1.6 Organic e-WOM mixed with entertaining contents

The netnographic findings indicate that the brand-generated post that combines the topic of organic e-WOM and entertaining contents have received high attention by Chinese customers on Sina Weibo. Generally, this type of post does not involve product information but describes the entertaining contents to catch customers' eyes. For example:

*Example 7.3.1.6: When our little lazy eggs (little lazy egg is a cartoon character) grow up, they will be the brave and wise woman or man. But when they are adults, they will become to miss their childhood's life. New Year is coming, let's have an unforgettable year with our little lazy eggs. (The photos are UNIQLO's new season's T-shirts which have the pattern of the cartoon of the little lazy eggs).*



优衣库\_UNIQLO

2017-1-28 09:01 来自 微博 weibo.com

广告等Wuli懒蛋蛋长大了，也会是英姿飒爽的雄鸡一枚！可成年之后才开始怀念童年的无法无天不是吗？新春开始，就和懒蛋蛋一起，把生活过得趣意盎然！



☆ 收藏

🔗 162

💬 108

👍 159

(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 28 January 2017).

Moreover, brands may invite customers to engage in the designed and creative entertaining activities. For instance, brands ask customers to design a slogan for their new season's product. In order to engage in this activity, customers have to search and learn about the product information by themselves. In other words, customers perceived the product information by their own efforts.

#### 7.3.1.7 Organic e-WOM mixed with remunerative contents

The organic e-WOM topics sometimes mixed with the remunerative contents appear in one brand-generated posts. Researcher recognises that this type of brand post mainly focuses on providing new items' information. But brands also invite customers to vote their favourite item and to write the reason about selecting this item. Those customers who have engaged in this activity will have the chance to get a gift from the brand. For instance:

*Example 7.3.1.7: Do you like wearing these lovely skirts in Autumn? We have sporty style, college style and English style. Tell us which style you like most and tell us the reason. We will select two customers to send one of these lovely skirts.*



(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 28 September 2016).

#### 7.3.1.8 Organic e-WOM mixed with both entertaining and remunerative contents

The netnographic data also shows that there is a type of brand-generated post mixed with organic e-WOM contents, entertaining contents and remunerative contents. This type of posts usually received higher attention by Chinese customers than those single topic's post. This type of post generalises the entertaining contents like mentioning an upcoming festival, a funny movie or a song to amuse customers. But it also includes the contents related to product information. At last, it appeals customers to express their opinions and they will send the gifts to those who engaged in this activity. For instance:

*Example 7.3.1.8: #Princess Style# Have you been moved by the movie of Beauty and the Beast? This classic movie will be filmed as a live-action feature and is launched soon! UNIQLO is cooperating with Disney to promote our new season's T-shirts. You can tell us which one in the following pictures you like most and you will have the chance to win two movie tickets!*



(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 23 February 2017).

### 7.3.2 Amplified e-WOM

The topic of amplified e-WOM has been proved one of the popular dialogic co-creation activities for Chinese fast fashion shoppers on Sina Weibo. Specifically, three sub-topics (perceived brand's interactivity, perceived celebrity's interactivity and celebrities' endorsement information) identified from literature (Labrecque, 2014; Xiang *et al.*, 2016) have been confirmed through the netnographic study. Compared to organic e-WOM contents, based on the analysis of relevant brand posts, it indicates that the amplified e-WOM contents cause higher effect on receiving customers' comments. Some sub-topics of amplified e-WOM content can receive more than ten thousand's piece of customer-generated comments. In line with Labrecque's, (2014) study, it found that Chinese customers are eager to gain interactivity with brands and celebrities. When customers were seeing other users have received brand's or celebrity's reply, they would follow other customers' behaviour to leave the comments and expect to get reply from brands or celebrities. In addition, when customers see their idol endorsing the brand, they will leave the comments to express their supports to the brand and celebrity. The following sub-sections will give examples of each sub-topic of amplified e-WOM contents.

#### 7.3.2.1 Perceived brand's interactivity

Chinese customers prefer brand interactivity as they believe that this direct customer-brand interaction can make them feel talking closely to a real person. Labrecque, (2014) state that when customers begin to consider the brand as a real friend and perceive online conversation with it, they have already established a parasocial relationship with the brand. Through the netnographic study, researcher recognised that brands usually personalise as a real person to invite customers to



interact with them under the brand post. The brands also give effective replies to the customers. As Rauschnabel and Ahuvia (2014) suggest that brands can interact with their customers from the first person perspective, which will attract more customers' attention than using the third person's slogan. For instance:

*Example 7.3.2.1a: Christmas is coming. Is it difficult for you to select and pack the gifts? Don't worried! Miss U (UNIQLO) has helped you to prepare all the stuffs! Follow Miss U and tell me what do you want? Miss U will pick one customer to send her/him a gift! Let's do it now!*



*Customer-generated comments on this post:*

*OIIPA-T: I want to buy a long-sleeve polo shirt or whirt sweater to my boy friend! Miss U, could you send me this gift! Lol!!*

*YOYOLEEL: I plan to purchase a Disney T-shirt to my daughter, as we will take her to Disney on Christmas this year! It will be great if Miss U can send me this gift!*

*(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 15 December 2016).*

*Example 7.3.2.1b: We have 500 physical stores in mainland China! Miss U appreciate every customer's love and support! Wish we will always stay together! Every day has good thing happened! According to my research, I know customers are satisfied with our service and product quality! But I still want to know more about your impression towards UNIQLO. Leave your comments here! Tell me what do you think about UNIQLO! You will have the opportunity to get my surprise!*

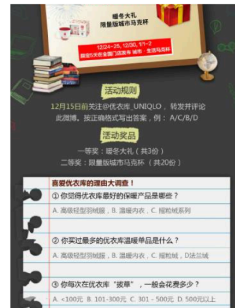




优衣库\_UNIQLO V

2016-12-8 17:40 来自 微博 weibo.com

优衣库中国区已突破500家门店！小优感谢消费者一路的支持和厚爱。希望小优的经典单品继续陪伴优星人，每一天都有生活小确幸~据小U调查，优星人们特别喜欢优衣库的优质与温暖。你#喜欢优衣库的理由#是什么？即日起至12月15日，参与转发/评论本微博并选出你的理由，就有机会获得惊喜礼物哦！



☆ 收藏

6456

1276

132

*Customer-generated comments on this post:*

*TTPING\_qian: UNIQLO is the first fashion brand I like! Compared to other fast fashion brands, UNIQLO has highest product quality with affordable prices. I will always support UNIQLO!*

*BebeWu: I love UNIQLO as it always has new collection that produced by the cooperation with other luxury brand's designer!*

*(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 8 December 2016).*

### 7.3.2.2 Perceived celebrity's interactivity

Social media users expect to have direct conversations and develop parasocial relationship with celebrities or experts on social networking sites (Xiang *et al.*, 2014). According to the netnographic study, researcher found that brands sometimes will facilitate the online direct interactive activity between customers and celebrities on Sina Weibo. Customers are not only able to co-create dialogues with their idols but also can face-to-face interact with celebrities via online video chat. More so, researcher recognised that these interactive activities usually focus on the theme of brand's products, the fashion trends and the variety of fashion styles. For instance:

*Example 7.3.2.2: @baogongzijeer (a Chinese fashion blogger). Miss Bao's experience in fashion week is here. Please click this link to engage in the online video chat with her! You will know more fashion information of our new launch product from her!*



*Customer-generated comments on this post:  
 TTTiffinay: OMG! I love her!!!! She is so beautiful with this outfit!  
 (Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 6 November 2016).*

### 7.3.2.3 Celebrity endorsement information

Centeno and Wang (2017) mention that as celebrities' performances in public area influence their fans' thoughts and choices. When the celebrities endorse a brand, they also create a branding identify to the customers. Thus, through the celebrity endorsement, customers are encouraged and persuaded to imitate their idol's fashion style and purchase the same items as their idol has (Holmes and Redmond, 2014). Based on the netnographic findings, the brand-generated posts related to celebrity endorsement information received a mass of customers' comments. One outstanding example is that H&M released a post on Sina Weibo to introduce Fan binbin and Li chen, a Chinese famous couple, as their endorsers in 2017, over 10 thousand customers have left their comments on this post.

*Example 7.3.2.3: We cannot wait to share this best news in 2017 to our customers! We are now officially to pronounce that the sweetest couple, Li chen and Fan binbin will endorse H&M's New Year's series in 2017! In 2017, you will have family's companies, perceive sincere love from your partner and get best wishes from your friends! Moreover, you will have H&M to get along with you! Do you want to what surprise this couple will bring to us? Let's look forward together! #HM2017CN#*



*(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 30 October 2016).*

#### 7.3.2.4 Only amplified e-WOM contents

Researcher found that when the brand post only contains the amplified e-WOM content, it can attract more customers' attentions than the post that combines amplified e-WOM content with other topics. This is different from the effect of organic e-WOM contents, when the brand post of organic e-WOM contents mix with other topics, it can generate stronger effect than the brand post only includes organic e-WOM contents. There is few study has discussed and explained this situation. Maybe it is a coincidence from this netnographic data, which needs to be further explored. Here is the example that only have amplified e-WOM contents that has perceived nearly 9,200 pieces of comments.

*Example 7.3.2.4: How can I be a fashion icon in a foreign country? @Yan ni (a Chinese movie star) and UNIQLO will give you the answer! You can get the same items as Yan ni from UNIQLO!*



(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 16 February 2017).

#### 7.3.2.5 Amplified e-WOM mixed with entertaining contents

The amplified e-WOM content mixed with entertaining contents is another form that appear in brand-generated post. Generally, brands release a video, which the contents are about sending greetings or wishes to customers from the celebrity who endorses the brand in that year. Although the video did not mention any product or brand information, it is a very creative way to attract customers' attention and impress them. However, this type of post did not receive customer comments as many as the pure amplified e-WOM contents. For instance:

*Example 7.3.2.5: The first working day after the Chinese New Year Holiday! Don't always check the social networking site! Your friends who are still in holiday will make you feel jealous! A good beginning will bring you good luck for whole year! Let's check this video by @Chen kun (a Chinese famous actor)! He will teach you how to have a good beginning in New Year!*



(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 3 February 2017).

### 7.3.2.6 Amplified e-WOM mixed with remunerative contents

Another type of amplified e-WOM contents is mixed with remunerative activity. In order to encourage more customers to interact with brand, it designs the prize draw activity for customers who engaged in the dialogic co-creation. This type of brand-generated posts can also perceive higher attention by Chinese customers than the amplified e-WOM mixed with entertainment contents. An interesting example from UNIQLO is showed below:

*Example 7.3.2.6: Please quickly follow our interactive account called Uniwan on Sina Weibo. Retweet and comment this post during the Chinese New Year Holiday, you will have the opportunities to get a PS4! We will select 5 users to send this gift and select 10 users to send the Disney toy!*



(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 25 January 2017).

#### 7.3.2.7 Amplified e-WOM mixed with both entertaining and remunerative contents

The amplified e-WOM contents can be mixed with both entertaining and remunerative contents in one brand-generated post. In terms of this type of amplified e-WOM post, brand usually send festival greetings to customers and invite customers to interact with them. The customers who have engaged in the interaction will have the chance to get the present from the brand. However, according to the netnographic data, this type of brand-generated posts did not perceive much attention by Chinese customers. Here is the example of the related post:

*Example 7.3.2.7: #Count to the Double Twelve Shopping Festival# Miss U reminds you only 3 hours left to our crazy online shopping festival on 12 December! Please connect to your Wi-Fi, prepare your e-wallet, and fully charge your phone! Let us know what you going to buy on this Festival, you may have opportunity to get our gift!*



(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 11 December 2016).

### 7.3.3 Entertainment

Entertaining content is another important topic in dialogic co-creation activities that attract Chinese customers to engage in. This type of contents does not mention any product information or promotion to persuade customers to buy the items, but mainly focus on amusing the customer (Lee and Ma, 2012; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013). In addition to the two sub-topics including the influential and creative contents, fun games and video that identified from the literature (Godey *et al.*, 2016; Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014), the netnographic study has found another two sub-topics of entertaining contents, which are general greetings and festival wishes from brand and the brand's anecdote. Moreover, the entertaining content also mixed with other types of topics that appear in one brand-generated post. As previous sections have mentioned the examples that related to combined entertaining contents with other topics, this section will give another example to explain how entertaining contents mixed with remunerative contents that appear in brand posts.

### 7.3.3.1 The influential and creative topics

Different from the previous studies (e.g. De Vries *et al.*, 2012; Dolan *et al.*, 2015), according to the analysis of brand-generated posts, the creative contents in the entertaining brand posts do not mention the slogan, teaser or word play, but are a set of creative and meaningful topics that attract Chinese customers to engage in the dialogic co-creation activities. These creative ideas aim to call customers for actions. For instance, UNIQLO facilitates a variety of charity campaigns, such as donating the old clothes to the children who live in remote and poor areas. Moreover, UNIQLO advise customers how to organise a pajama party and encourage them to have a try! This post attracts nearly three hundred customers to leave their comments about sharing their previous experiences of pajama party. In addition, a brand post from UNIQLO that encouraged customers to share their personal feeling on Single Day has attracted over two hundreds customers in the discussions (See the three examples below).

*Example 7.3.3.1a: #Send your wishes, send your love# Only donate one piece of clothes, can you help the remote area's children. There are over 9 million children who live in poor and remote areas in China. These children wish to get a new clothes in the freezing winter. If you care about these children, we hope you can join us to send your wishes and send your love through denoting your old clothes to these children!*



(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 12 January 2017).



*Example 7.3.3.1b: #Wonderful pyjamas# The best activity in winter is to hold a pyjamas party with your sweeties! It is so relaxable to wear a comfortable and soft pajamas at home and stay with the people who can make you laugh! Let's take a photo for your pyjamas party and share with us!*



*(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 9 November 2016).*

*Example 7.3.3.1c: #Single makes me feel sick# We cannot order a lot of dishes if we eat alone. We will feel cool if we sleep alone. We will feel lonely if no one company. #Today's Topic# What do you feel if you are single? Any special feeling wants to share with us?*



*(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 8 November 2016).*

### 7.3.3.2 Fun games and videos

The fun games and videos is another sub-topic of entertainment contents in the dialogic co-creation activities among international fast fashion brands and Chinese



customers on Sina Weibo. This is consistent to previous empirical studies (Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014; Lee and Ma, 2012; De Vries *et al.*, 2012). However, based on the netnographic findings, most of the games that international fast fashion brands facilitate are not digital games but are the word play or slogan design. For instance, UNIQLO facilitate an activity on Valentines Day, which aims to ask customers to design a romantic slogan for their lover. There are over 500 customers involved in this activity and over 6,000 users reposted this brand post.

*Example 7.3.3.2: Dear customers, please pay attention here! #Let's express our love now# Get involved in this activity to express your love to your partner before 14 Feb! You may have the opportunity to get our surprise gift.*



*(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 6 February 2017).*

### 7.3.3.3 Greentings and festival wishes

The social greetings and festival wishes that are delivered from brands to customers have been identified as one of the popular sub-topics of entertainment contents on Sina Weibo. Brands usually generate the messages such as "a greeting from us!", "Happy Monday, everyone!", "wish you a very happy Chinese New Year" to get close to their customers (He *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, brands sometimes play a role as customer's friend to ask what is their new year plan and wishes. For instance:

*Example 7.3.3.3a: #New Year and Surprise# New Year is coming! How do you plan for this new journey? For our fashion customers, you must want to try something new! Tell us what is your new year wishes through commenting or reposting this post. You will have the opportunity to get our surprise! Wish everyone a very happy New Year!*



(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 2 January 2017).

#### Example 7.3.3.3b: A greeting from Lia Pavlova



(Post from ZARA's Sina Weibo on 9 December 2016).

#### 7.3.3.4 Brand's anecdote

In the entertaining brand posts, brands usually create the post that contains brand's anecdote (De Vries *et al.*, 2012). As these brand's anecdotes are related to brand's information, De Vries *et al.*, (2012) mention that some of these brand posts can be categorised either in entertaining content or in informative content. For instance, ZARA created a video to interview their employees from over the world. The video is from the employee's perspective to talk about their feeling and interesting stories about working in this company. Although it did not receive a lot of comments from customers but it is a new sub-topic of entertaining contents to attract customers' attention.

*Example 7.3.3.4: #inditexcareers# We are interviewing our employees over the world. We ask them how they feel about working with us. This time, it is the turn for interviewing Chinese employees! You can find the*

*unique characteristic of our employees through this interview! Click this video to check this interview!*



*(Post from ZARA's Sina Weibo on 28 November 2016).*

#### **7.3.3.5 Entertaining contents mixed with the remunerative contents**

The brand-generated posts that related to entertaining topic sometimes contains the remunerative contents. Especially, in a specific festival, brands not only generate the message to entertain their customers but also provide the economic incentives to motivate customers engage in the activities. The following two examples illustrate how the entertaining contents mixed with remunerative contents in one brand-generated post.

*Example 7.3.3.5a: #The best outfit in Halloween# We cannot miss a horror movie in Halloween! Do you want to wear the same item from the horror movie? Tell us which horror movie it is your favoroute and tell us which item you want? You will have the opportunity to get our gift!*



(Post from ZARA's Sina Weibo on 29 October 2016).

*Example 7.3.3.5b: Wish you all the best and earn more fortune this year! We have already delivered our wishes to customers! Click this video to hear what we said to you! You can tell us how to say Happy New Year in your local language! We have prepared some surprises to you!*



(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 13 January 2017).

#### 7.3.4 Remuneration

According to the netnographic data, the remuneration contents are listed as the second popular topic of dialogic co-creation among selected international fast fashion brands and customers on Sina Weibo. Prior studies have proved that the remuneration contents are one of the attractive topics on social media (Muntinga *et al.* 2011). Through the economic incentives and other types of future rewards,

customers are attracted to become involved in the related activities. Through the netnographic study, it was found that Chinese customers are eager to engage in the remunerative activities and willing to contribute generated contents under the brand post in order to perceive monetary or intangible benefits. Specifically, there are two sub-topics that belong to remuneration contents, which are the economic incentives and other rewards. More importantly, it found that the economic incentives not only include product discounts, product promotions, prize draw but also has the red pocket (a Chinese style economic reward) that release from brands to customers. Other types of rewards include free products, samples and gifts, which are consistent to previous studies' findings (Azar *et al.*, 2016; De Vries *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, the remuneration contents also mixed with other types of contents that appear in one brand-generated post, however as the previous sections have provided the related examples, the following sections only illustrate the sub-topics that related to remunerative brand posts.

#### 7.3.4.1 Economic incentives

Customers prefer consuming the remuneration contents, as this type of brand posts provide the economic incentives for customers (Muntinga *et al.* 2011). The netnographic findings show that the economic incentives including the product discounts, prize draw and red porket released from the brand have attract great number of customer replies. For instance, ZARA generated a brand post to announce the beginning of seasonal sale that have perceived over one thousand customer's replies (See the example 1 below). More so, UNIQLO facilitated an activity to ask customers to engage in expressing thank you to their friends and family. Those customers who have generated their comments can engage in the prize draw and win the voucher from the brand (See the example 2 below). Furthermore, the red pockets that released from the brand on Chinese New Year have also attracted customers' attention. The red pocket is a Chinese traditional form to delivery wishes through putting the money in the red envelop. In order to get this red pocket, customers are willing to engage in the brand-facilitated dialogic co-creation activities.

*Example 7.3.4.1a: The product discount is beginning now! You can check our online store and physical store!*



*(Post from ZARA's Sina Weibo on 16 December 2016).*

*Example 7.3.4.1b: #UNIQLO's thanks giving# Our parents' caring, our friends' understanding, our lover's company, our peers' help... We need to say thank you to all of them! Miss U also wants to thank you our customers' supports! Who you want to say thank you? Follow UNIQLO on Sina Weibo and leave your comments on this post to tell us what you want to say to your family, friends, peers and lovers. You will win the voucher from us!*



*(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 21 November 2016).*

*Example 7.3.4.1c: #Happy Chinese New Year# The Chinese spring festival is coming! Look forward to reuniting with our family! You can get the wishes from your friends and from us as well! Follow us on Sina Weibo and tell us your wishes! You will have the opportunity to get our prepared red pocket! We will delivery 10 red pockets to our customers!*



*(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 10 January 2017).*



#### 7.3.4.2 Other rewards

The other types of rewards including the free item, product sample, brand's gift have been found in the brand-generated posts that related to remuneration contents. For example, UNIQLO facilitated an activity to ask customers to leave comments about their favorite T-shirt style. Those customers who have generated their comments can engage in the prize draw and win the gift from the brand (See the example below).

*Example 7.3.4.2: A simple T-shirt can be dressed for different styles! Even wearing a white T-shirt can make you look like a Queen! Which type of T-shirt you like most? Comment on this post and you will have an opportunity to get our T-shirt! We will randomly select 10 customers to delivery our T-shirt.*



*(Post from UNIQLO's Sina Weibo on 23 January 2017).*

#### 7.4 Summary

This chapter has provided the netnographic findings that seeks to answer two research questions: 1. What are the antecedent factors influencing customer engaging in dialogic co-creation activities on Chinese social networking platform; 2. What types of dialogic co-creation activities are popular for customers to engage on Chinese social networking platform? Two new templates that conclude the antecedent factors and topics of dialogic co-creation activities have been developed respectively based on the analysis process. Generally, the results prove that the dialogic co-creation between international fast fashion brand and customer or customer and customer are popular on Chinese social networking site, Sina Weibo. For one side, customers enjoy engaging in different topics' discussions, expressing their own opinions or exchanging though with brands and other customers who match the similar interests or characteristics with them. For another side, Brands are willing to obtain unique and creative thoughts and ideas, brand or product suggestions, product reviews and feedback, customer supports from the customers through the dialogic co-creation activities. In addition, the Chinese social networking platform, Sina Weibo allow brands to personify themselves and enable customers to constantly interact with the brands and other customers.

Specifically, through the analysis of customer-generated comments, the netnographic study has provided rich data to confirm that the antecedent factors (consumer expertise and social expertise) that identified from the literature review can reflect customer's logic to engage in the dialogic co-creation activities with international fast fashion brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. In addition, there are other contents that have been identified and categorised including showing customer's personal fashion style, customer's emotional expression, customer's compliments expression, customer's purchase intention expression, customer-generated emojis and GIF pictures that appeared in customer-generated comments.

Furthermore, in terms of the factor of consumer expertise, it also identified a new sub-factor, called customer self-enhancement, which motivates customers engage in dialogic co-creation in this research context. More so, it supposes that the sub-factor of customer memory has the highest effect on influencing customer engagement behaviour compared to the other sub-factors of consumer expertise, as there are the most number of customer-generated comments related to this dimension. It indicates that customer's previous shopping experiences and personal fashion knowledge have been stocked in their memory and then transformed to their expertise, which can be utilised in dialogic co-creation. It also implies that the customers who eager to engage in the dialogic co-creation activities have high level of social expertise, which means they are also good at social interaction, even with stranger on virtual environment.

In terms of the popular topics of dialogic co-creation activities, the four main themes (organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertainment and remuneration) that identified from the literature review have been proved as the major topics that Chinese customers are likely to engage on Sina Weibo. Although these topics are not always appeared singularly in a brand-generated post but mixed with other topics. Each of these topics have been expanded upon with a set of examples that screenshot from the selected international fast fashion brands' Sina Weibo. Some of the topics have been added the new sub-topics or revised based on netnographic findings. Among those four main topics of dialogic co-creation, it found that the organic e-WOM contents are the most popular one for Chinese fast fashion shoppers. The second place is the remuneration contents, which provide economic benefits for customers. Based on these results, it indicates that Chinese customers enjoy interacting with different objects rather than the duality of communication. Thus, it is important for social media marketers to facilitate the relevant activities that enable customers to share their fashion shopping experiences and their useful information with others. More so, social media marketers can encourage customers to interact with each other to share interests, to solve out the practical problems and demonstrate their fashion expertise. In addition, brands should operate a reward system to attract more potential customers to get involve in the dialogic co-creation activities on social networking sites.



To sum up, the netnographic study confirms the basic conceptual framework that build up based on the literature review. The variables and measurement items from the conceptual model can be used in the quantitative study in next step.

## Chapter 8 Quantitative Research Findings

### 8.1 Introduction

The quantitative findings of the pilot study and main survey study have provided the answers towards three research questions including:

- (1). What's the relationships between the identified antecedent factors that motivate customers to engage in dialogic co-creation and the different types of dialogic co-creation activities on a Chinese social networking site?
- (2). What's the relationships regarding customer engagement in major types of dialogic co-creation activities and the outcomes in terms of perceived customer benefits?
- (3). What's the relationships between customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities and customer purchase intention?

This chapter outlines the quantitative data analysis process and presents the results of the main survey, while the findings of the pilot study are provided in Appendix 6.

Firstly, the **data preparation**, including data screening of the unengaged responses and data cleaning of the missing data, was conducted as the first step (in Section 8.2). Secondly, the description of the demographic profile of the main survey was presented (in Section 8.3). Thirdly, **data normality** was checked prior to conduct the exploratory factor analysis (Section 8.4). Fourthly, the results of the **reliability test** and **exploratory factor analysis (EFA)** were outlined in Section 8.5. Cronbach's alpha (De Vaus, 2013), which is a common tool used to assess data reliability, was adopted in this step. After removing the irrelevant measurement items, the remaining observed variables were applied to the next Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy were adopted to ensure that the measurement items were suitable to conduct factor analysis (Hair *et al.*, 2010). In addition, in order to develop a more rigorously factorial structure, principle component analysis and varimax rotation were applied to reduce the number of variables (Hair *et al.*, 2010). In addition, variance and Eigen values were also used to identify the number of variables to be extracted (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Fifth, the **confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)** was conducted in Section 8.6. The aims of CFA are to detect the final factor structure and ensure the remaining variables are both convergently and discriminatively validated. The first step of CFA is to evaluate the established model fit. In this step, the goodness of fit indices were applied as the standard to assess the model fit. What's more, the one-factor congeneric measurement models that were used to calculate the composite scores for the observed variables, along with the construct reliability and validity, were described. Furthermore, the results from the test for common method bias (CMB) were also provided. Sixth, **Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)**, as established in Chapter 5, was applied to detect the causal relationships between the survey constructs. Prior to developing a structural path model, a series of applications of SEM were outlined (in Section 8.7), including the model identification, multivariate assumptions and a modified model. Consequently, a set of hypotheses that were proposed in Chapter 5

were tested in Section 8.8. Finally, section 8.9 summarised the findings from the quantitative study and discusses the results of the hypotheses.

## **8.2 Data preparation**

A substantial sample has been collected in the main survey (n=401). In order to ensure the collected data for the main survey was clean to conduct further data analysis, three steps for the data screening and examination procedure were necessary:

- (1) Screening the unengaged responses (Hair *et al.*, 2010);
- (2) Cleaning the missing data (Hojstrup, 1993);
- (3) Detecting the outliers (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

### **(1) Screening the unengaged responses**

First, unengaged responses refer to those participants who selected the same value for each measurement item, which resulted in a low quality response. These responses needed to be screened out by utilizing SPSS 23.0. Through computing the standard deviation (SD) per response towards the value of measurement items, the unengaged responses could be identified. If a respondent's SD was less than 0.5, it indicated that the amount of variance for this response was insufficient (Downes-Le Guin *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, if the length of time to finish the survey was less than five minutes, this response should be screened out and the quality of the responses checked. The researcher identified 58 instances of unengaged responses from the total 496 collected and completed surveys.

### **(2) Cleaning the missing data**

Second, missing data is produced by those respondents who did not finish the whole questionnaire or dropped out at the middle (Hair *et al.*, 2010). After screening for missing data, there were 37 responses that needed to be removed from the data set. Therefore, only 401 valid responses were collected from the main survey.

### **(3) Detecting the outliers**

Third, the outliers can be explained as those cases (observations) that are distinctly different from the overall pattern of a holistic distribution (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The outliers may include extremely high or low values and can result in non-normality statistics. There are two types of outliers: a univariate outlier is detected by the individual measuring variables and a bivariate outlier is identified by multi-variables in the entire measurement model (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The researcher detected both univariate and bivariate outliers in this data set using different methods. As all latent variables are measured on a seven-point Likert scale in this study, the sum of each case's scores from the scale measurements was calculated first. Then all the scores for each individual case were converted to standard scores in SPSS 23.0. The result of the standardised values was saved as a univariable called 'Z-scores' in the data set. Five cases from the total 401 cases were identified as outliers; these were case no.101, no.178, no.192, no.213 and no.269. The process for detecting the univariate outliers is presented in Appendix 7.

Next, the researcher detected the multivariate outliers by computing the Mahalanobis  $D^2$ , which is a multi-dimensional type of Z-score (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The Mahalanobis  $D^2$  was computed through the linear regression procedure in SPSS 23.0. The 'Z-scores' variable was considered as a dependent variable in this step, while the respondent's age, educational level, monthly incomes, monthly spending on fast fashion shopping and the frequency of browsing fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo variables were considered as independent variables. The result of Mahalanobis  $D^2$  was saved as a variable called 'MAH\_1' in the data set. Through the calculation of a chi-square with the degree of freedom and significance, the researcher identified that a case can be considered as a multivariate outlier if its Mahalanobis  $D^2$  is larger than 18.55. There were five cases detected as outliers, which were no.101, no.209, no.236, no.257, and no.392.

The researcher checked these outliers individually but cannot identify any serious mistakes in the answers. For instance, no participant selected one answer in the thorough survey. According to Hair *et al.* (2010), outliers can be retained in the data set unless there is evidence to prove the outlier is absolutely deviating from the normal data. Therefore, the researcher decided to retain both the univariate and multivariate outliers in the data set but marked them. In the further analysis process, the researcher paid particular attention to these outliers to detect whether they influenced the results of the EFA and CFA for the main survey.

### **8.3 The demographic profile of main survey**

After the data screening and examination, there were 401 valid responses employed in the further analysis. The demographic profile is provided in Table 8.1.

- The results showed that the majority of the fast fashion shoppers in this survey are aged from 28–30 (53.62%), while there are a similar number of respondents in the age group 24–27 (23.94%) and 31–35 (23.44%).
- The results also demonstrated that a very high percentage (73.32%) of respondents have a bachelor's degree. Moreover, 71.57% of the respondents' personal incomes are between RMB5,000 and 15,000.
- The findings indicated that most of the participants in this survey would like to spend RMB501–1000 (40.40%) or RMB1001–3000 (38.65%) on fast fashion shopping.
- However, an interesting finding is that the number of respondents who live in Tier 2 cities (46.13%) in mainland China is more than those who live in Tier 1 cities (32.67%). This finding is different to the pilot study.
- In terms of the length of time browsing or engaging in the international fast fashion brands' activities on Sina Weibo, 30.67% of the respondents said they would check or engage in it once or twice per day while 27.43% said they would look up the contents of the international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo four or five days per week. A further 22.44% said they would do it at least 2–3 days per week.

- With regard to the top three popular international fast fashion brands (ZARA, H&M, Uniqlo), more than half the respondents (53.87%) have followed Uniqlo's Sina Weibo, 34.41% of the respondents have followed ZARA and only 11.72% have followed H&M.

Table 8.1: Demographic profile of the main survey

Sample size (n)		%	N
Age:	24-27	23.94	96
	28-30	52.62	211
	31-35	23.44	94
Educational level:	High school or below	1.75	7
	College	9.98	40
	Bachelor degree	73.32	294
	Master degree	12.22	49
	PhD or higher	2.74	11
Personal Monthly incomes:	Less than 5,000rmb	2.49	10
	5,000-15,000rmb	71.57	287
	15,001-25,000rmb	18.70	75
	25,001-35,000rmb	4.74	19
	Over 35,000rmb	2.24	9
	I don't have incomes currently	0.25	1
Monthly spending on fast fashion shopping:	Less than 500rmb	3.99	16
	501-1000rmb	40.40	162
	1001-3000rmb	38.65	155
	3001-5000rmb	13.47	54
	More than 5,000rmb	1.49	14
The city tiers they live in:	Tier 1 cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen)	32.67	131
	Tier 2 cities (Tianjin, Chongqing, Nanking, Hangzhou, Wuhan, Chengdu)	46.13	185
	Tier 3 cities (Suzhou, Wuxi, Ningbo, Foshan, Dongguan, Xi'an, Shenyang, Dalian)	18.95	76
	Others	2.24	9
The frequency of looking at or engaging in fast fashion brands' social media	Many times per day	15.71	63

activities on Sina Weibo:			
	Once or twice per day	30.67	123
	4-5 days per week	27.43	110
	at least 2-3 days/week	22.44	90
	Once a week	3.24	13
	Less than once a week	0.50	2
<hr/>			
The international fast fashion brand they follow on Sina Weibo:	Uniqlo	53.87	216
	ZARA	34.41	138
	H&M	11.72	47
	Others	0	0

Source: Based on the data from main survey.

\*in order to clarify China's currency equivalents, here provides the China's Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in 2017 compared to the UK's. China's GDP per PPP was 15308.71 US dollars in 2017 (Trading Economics, 2018a), while UK's GDP per PPP was 39753.24 US dollars (Trading Economics, 2018b).

#### 8.4 Check for the normality

Prior to the EFA and CFA for the main survey, the normality of the data set was assessed through analysing the **skewness and kurtosis** (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Normality refers to the distribution of the data set, which can be assessed by a particular parameter (Hair *et al.*, 2010). If the normal distribution of the data set is not sufficiently large, it will seriously influence the analysis of structural equation modelling. Table 8.5 displays the assessment of the data normality, which includes the values of the means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis for each individual measuring variable. The analysis of this step was conducted using SPSS 23.0. Appendix 8 shows the descriptive data from the normality test.

**Skewness** aims to test whether the responses are distributed towards one direction of the scale. The acceptable range of the skewness values are from -1 to 1 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). If the value of skewness equals 0, it implies the data is distributed symmetrically; otherwise, it is distributed asymmetrically. If the value of skewness is above 1, it implies that the distribution of the data has shifted to the left. If the value of skewness is below -1, it indicates that the distribution of the data has shifted to the right (Hair *et al.*, 2010). According to the results of the assessment, all variables met the required standard except for the two observed variables (CE04, AN01), which slightly exceeded -1. However, in a large sample set, the influence of the skewness is diminished (Tabachnik and Fidel, 2001). In other words, the normality of the data set may not yield serious influence on further analysis.

**Kurtosis** focuses on examining whether the data distribution displays as ‘peskiness’ or ‘flatness’ compared to the normal distribution (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Similar to the value of skewness, if the value of kurtosis equals 0, it indicates the data distribution is normal. If the value is higher than 1, the data distribution is considered as ‘leptokurtic’, while if the value is less than -1, the data distribution is termed ‘platykurtic’ (Lei and Lomax, 2005). The analysis shows that a set of variables were not loaded in the acceptable range of the kurtosis value. However, Hair *et al.* (2010) suggest if the kurtosis value belongs to the threshold of  $\pm 3$ , the data distribution can be considered as normal. Therefore, the skewness and kurtosis values are all considered as acceptable for further analysis in SEM.

### 8.5 Exploratory factor analysis for main survey

The purpose of the EFA for the main survey was to acquire an ideal and suitable factor structure, including a set of distinct measurement constructs. Each of these constructs measure a single aspect and they are considered as reliable and valid. In order to achieve this aim, two specific objectives are:

- (1) to test and confirm the underlying factorial structure of the measurement scales;
- (2) to further ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement items.

The following paragraphs present the results of the EFA for the main survey.

#### (1) The factorial structure

Before presenting the results of the EFA, it is necessary to outline the factor extraction methods and techniques employed in this step. Firstly, a **KMO test** of sampling adequacy and **Bartlett’s test of sphericity** were conducted to check whether the remaining items from the respective constructs were appropriate to undertake the EFA (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Hair *et al.*, (2010) suggested that the values of KMO should be more than 0.60 and the significance value (p) should be less than 0.05. In addition, the **communalities** of each factor were checked, which assessed the extent to which one measurement item correlated with other measurement items. Communalities that are less than 0.4 indicate that these items will not significantly influence their respective construct (Gaskin and Happell, 2014). In addition, the mean and standard deviation of each item were computed.

Secondly, after confirming the constructs were suitable to conduct EFA, it is necessary to determine how many components need to be extracted in every set of constructs (objective 1 of EFA in the pilot study). According to **Kaiser criterion**, the factors with an initial **eigenvalue** greater than 1 can be extracted as a single component (Kaiser, 1958). In addition, it is also necessary to check the scree plot, which also called ‘Cattell’s scree test or ‘elbow criterion’. The components above the point on the elbow can be retained (Fabrigar and Wegener, 2011). However, factor extraction should not only be based on the statistical criteria, but also needs to consider content interpretability (DeCoster, 1998). In other words, the arguments from previous literature can also be employed as the evidence to justify the variable extraction.



Thirdly, **principal component analysis** (Abdi and Williams, 2010) and **varimax (orthogonal) rotation analysis** (Costello and Osborne, 2005) were employed to assess whether each item is consistent with factor structure and remove the items that were reported (objective 2 of EFA in the pilot study). Principal component analysis is used to explain the total variances associated to each variable included in the analysis (Hair *et al.*, 2010). In other words, it helps a researcher to identify the underlying relationship among the observed variables. The varimax rotation method is commonly used to detect whether each item is valid. Moreover, the resultant factor analysis is employed to detect the items that have substantial and similar loadings on more than one component. It indicates that the items with low factor loadings (less than 0.50), high cross-loadings (more than 0.20) or low communalities (less than 0.40) should be taken out (Hair *et al.*, 2010). 'Cross-loadings' means the item load on multiple components. If an item cross-loads in two components, Gaskin and Happell, (2014) suggest the difference between the two loadings should be more than 0.20.

Forty-one measurement items that remained in the pilot study were subjected to the EFA in this step. The **KMO** test of the sampling adequacy was measured first. A very high KMO value of 0.901 was obtained, which confirmed an excellent selection of the measurement items for the EFA. The **Bartlett test of sphericity** was conducted and the result was positive and significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The **communalities** of each variable were all greater than 0.40, which indicated the selected variables all correlated to other measurement items. Furthermore, using the same factor extraction method (**principal component method**), the same factor extraction criteria (**eigenvalue > 1**) and the same rotation type (**varimax rotation**) as in the EFA for the pilot study, the low loading (less than 0.5) items and cross-loading (the difference of two factor loadings is less than 0.2) items were withdrawn. In addition to the **Kaiser criterion**, which only extracts the common factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1 (Costello and Osborne, 2005), the **elbow criterion** (Ledesma and Valero-Mora, 2007) was also checked in the factor extraction process for this study.

After an iterative process of removing those observed variables that had low factor loadings on respective constructs or high cross-loadings on different components, a six-components rotated pattern matrix including 20 measurement items was perceived with 75.77% cumulative variance. The KMO value was 0.826, which was accepted as reasonable. Table 8.2 displays the final factorial structure from the EFA of the main survey. The results of the final round of EFA for the main survey data are presented in Appendix 9.

Table 8.2: Factor structure from the rotated component matrix

Measurement items	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
TR03	<b>.837</b>					
PH01	<b>.795</b>					
TR01	<b>.777</b>					
PR01	<b>.659</b>					
HE01		<b>.841</b>		<b>.</b>		
HE04		<b>.823</b>				
PU03		<b>.791</b>				
HE02		<b>.715</b>				
ID03			<b>.885</b>			
CO02			<b>.863</b>			
ID02			<b>.837</b>			
PA01				<b>.882</b>		
PA02				<b>.845</b>		
PE04				<b>.817</b>		
CE03					<b>.871</b>	
CE04					<b>.867</b>	
AN01					<b>.835</b>	
RE03						<b>.891</b>
RE02						<b>.886</b>
RE01						<b>.878</b>

Source: Based on the result of EFA in main survey

Component 1 contained four items (PR01, TR01, TR03, PH01). These items all belonged to the survey construct 'organic e-WOM'. According to the items' descriptions, it indicates that Chinese fast fashion shoppers would like to pay attention to the brand-generated content related to the variety of fashion products, the transaction and delivery services and that they are willing to share their shopping experiences with brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. This result is consistent with previous scholars' claims. They believe that the interactive activities facilitated on social media are very attractive to social media users as they can assist in gathering useful and reliable information (Tafesse, 2014; Ashley and Tuten, 2015). For instance, Jeon *et al.* (2016) point out that the brand posts, including brand services and recent item updates, are considered as informational content for customers on social media. Azar *et al.* (2016) claim that seeking reliable information from brands or other users on social media is the reason the customers consume the brand-generated content.

Notably, in terms of the second component, the outcomes for customers engaging in dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo, only one dimension of customer benefits, the customers' hedonic benefits, was extracted in this factorial structure. Previous studies (e.g. Chen *et al.*, 2015; Zhang *et al.*, 2016) have proved that the hedonic value is one of the main outcomes of customer engagement in value creation or co-creation activities on social media. Habibi *et al.* (2014) also emphasise that hedonic benefits are one of the major values that customers can perceive from their engagement in brand communities on social media. Delgado-Ballester and Fernandez Sabiote (2015) point out that hedonic values are the main customer benefits that influence customer's attitudes and shopping preference. Furthermore, one item (PU03), which describes customers' purchase intention, has also dropped into this component. Koufaris (2002) previously found that intrinsic enjoyment is very important to online customers, especially for online shoppers. This hedonic enjoyment is also associated with customers' attitude and purchase intention towards the brand. Therefore, this component was re-named 'positive outcomes' in the measuring model.

However, the other dimensions of customer benefits (utilitarian benefits and interpersonal benefits) were not identified in the factorial structure. This is different to previous empirical studies, which considered the utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal benefits as the main dimensions of customer benefits from the value co-creation engagement on virtual environment (Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Chen *et al.*, 2015). For instance, Chiu *et al.* (2014) point out that the utilitarian benefits, including perceiving convenience, perceiving product information, obtaining product offering and monetary savings, are deemed as the fundamental determiners to influence customers' purchase intention.

Li *et al.* (2013) specify that the functional values that Chinese customers perceive from the luxury brands always positively influence their buying intention. Anderson *et al.* (2014) point out that the utilitarian values that stem from perceiving convenience and product information are related to the customers' purchase

intention and motivate customers to purchase from online channels. This result implies that Chinese customers' needs from online social engagement are gradually changing. Previously, they paid more attention to the utilitarian value, such as perceiving useful and reliable information from customer reviews and perceiving product discounts from brand-generated posts on social networking platforms. But now, Chinese customers may consider interacting with brand and other customers as a relaxing and pleasant activity that can help them pass the time and escape from reality.

The third component contained three measurement items (ID02, ID03 and CO02), which represented the variable of customers' social expertise (Barrutia *et al.*, 2016). In other words, Chinese fast fashion shoppers consider social expertise as an important factor to influence their dialogic co-creation engagement behaviour. This is consistent with previous studies (e.g. Blazevic *et al.*, 2014; Heinonen, 2011; Ma and Chan, 2014) that emphasise the customers' social reference groups' (friends, peers, family) and co-consuming groups' (other customers) influence on engagement behaviour.

The fourth component included three items (PA01, PA02 and PE04), which represent the contents of amplified e-WOM. In other words, this component implies that Chinese fast fashion shoppers would like to interact with brands and brand celebrities on Sina Weibo. Dolan *et al.* (2015) point out that the advertisements or brand promotions, including a celebrity's endorsement, can yield dramatic influence on social media, which is positively accepted by customers. Moreover, the result also indicates that fast fashion brands also provide continuous support to their customers by listening and replying to what they have said on Sina Weibo. Labrecque *et al.* (2014) insist that facilitating direct interactions between brand and customers on social media can be considered as a successful marketing strategy to generate positive outcomes for both brand and customers.

The fifth component includes three items (AN01, CE03 and CE04) that all belong to the construct of consumer expertise (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). However, only two dimensions of consumer expertise (cognitive effort and analysis) remain in this construct. Extant studies have shown customers' cognitive effort and customers' analysis capability are the essential factors influencing customers' online engagement. Simon and Usunier (2007) found that customers' cognitive effort is related to customers' rational engagement in self-service technology. Barrutia *et al.* (2016) emphasise the effect of cognitive effort and analysis on consumer expertise in the research context of e-commerce shopping. Jiang *et al.* (2010) explicitly claimed that customers' cognitive and emotional effects play an important role in customers' involvement on websites. They further illustrated that the cognitive effect can be explained as a customer's rational thinking. In other words, this result indicates that the Chinese fast fashion shoppers who have higher cognitive effort and capabilities to conduct product analysis are more willing to engage in dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo.

In terms of the sixth component, three measurement items (RE01, RE02 and RE03), which were considered as remunerative contents (Azar *et al.*, 2016; De Vries *et al.*, 2017), were utilised. Thus, the result is consistent with the theoretical consideration, in which the remunerative posts were proved to be positively relevant to the popularity of social media content (Yang and Li, 2016; Dolan *et al.*, 2016; Luarn *et al.*, 2015; Jeon *et al.*, 2016; Muntings *et al.*, 2011). However, the entertainment variable was not extracted in EFA. Although previous studies have suggested the entertaining content that can produce hedonic benefits for customers should be deemed as one of the important topics on social media (Godey *et al.*, 2016; Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; De Vries *et al.*, 2012), the result of EFA implies that most of the respondents in this survey did not consider entertaining content as the same attractive and popular topic as the other content.

## (2) The reliability and validity of the remaining measurement items

In order to ensure the measurement items in EFA were accurate and consistent with the measuring variables, the reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity tests were conducted (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

The reliability test was undertaken to assess multi-item scales and ensure the selective measurement items demonstrated an acceptable level of homogeneity within the same construct (De Vaus, 2013). Generally, there are three main types of reliability scale (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003). The first is internal consistency, which means the homogeneity of measurement items within the same construct (Churchill, 1979; Bryman and Cramer, 1999). For example, there are four items (CE01, CE02, CE03, CE04) that have been selected to measure the latent variable of cognitive effort. The reliability test can ensure these items all represent the unified content. The second test is test-retest, which refers to the stability of measurement items that are responded to over time (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003). The final test is alternative-form reliability, which means the extent to which two different measurement items can be measured using the same variable at different times (Peter, 1979). In this step, the internal reliability of the measurement scales was assessed. To analyse the results from reliability test, three types of indices were chosen to evaluate the items.

First, **Cronbach's alpha** was used to select the appropriate items and remove the unsuitable items. This test indicates that if the values of Cronbach's alpha of the latent variable are equal or greater than 0.70, the selected items are considered as reliable to measure the same latent variable (DeVellis, 2012). However, Hair *et al.* (2010) specified that if the value is less than 0.70 but close to 0.70, it can also be accepted. Second, the **item-total correlation value** was also used to evaluate the reliability test's results. If an item's total correlation is less than 0.3, it indicates that it item is not internally consistent with the other observed variable and therefore, it should be removed (De Vaus, 2013). Lastly, Cronbach's alpha if the item deleted was checked to see if the observed item should be deleted. De Vaus (2013) stated that if Cronbach's alpha of the construct is less than 0.70 but increases to 0.70 after

deleting one item, then the item is not relevant to this construct and can be removed.

The result shows that the values of the Cronbach's alpha for the 20 measurement items were 0.853, which indicates those measurement items are reliable to be subjected to the next step of CFA. Furthermore, the Cronbach's alpha for each variable was tested individually. Table 8.3 presents the results of the reliability test for each variable and the other index, including the mean, standard deviation (SD), item-total correlation and communalities loading. According to the criteria, all measurement items passed the reliability assessment successfully.

Table 8.3: Reliability test for the main survey data

Construct	Sub-construct	Items	Cronbach's alpha	Item-total correlation	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
Consumer expertise	Cognitive effort	CE03	0.881	.760	5.24	1.595	.840
		CE04		.786	5.32	1.536	.815
	Analysis	AN01		.762	5.41	1.477	.837
Social expertise	Individual reference group	ID02	0.888	.732	4.48	1.535	.884
		ID03		.810	4.22	1.604	.817
		CO02		.807	4.31	1.637	.819
Organic e-WOM	Product/Brand information	PR01	0.836	.604	4.52	1.661	.820
	Transaction and delivery service.	TR01		.690	4.42	1.756	.783
		TR03		.698	4.60	1.583	.780
	Offline/online shopping experience	PH01		.679	4.88	1.615	.787
Amplified e-WOM	Brand interaction	PE04	.872	.740	5.12	1.338	.834
	Parasocial interaction	PA01		.782	5.33	1.312	.799
		PA02		.757	5.17	1.540	.827
Remuneration	Rewards	RE01	.869	.742	4.82	1.392	.822
		RE02		.772	4.71	1.523	.793
		RE03		.734	4.58	1.516	.826
Positive outcomes	Hedonic benefits	HE01	.818	.717	5.05	1.538	.723
		HE02		.521	4.82	1.602	.830
		HE04		.687	5.15	1.360	.752
	Purchase intention	PU03		.652	5.12	1.424	.765

Criteria: \* Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.60 (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

\* Item-total correlation greater than 0.30 (De Vaus, 2002).

Source: based on the results from the EFA in main survey.

In addition to the reliability test, the convergent validity (Cunningham *et al.*, 2001; Zikmund, 2003), which aims to assess whether the factors are highly correlated in the measuring model, was conducted. If the variable has high and sufficient factor loadings that are greater than 0.40, it can be considered as a valid factor. However, Zikmund (2003) pointed out that the factor loadings may be influenced by the survey sample size. If a survey sample size is larger than 200, the factor loadings should be higher than 0.40. Table 8.5 shows the pattern matrix, which indicates that all items achieved sufficient factor loadings.

Furthermore, discriminant validity (Hooper *et al.*, 2008), which refers to the assessment of the distinctiveness of each factor, was tested. If latent variables pass the discriminant validity test, it indicates that the selected factors are theoretically distinctive to measure the different items. Furthermore, discriminant validity aims to ensure that all items have been loaded solely in one construct and no cross-loading factors come up. In addition, the factor correlations should not be greater than 0.70, otherwise it implies these two factors are very similar. This test was conducted in next step of CFA.



## 8.6 Confirmatory factor analysis for main survey

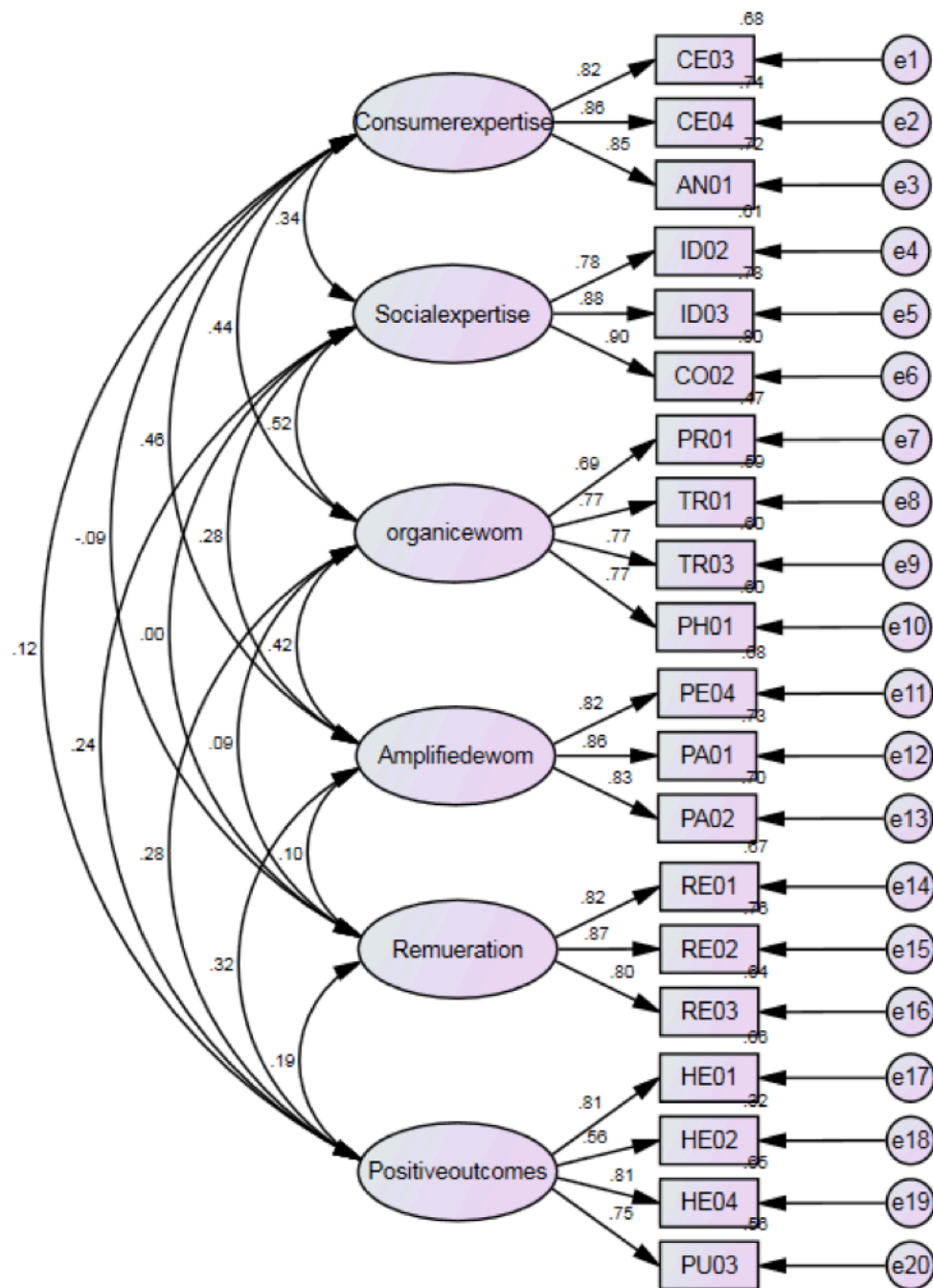
After a very clear factor structure was perceived from EFA, the confirmatory factor analysis (Schwartz and Boehnke, 2004) that was conducted in the subsequent step aimed to:

- (1) assess the factorial structure by evaluating a series of goodness-of-fit indices (Brown, 2014) (see Section 8.6.1);
- (2) statistically compute a set of observed variable loadings on their respective survey construct (see Section 8.6.2);
- (3) validate the survey constructs and the measuring variables in CFA (see Section 8.6.3);
- (4) specify the common method bias (see Section 8.6.4).

The entire CFA procedure was assessed using SPSS AMOS 23.0. The first step of CFA is to evaluate the model fit of the perceived factor structure and to validate each remaining variable from the EFA. The sample used for CFA was the same sample that was used to conduct EFA. Employing the same dataset to conduct CFA may result in the model overfitting. However, Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2006) suggest that it is better to divide the dataset into two groups and use the different groups of samples to conduct EFA and CFA respectively. However, Costello and Osborne (2005) argue that after splitting the dataset, the small sample size will also affect the reliability of the results. Therefore, he suggests the findings should be confirmed by a large sample size. According to Costello and Osborne's (2005) argument, it was decided to use the same dataset to conduct CFA at this stage.

The **maximum likelihood estimation (MLE)** was employed in this study as it is considered the most common technique to estimate the model fit for the measuring model and to test the relationships in the factor structural model (Kleinbaum and Klein, 2010). The MLE is a method used to minimise the difference between the theoretical estimated correlation and the observed correlation of the factor structure. A variety of previous studies claim that MLE is relatively stable and robust to evaluate the measurement model by referring its parameter (Jöreskog, 1969; Hair *et al.*, 2010; Kleinbaum and Klein 2010). Therefore, the MLE method was appropriate to use for the evaluation of CFA and the structural path model in this study. Figure 8.1 presents the correlational model that arose from CFA. The next section introduces the variety of criteria to evaluate the level of model fit

Figure 8.1: The correlational model from CFA



Source: Based on the result of CFA

### 8.6.1 Goodness-of-Fit Indices

This section introduces a series of criteria used to evaluate the model fit for the factor structure. Model fit refers to how well the measuring variables correlate to each other (Mulaik *et al.*, 1989; Cheung and Rensvold, 2002). A good model exists when the correlations and covariance between the measuring variables significantly

fit (Hoelter, 1983). In addition to the principal goodness-of-fit index, there are a number of different indices recommended to be calculated in AMOS and to evaluate the goodness of model fit. Generally, the goodness-of-fit indices have been classified as **absolute fit indices, incremental fit indices and parsimony fit indices** (Hooper *et al.*, 2008; Marsh *et al.*, 1996). Table 8.4 lists the applied model fit indices and their abbreviations, as well as the acceptable level of each index along with its reference. It also presents the values of different indices for this measuring model. As Marsh (1996) noted, the sample size and the number of measuring variables will influence the model fit and thus, the accepted level of different indices should be considered as a guideline rather than an absolute evaluation standard.

Table 8 4: Summary of the model fit indices that applied in CFA.

Model fit indices	Abbreviation	Type	Accepted Level	Reference	The value of this model
Chi-Square	$\chi^2$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model fit</li> </ul>	$P > 0.05$	Hair <i>et al.</i> (2010)	$P=0.000$
Normed Chi-Square	$\chi^2 / df$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absolute</li> <li>Parsimony</li> </ul>	$1 < \chi^2 / df < 3$	Cheung and Rensvold (2002); Hair <i>et al.</i> (2010)	$\chi^2 / df = 1.924$
Goodness-of-Fit	GFI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absolute</li> </ul>	$GFI > 0.90$ good  $GFI > 0.80$ accepted	Hair <i>et al.</i> (2010)	$GFI = 0.930$
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit	AGFI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absolute</li> </ul>	$AGFI > 0.90$	Anderson and Gerbing (1984)	$AGFI = 0.905$
Tucker-Lewis Index	TLI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incremental</li> </ul>	$TLI > 0.95$	Marsh <i>et al.</i> (1996)	$TLI = 0.958$
Comparative Fit Index	CFI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incremental</li> </ul>	$CFI > 0.95$ Great  $CFI > 0.90$ Accepted	Hooper <i>et al.</i> , (2008)	$CFI = 0.966$
Normed Fit Index	NFI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incremental</li> </ul>	$NFI > 0.90$	Bollen (1989)	$NFI = 0.932$
Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation	RMSEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absolute</li> </ul>	$RMSEA < 0.05$	Hair <i>et al.</i> (2010)	$RMSEA = 0.048$
Standardised Root Mean Squared Residual	SRMR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absolute</li> </ul>	$SRMR < 0.05$ Good  $SRMR < 0.08$	Schumacker and Lomax (2012)	$SRMR = 0.0408$

			Moderate		
Consistent Akaike Information Criterion	CAIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parsimony</li> </ul>	No specific defined	Hooper <i>et al.</i> , (2008)	CAIC = 682.957

Source: based on the relevant literatures

### **Absolute fit indices**

Absolute fit indices aim to evaluate whether the theoretical model is able to be applied to the data set (Hooper *et al.*, 2008). In order to assess the goodness of the model, six types of indices were measured using SPSS AMOS 23.0: the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), the normed chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ), the goodness of fit index (GFI), the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the standardised root mean squared residual index (SRMR).

#### **(1) The chi-square index ( $\chi^2$ )**

The chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) is the major statistic used to measure the model fit (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Cheung and Rensvold, 2002). It usually assesses the p-value of the chi-square. If  $p > 0.05$ , this model can be proved as a good fit. Conversely, if  $p < 0.05$ , the model is proposed as a poor fit. However, the sample size of the data set will significantly influence the chi-square (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The above standard only suits a sample size between 100 and 200 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). If the sample size is larger than 200, the p-value normally responds as less than 0.05 (Hooper *et al.*, 2008). The sample size of this study is 401, which indicates that the p-value must be shown as significant. Therefore, the additional indices should be applied to evaluate the model fit.

#### **(2) The normed chi-square index ( $\chi^2/df$ )**

The normed chi-square is another index used to measure the model fit. It calculates the chi-square divided by the degree of freedom (df) (Hair *et al.*, 2010). It is suggested that the values of the normed chi-square are better around 1 and 3. The normed chi-square for this model is 1.924, which indicates the measuring model is fit.

#### **(3) The goodness of fit index**

The GFI is an essential statistic that is considered as the most reliable criteria to evaluate the fitness of the measuring model (Hair *et al.*, 2010). As this index is less sensitive to sample size and can evaluate a number of variances and covariances produced by the model, it suits to assess different measuring models. According to Hair *et al.*, (2010), a GFI value greater than 0.90 implies the model is a good fit. GFI values between 0.80 and 0.90 can be considered as a reasonable fit, while if the value is less than 0.80, the fitness of the model is rejected. The GFI value for this measuring model is 0.930, which proves it is a good fit.

#### **(4) The adjusted goodness of fit index**

The AGFI is a statistic related to GFI, which is adjusted by the degree of freedom of the measuring model (Anderson and Gerbing, 1984; Hair *et al.*, 2010). The minimum accepted level of AGFI is 0.80. However, Hair *et al.* (2010) suggest that the value of AGFI is better if it is greater than 0.90. The result shows that the AGFI value for this measuring model is 0.905, which indicates this model is accepted as a good fit.

#### **(5) The root mean square error of approximation**

Another index used to measure model fit is the RMSEA (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The RMSEA aims to measure the discrepancy between the hypothesised model and the observed model divided by df (Hair *et al.*, 2010). To prove the fitness of the model, the values of RMSEA should be less than 0.05 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). The value of RMSEA for this measuring model is 0.048, which indicates this model is a good fit.

#### **(6) The standardised root mean squared residual index**

Similar to RMSEA, the SRMR is another statistic used to evaluate the badness-of-fit of the measuring model (Schumacker and Lomax, 2012; Hair *et al.*, 2010). The SRMR measures the square root of the difference between the postulated and observed covariance matrix (Hu and Bentler, 1999). RMR values should be less than 0.05, otherwise the measuring model cannot be considered as a fit model. The result of SRMR for this model is 0.0408, which proves this model is accepted as a fit model.

### **Incremental fit indices**

The incremental fit indices aim to compare the chi-square difference between the hypothesised and the 'null' models (Bollen, 1989). The accepted level of the incremental fit indices is higher than the other indices. Generally, there are three types of measures belonging to the incremental fit indices, as outlined below.

#### **(1) The Tucker–Lewis index**

The Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) is also called the non-normed fit index (NNFI), which refers to comparing the difference between the measuring model and the null model (baseline model) (Marsh *et al.*, 1996; Hair *et al.*, 2010). Values of TLI greater than 0.95 are considered as acceptable. The result of the TLI for this measuring model is 0.958, which can be deemed as reasonably accepted.

#### **(2) The normed fit index**

The normed fit index (NFI) calculates the comparison between the hypothesised model and the baseline model but does not take the degree of freedom of the model into account (Bollen, 1989; Hair *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, Hair *et al.* (2010) indicate that the values of NFI are sensitively influenced by the sample size. It is suggested that NFI values should be greater than 0.90. The result of NFI for this measuring model is 0.932.

#### **(3) The comparative fit index**

The comparative fit index (CFI) is an improved version of the NFI (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The values of CFI should greater than 0.95. If the values of CFI are close to 1, it

implies the model is very fit. According to the result of CFA, the CFI value of this measuring model is 0.966.

### **Parsimony fit indices**

Parsimony fit indices usually evaluate the relative complexity of the model by calculating the model's fitness in proportion to a set of estimated parameters (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The consistent Akaike information criterion (CAIC) is commonly used to measure the model's parsimony (Hooper *et al.*, 2008).

#### **(1) Consistent Akaike information criterion**

CAIC is used to evaluate whether a model is parsimonious (Hooper *et al.*, 2008). If the value of CAIC increases, it means the model is less parsimonious. There is no accepted range for this index. However, Hooper *et al.* (2008) suggest that the model that produces a lower CAIC value compared to another model can be considered as fitter.

In summary, the overview of the different indices employed to measure the model fit in this study indicates that this measuring model is a reasonable fit as the accepted level for all applied indices was achieved. Appendix 10 includes the original model fit indices generated by SPSS AMOS 23.0.

### **8.6.2 One-factor congeneric measurement models**

The aim of one-factor congeneric measurement models is to calculate the factor score weights on its respective constructs, which can further confirm the factor structure that came from the EFA (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). As six components (consumer expertise, social expertise, organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, remuneration and positive outcomes) were extracted in the EFA, six one-factor congeneric measurement models were tested individually using SPSS AMOS 23.0. In order to ensure the convergent validity of the observed variables, the minimum accepted score weight for each item is 0.5 (Schreiber *et al.*, 2006). Moreover, consistent with the CFA, a set of goodness-of-fit indices, including the absolute fit indices, the incremental fit indices and the parsimony fit indices, were employed to assess the model fit of each one-factor congeneric measurement model.

Prior to computing the different indices for assessing the model fit, two mandatory preconditions suggested by Kline (2005) should be outlined:

1. the degrees of freedom for the model should be greater than 0;
2. a higher number of observed variables is required ( $n > 3$ ).

This is because the model fit cannot be tested in CFA if the degree of freedom is equal to 0. In addition, if there are only three observed variables to measure a latent variable, the empirical data for this one-factor congeneric measurement model is three variances and three covariances. According to the maximum likelihood setting, the variance of the latent variable is fixed to 1. Therefore, the degrees of freedom are 0 in this one-factor congeneric model. As there are four latent variables in this study, that only have three observed items (i.e., the latent variables of consumer expertise, social expertise, amplified e-WOM and remuneration), accordingly, only

two latent variables (i.e., organic e-WOM and positive outcomes) can be subjected to test the one-factor congeneric model. The results of assessing the one-factor congeneric measurement models for each construct are presented in Appendix 11.

According to the acceptable level of different goodness-of-fit indices introduced in Section 8.6.1, the results indicate that all models present a good model fit. Several indices (e.g., CFI, TLI) for some models even equal 1, which indicates that the model was perfectly fit (Hair *et al.*, 2010). In the one-factor congeneric measurement model, this is commonly acceptable if some indices indicate the model is overfit (Hoyle, 1995; Hair *et al.*, 2010). More importantly, the results provided the evidence that each observed variable had achieved the minimum score weights (greater than 0.50) on its respective construct (see Table 8.5). In conclusion, the measuring model, along with the observed variables, passed the assessment in this step. This indicates that the observed variables were appropriate to be tested in SEM and the hypothesised relationships.



Table 8.5: Results of the factor loadings for each item on its latent variable

Latent variables	Observed variables	Factor loadings	t-value
Consumer expertise	CE03	0.828	
	CE04	0.870	18.875
	AN01	0.833	18.361
Social expertise	ID02	0.778	
	ID03	0.892	18.650
	CO02	0.888	18.621
Organic e-WOM	PR01	0.659	
	TR01	0.757	12.633
	TR03	0.799	12.400
	PH01	0.784	12.120
Amplified e-WOM	PE04	0.809	
	PA01	0.871	18.066
	PA02	0.813	17.622
Remuneration	RE01	0.818	
	RE02	0.867	17.724
	RE03	0.805	17.704
Positive outcomes	HE01	0.817	
	HE02	0.569	11.216
	HE04	0.808	15.471
	PU03	0.743	14.211

Source: Based on the results of CFA in one-factor congeneric measurement model

### 8.6.3 Validity and reliability of the survey constructs from CFA

Although the observed variables were tested and validated in EFA, an assessment of the convergent and discriminant validity and composite reliability for the latent constructs in CFA was required (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

**Convergent validity** aims to detect the correlation between the observed variables for the respective construct and confirm that the measurement items to measure the latent construct have been selected correctly (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Convergent validity is tested through computing the average variance extracted (AVE) according to the following formula:

$$p_{vc(\eta)} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_{yi}^2}{\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_{yi}^2 + \sum_{i=1}^p \text{Var}(\epsilon_i)}$$

In this formula, P is number of the measurement items,  $\lambda$  is the factor loadings of measurement item i. and  $\text{Var}(\epsilon_i)$  is the variance error of measurement item i. Based on this formula, the item's loading on its respective construct crucially influences the

results of AVE (pvc). The test of one-factor congeneric measurement models proved that all the observed variables had high score weights on their respective latent variable. The minimum accepted level of AVE is 0.5, which means the observed variables account for a larger amount of variance than the non-estimated measurement error (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

**Discriminant validity** aims to assess the degree of distinctiveness between the latent variables (Voorhees *et al.*, 2016; Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The valid constructs should be theoretically different and statistically uncorrelated. The assessment of discriminant validity is achieved through calculation of the correlations between each construct. The correlations between the latent variables should not exceed 0.70.

**Composite reliability** is slightly different to the reliability test in EFA, which is achieved by calculating Cronbach's alpha, while the composite reliability test measures the item's factor loadings and its error variances based on the following formula (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The accepted level of the composite reliability of each construct is higher than 0.70. Table 8.6 summarises the results of AVE, CR and correlation matrix of each survey construct. Based on the results, all the latent variables have passed the reliability and validity test. The standard regression weights of each observed variable on their respective constructs and the correlations between the constructs calculated using SPSS AMOS 23.0.

$$p_{\eta} = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_{yi})^2}{(\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_{yi})^2 + \sum_{i=1}^p \text{Var}(\epsilon_i)}$$

Table 8.6: Results of convergent and discriminant validity and composit reliability for the latent constructs

Constructs	CR	AVE	MaxR(H)	Consumer expertise	Social expertise	Organic e-WOM	Amplified e-WOM	Remuneration	Positive outcomes
Consumer expertise	0.716	0.716	0.716						
Social expertise	0.890	0.730	0.901	0.345					
Organic e-WOM	0.839	0.566	0.842	0.443	0.525				
Amplified e-WOM	0.875	0.701	0.876	0.459	0.279	0.420			
Remuneration	0.869	0.549	0.874	-0.086	-0.001	0.093	0.101		
Positive outcomes	0.827	0.747	0.848	0.120	0.239	0.282	0.317	0.191	\

Source: Based on the results from the calculations.

#### **8.6.4 Common method bias**

Common method bias is a potential issue caused by a set of systematic measurement errors in factor analysis (Siemsen *et al.*, 2010). In other words, if a single factor can explain a majority of variance (large than 50%), it means common method bias exists in the data set. As this issue influences the correct assessment of the relationships between the latent constructs, it is necessary to conduct a test to identify this potential problem. Harman's single-factor test is the most commonly-used technique in SPSS 23.0 to detect the common method bias. To use this technique, the final 20 measurement items from the EFA were selected. Next, the number of factors extracted was set as one. The results of the non-rotation type of one-factor solution showed that 28.17% of variance was extracted by one factor, which indicates common method bias is not an issue in this data set.

### **8.7 Structural equation modelling**

The EFA and CFA procedures validated the observed and latent variables. This section aims to devise a structural path model through testing the hypothetical relationships between the constructs (Schumacker and Lomax, 2012).

#### **8.7.1 Model identification**

Prior to testing the structural equation model, the model should be identified by evaluating two criteria (Breckler, 1990): (1) whether the number of observed variables is equal to the free model parameters; and (2) whether each unobserved construct has an observed variable. A model is considered as unidentified if criterion 1 has not been achieved. AMOS cannot provide any estimates if the model is not identified. In other words, if the model fulfils the first criteria, it may be a just-identified model or an over-identified model. This depends on whether the number of distinct sample moment is equal or more than the number of distinct parameters to be estimated. If it is equal, the model can be considered as a 'just-identified' model. Otherwise, the model is deemed to be an over-identified model. Based on the result, the structural path model in this study is an over-identified model and, as such, positive degrees of model freedom exist.

#### **8.7.2 Multivariate assumptions**

In order to conceive a stable structural path model, it is necessary to detect the multicollinearity and homoscedasticity of the data set (Hair *et al.*, 2010). These tests can be completed using SPSS.

Multicollinearity refers to two or more independent variables that are highly correlated (Grewal *et al.*, 2004). It is common to see small degrees of multicollinearity existing in a structural path model. However, a high degree of multicollinearity will influence the relationships between independent variables and dependent variables (Hair *et al.*, 2010). A common method employed to detect the potential issue caused by multicollinearity is computing the variance inflation factor (VIF) in SPSS (Grewal *et al.*, 2004). If the value of VIF is greater than five, it indicates there is a multicollinearity issue. According to the results, none of the VIF values

were higher than three. Therefore, there is no significant issue of multicollinearity in this model.

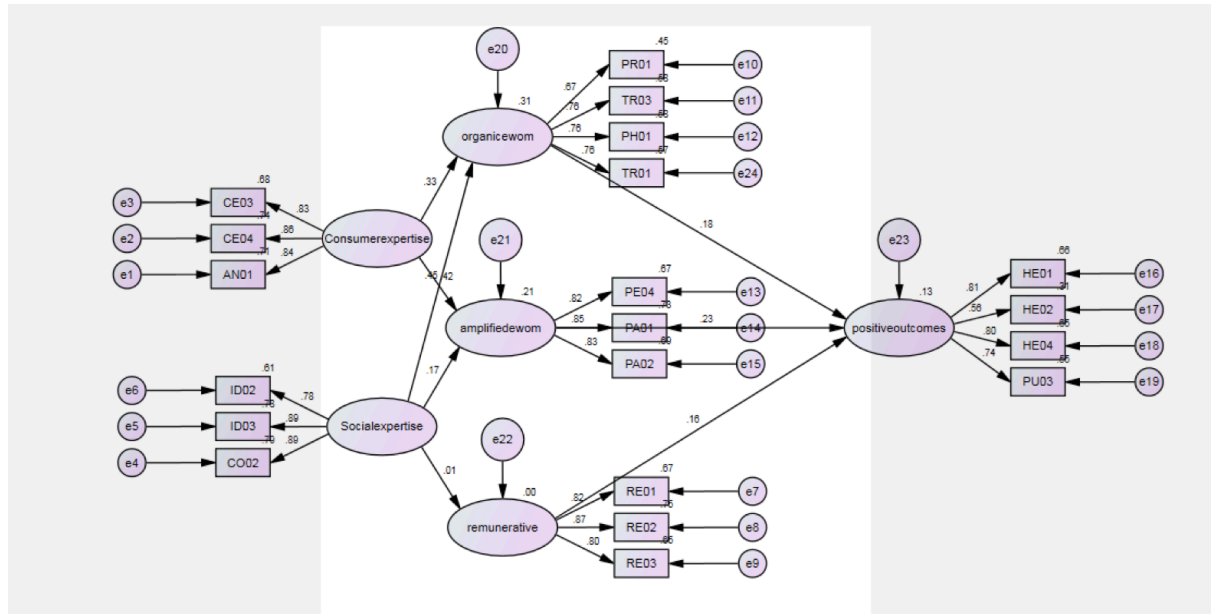
The issue caused by homoscedasticity exists when the variables' residuals do not have a constant variance in the data set (Jarque and Bera, 1980). The scatterplots provided by SPSS did not locate any heteroscedasticity issues. In addition, the Levene test was conducted and the results indicate that the variances were not statistically different. Therefore, there are no heteroscedasticity issues in this data set.

### **8.7.3 The structural path model**

After the process of model identification and testing the multivariate assumptions, this section presents the final structural path model and assesses its overall model fit using AMOS 23.0. A set of goodness-of-fit indices (as discussed in Section 8.6.1) is employed to assess the fit of the conceptual model that was developed based on the literature review. Figure 8.2 shows the initial structural path model and presents the results of the model fit indices.

Although the conceptual model has been justified through the literature review and has been preliminarily evaluated in qualitative study, some of the goodness-of-fit indices did not achieve the acceptable level of the model fit. The indices  $\chi^2/df$  (=2.278), GFI (=0.917), CFI (=0.951), TLI (=0.942) and NFI (=0.916) imply a good fit for the conceptual model, while AGFI (=0.893) was very close to 0.9 but did not meet the criteria. More seriously, RMSEA (0.057) and SMRM (0.0853) were slightly higher than the good model fit level. Therefore, in order to achieve a fitter and more parsimonious structural path model, an investigation of model modification indices using AMOS 23.0 was considered necessary (Hoyle, 1995).

Figure 8.2: Initial structural path model with the results of the model fit indices



$\chi^2$  chi-square = 368.985

Degree of freedom: 162

GFI = 0.917 (GFI > 0.9)

CFI = 0.951 (CFI > 0.95)

NFI = 0.916 (NFI > 0.9)

SMRM = 0.0853 (SMRM < 0.08)

$\chi^2/df$  = 2.278 ( $1 < \chi^2/df < 3$ )

P value = .000

AGFI = 0.893 (AGFI > 0.9)

TLI = 0.942 (TLI > 0.942)

CAIC = 704.695

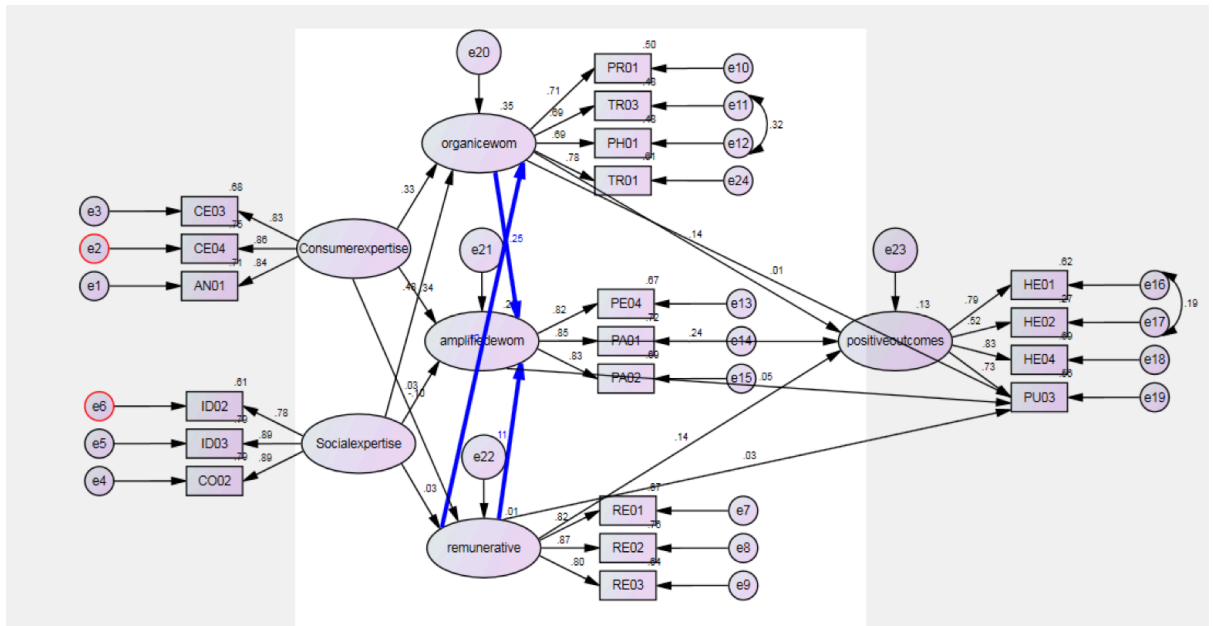
RMSEA = 0.057 (RMSEA < 0.05)

#### 8.7.4 Re-modified model

The process of re-modifying the initial structural path model followed the stepwise approach through consideration of the model modification indices provided by AMOS 23.0 (Byrne, 2016). The modification indices help to improve the chi-square value of the model by fixing the parameter of a specific path in the model (Byrne, 2016). In other words, the modification indices can assist the researcher to discover the potential and non-estimated relationships between the latent constructs that have not been hypothesised in literature review. With the higher modification indices included in the initial structural path model, a higher level of the model fit can be achieved. Notably, achieving a best fitting model is not the main research aim; thus, if the new relationships cannot be theoretically justified or cannot be suited in the research context, they will not be considered (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

After checking the modification indices, there were three additional paths to be added in the structural path model. The first path was from the **organic e-WOM to amplified e-WOM** construct. The second path was established from the construct of **remuneration to amplified e-WOM**. The third path was built from the construct of **remuneration to organic e-WOM**.

Figure 8.3: Updated structural path model within a set of goodness-of-fit indices.



$\chi^2$  chi-square = 308.322

Degree of freedom: 153

GFI = 0.930 (GFI > 0.9)

CFI = 0.963 (CFI > 0.95)

NFI = 0.930 (NFI > 0.9)

SMRM = 0.0746 (SMRM < 0.08)

$\chi^2/df = 2.015$  ( $1 < \chi^2/df < 3$ )

P value = .000

AGFI = 0.904 (AGFI > 0.9)

TLI = 0.954 (TLI > 0.9)

CAIC = 706.978

RMSEA = 0.050 (RMSEA < 0.05)

In terms of the updated structural path model, a set of goodness-of-fit indices indicate that the model is fitter than the initial one. In particular, the SMRM value has decreased to an acceptable level. Similarly, other indices have been improved, such as the GFI (0.922), AGFI (0.897), CFI (0.956), TLI (0.947) and NFI (0.921).

In terms of the three identified paths, the additional hypotheses were developed based on the results from the re-modified model and the results from the netnographic study (see Chapter 7).

#### First path: organic e-WOM → amplified e-WOM

The informational contents were classified as organic e-WOM and amplified e-WOM that were disseminated by brands, customers and other users on social media (Kulmala *et al.*, 2013; Tsai, 2013; Ballantine *et al.*, 2015). Hennig-Thurau *et al.* (2004) proposed that the contents of organic e-WOM include sharing personal shopping experiences, seeking purchase advice, helping others to solve product-related problems, discussing product/brand-related information. The contents of amplified e-WOM are related to the para-social interactions with brands, celebrities or fashion bloggers (Kulmala *et al.*, 2013; Ballantine *et al.*, 2015). However, some scholars

argued that there is not a significant difference between organic e-WOM content and amplified e-WOM content (De Matos and Rossi 2008; Saravanakumar and Lakshmi 2012). According to the quantitative results of this study, there is a potential relationship between the content of organic e-WOM and the content of amplified e-WOM. Specifically, the content of organic e-WOM will induce customers to consume the content of amplified e-WOM. Furthermore, based on the findings of the netnographic study, the researcher found that most of the brand-generated posts not only included one type of content, but mixed with a variety of types of content. The different types of content inosculate in one post and attract customers to engage in the discussions. Therefore, a new hypothesis was proposed based on this justification.

H7: the content of organic e-WOM will induce customers to engage in the dialogic co-creation related to the content of amplified e-WOM.

### **Second path: remuneration → organic e-WOM**

The remunerative content of the brand-generated posts mainly focus on the economic incentives provided by brands for customers (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011; de Vries *et al.*, 2017; Azar *et al.*, 2016). Although Muntinga *et al.* (2011) proposed that the remunerative activities on social media are usually associated with the social interactions, very few studies have hypothesised and tested the relationship between the content of remuneration and organic e-WOM. According to the findings from the netnographic study, 28 pieces of the collected brand-generated hot posts have mixed the topic of remuneration and organic e-WOM in one post (see Figure 6.4). This indicates that the economic rewards (e.g. prizes, gifts) may induce customers to engage in the dialogic co-creation related to the organic e-WOM content. Thus, the following hypothesis was generated.

H8: the remunerative content has a positive effect on influencing customers engaging in dialogic co-creation related to organic e-WOM.

### **Third path: remuneration → amplified e-WOM**

There are very few empirical studies that have proposed and examined the relationship between the social media content of remuneration and the content of amplified e-WOM. The statistical result of this quantitative study indicates that the economic incentives or financial compensations may attract more customers to engage in the interactions with brands or celebrities. In addition, the netnographic findings supported this hypothesis as there are 31 pieces of brand-generated posts containing the content of remuneration and amplified e-WOM. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed.

H9: remunerative content has a positive effect on influencing customers engaging in dialogic co-creation related to amplified e-WOM.

In conclusion, the structural path model has been modified by means of statistical testing and theoretical considerations. Three additional paths were added to the



conceptual model. However, it is worth noting that these new paths could not be considered as final confirmation; they were deemed to be exploratory findings. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct a further validation process for the established paths using a new data set (Byrne, 2016). Given the modified structural path model with a good model fit, the updated structural path model was considered as qualified for the hypotheses test in the next step. The findings for the coefficients of each path and evaluation of the hypotheses are provided in detail in the next section.

## 8.8 Results of testing the hypotheses

The hypothesised causal relationships between two latent constructs was tested. According to Byrne (2016), when the coefficients of the supposed path that connect two latent variables is not equal to 0, it indicates the relationship between two latent variables is either positively or negatively supported. Table 8.11 summarises the results of each hypothesis test and its standardised estimates of path coefficients. This table also introduces the independent variable and dependent variable related to each hypothesised path. Moreover, it includes the path coefficients of the **standardised direct effect, indirect effect and total effect**, which concludes the complete effect from one variable to another variable. Byrne (2016) suggests that it is valuable to consider the standardised total effect of each path as it enables a holistic understanding of each causal relationship in the conceptual model. In addition, the **critical ratio** and the **significance level** of each path's direct effect is presented in Table 8.7.

According to Table 8.7, the results of the updated structural path model provide the evidence for the majority of proposed hypotheses, while six hypotheses have been rejected. As the construct of entertainment was not extracted successfully in the EFA, the relevant hypotheses (H2c, H5a and H5c) must be rejected. In addition, H2b, H3b and H6b must be rejected due to the non-significance between the constructs.

In summary, the majority of proposed relationships between the antecedent factors, different types of dialogic co-creation activities and the positive outcomes have been confirmed. The specific hypotheses with their path coefficients and significance level will be discussed respectively in the following section.

Figure 8.4: Updated structural path model with the established and additional hypotheses

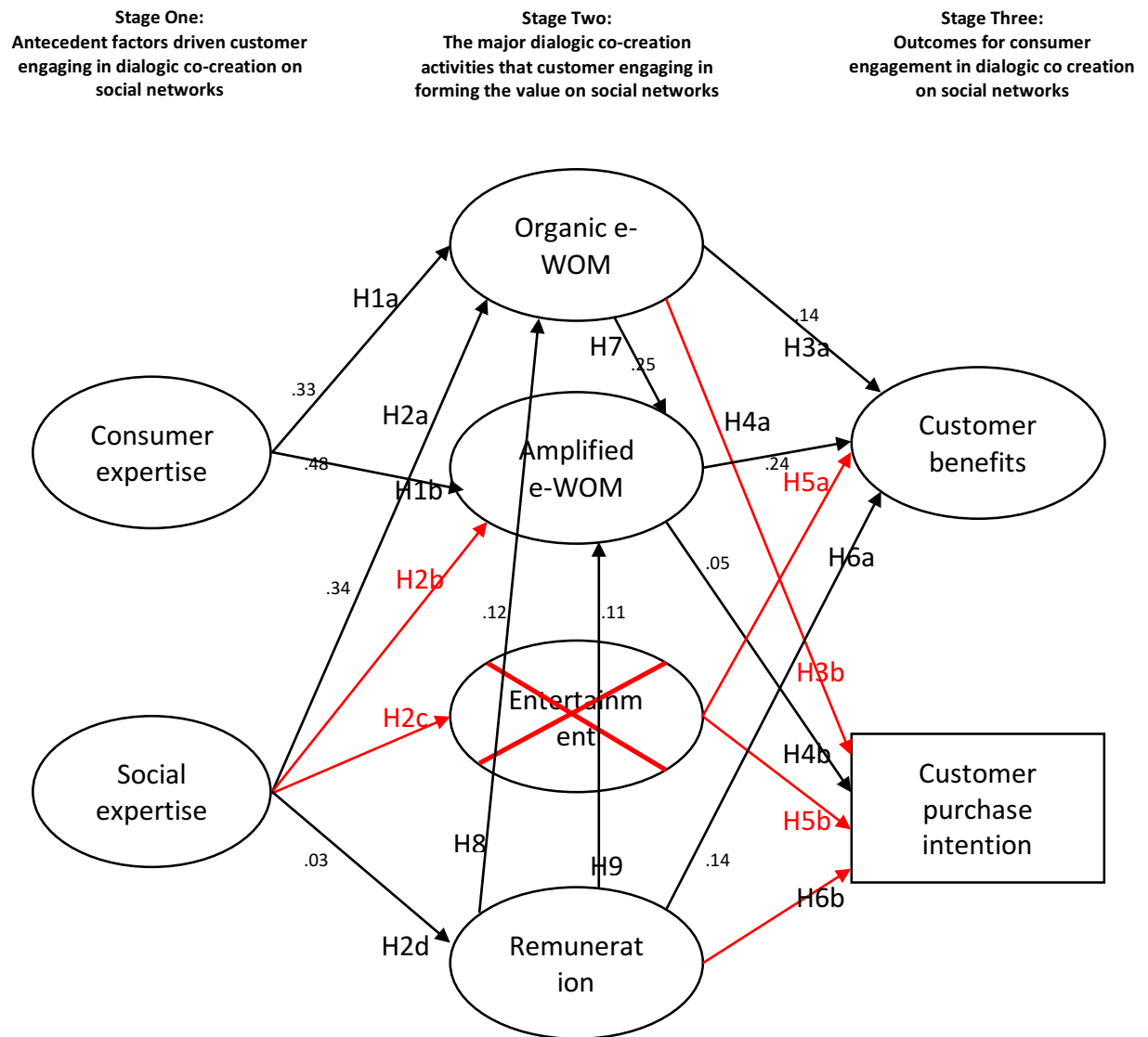


Table 8.7: Results of each hypotheses test

Hypotheses	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Standardised Effects			Critical Radio	Significance level	Support
			Direct	Indirect	Total			
H1a	Consumer expertise	Organic e-WOM	.328	.000	.328	5.956	***	Yes
H1b	Consumer expertise	Amplified e-WOM	.348	.076	.424	5.938	***	Yes
H2a	Social expertise	Organic e-WOM	.447	.000	.447	7.776	***	Yes
H2b	Social expertise	Amplified e-WOM	.052	.104	.156	.871		No
H2c	Social expertise	Entertainment	\	\	\	\	\	No
H2d	Social expertise	Remuneration	.035	.000	.035	1.576	*	Yes
H3a	Organic e-WOM	Positive outcomes	.177	.046	.223	2.724	**	Yes
H3b	Organic e-WOM	Purchase intention	-.005	.177	.172	-.099		No
H4a	Amplified e-WOM	Positive outcomes	.198	.000	.198	3.112	**	Yes
H4b	Amplified e-WOM	Purchase intention	.074	.142	.216	1.623	*	Yes
H5a	Entertainment	Positive outcomes	\	\	\	\	\	No
H5b	Entertainment	Purchase intention	\	\	\	\	\	No
H6a	Remuneration	Positive outcomes	.145	.048	.193	2.523	*	Yes
H6b	Remuneration	Purchase intention	.026	.148	.175	.640		No
H7	Remuneration	Organic e-WOM	.120	.000	.120	2.325	*	Yes
H8	Organic e-WOM	Amplified e-WOM	.232	.000	.232	3.345	***	Yes
H9	Remuneration	Amplified e-WOM	.107	.028	.135	2.025	*	Yes

Source: Based on the results from AMOS.

Significance level: \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; No \*  $p > \text{or} = 0.05$

Bootstrap=2000; Confidence level: 96%

According to Table 8.7, the results of the updated structural path model provide the evidence for supporting the majority of proposed hypotheses, while six hypotheses have been rejected. As the construct of entertainment have not been extracted successfully in EFA, the relevant hypotheses (H2c, H5a and H5c) have to be rejected. H2b, H3b and H6b have to be rejected due to the non-significance between the constructs. To sum up, the majority of proposed relationships between the antecedent factors, different types of dialogic co-creation activities and the positive outcomes have been confirmed. The specific hypotheses with their path coefficients and significance level will be discussed respectively as follows.

**H1a: Consumer expertise will have a positive effect on driving customers to engage in organic e-WOM on a SNS.**

The result of this hypothesis test reveals that the antecedent factor of consumer expertise has very high positive effect on motivating customers to engage in organic e-WOM on an SNS. The beta coefficient of the direct effect is 0.328 with a high significance level ( $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, this hypothesis is supported.

**H1b: Consumer expertise will have a positive effect on driving customers to engage in amplified e-WOM on a SNS.**

Likewise, strong positive support emerged for this hypothesis due to the high direct effect ( $\beta = 0.348$ ) from consumer expertise on motivating customers to engage in amplified e-WOM on a SNS. In addition, it has a very high significance level of  $p < 0.001$ . Thus, H1b is considered as supported.

**H2a: Social expertise will have a positive effect on driving customers to engage in organic e-WOM on a SNS.**

The association between social expertise and driving customers to engage in organic e-WOM on a SNS was confirmed as a highly significant level ( $p < 0.001$ ) and high beta coefficient for the direct effect ( $\beta = 0.447$ ). Based on this evidence, H2a is supported.

**H2b: Social expertise will have a positive effect on driving customers to engage in amplified e-WOM on a SNS.**

Although the antecedent factor of social expertise has very strong direct and indirect effects on motivating customers to engage in amplified e-WOM on a SNS, it has a very low significance level ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, this hypothesis is not supported.

**H2c: Social expertise will have a positive effect on driving customers to engage in entertainment activities on a SNS.**

As the types of entertainment activities were not extracted in the EFA of the main survey data, this hypothesis cannot be tested in SEM. Accordingly, the association between the antecedent factor of social expertise and driving customers to engage in entertainment activities on a SNS is not found.

**H2d: Social expertise will have a positive effect on driving customers to engage in remunerative activities on a SNS.**

Support for this hypothesis is accepted according to the result. Social expertise has a positive direct effect ( $\beta = 0.035$ ) on customer engagement in remunerative activities. Although the significance level is not very high ( $p < 0.05$ ), it can be accepted.

**H3a: Customers engaging in positive organic e-WOM activities on a SNS will increase customers' perception of utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal benefits.**

With evidence of a high direct effect ( $\beta = 0.177$ ) and medium significance level ( $p < 0.01$ ), this hypothesis is supported. Notably, as the only extracted factor for the construct of customer benefits after EFA and CFA in the main survey study was hedonic benefits, H3a should be revised: customers engaging in the positive organic e-WOM activities on a SNS increases customers' perception of hedonic benefits.

**H3b: Customers engaging in positive organic e-WOM activities on a SNS will enhance customer purchase intention.**

As there was a negative effect ( $\beta = -0.05$ ) between positive organic e-WOM activities and customer purchase intention and no significant level for this hypothesis, customers engaging in positive organic e-WOM activities on a SNS will not increase customer purchase intention.

**H4a: Customers engaging in positive amplified e-WOM activities on a SNS will increase customers' perception of utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal benefits.**

As the beta coefficients of the direct effect equal 0.198 and the medium significance level of this hypothesis, customers engaging in positive amplified e-WOM activities on a SNS increases customers' perception of hedonic benefits is indicated. Therefore, H4a is considered as supported.

**H4b: Customers engaging in positive amplified e-WOM activities on a SNS will enhance customer purchase intention.**

The result shows that there are both direct and indirect effects between customers engaging in positive amplified e-WOM activities and customer purchase intention. Moreover, there is a medium significance level for this hypothesis. Thus, H4b is supported by the statistical test.

**H5a: Customers engaging in entertainment activities on a SNS will increase customers' perception of utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal benefits.**

Similar to the previous explanation outlined in H2c, the hypotheses related to entertainment activities will not be tested. Therefore, the proposed relationship between customers engaging in entertainment activities on a SNS and customers' perception of hedonic benefits is not supported.

**H5b: Customers engaging in entertainment activities on a SNS will enhance customer purchase intention.**

The result of H5b is consistent with the result of H5a. The relationship between customers engaging in entertainment activities on a SNS and customers' purchase intention was not tested. Thus, the hypothesis cannot be supported.

**H6a: Customers engaging in remunerative activities on a SNS will increase customer's perception of utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal benefits.**

Remunerative activities have been found to positively influence customers' perception of hedonic benefits. The beta coefficients of direct effect and total effect are 0.145 and 0.193 respectively. It also has an accepted significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis that customers engaging in remunerative activities on a SNS will increase customers' perception of hedonic benefits is confirmed.

**H6b: Customers engaging in remunerative activities on a SNS will enhance customer purchase intention.**

Although remunerative activities have both direct and indirect effects on customer purchase intention, there is a low significance level for this hypothesis. Therefore, customers engaging in remunerative activities on a SNS will not increase customer purchase intention.

**H7: The content of organic e-WOM will induce customers to engage in the dialogic co-creation related to the content of amplified e-WOM on a SNS.**

The positive direct effect ( $\beta = 0.120$ ) of organic e-WOM on amplified e-WOM and accepted significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicates that the content of organic e-WOM will induce customers to engage in the dialogic co-creation related to the content of amplified e-WOM on a SNS. Thus, H7 is supported.

**H8: The remunerative content has a positive effect on influencing customers engaging in dialogic co-creation related to organic e-WOM on a SNS.**

According to the results, the remunerative content has a very high positive effect on influencing customers engaging in dialogic co-creation related to organic e-WOM on a SNS. The beta coefficient of direct effect is 0.232 and the significance level is strongly high ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**H9: The remunerative content has a positive effect on influencing customers engaging in dialogic co-creation related to amplified e-WOM on a SNS.**

The association between remunerative content and amplified e-WOM is accepted as there is a positive direct effect ( $\beta = 0.107$ ) of remunerative content on amplified e-WOM and an accepted significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ). In other words, the remunerative content will reduce customers engaging in dialogic co-creation related to amplified e-WOM on a SNS. Thus, H9 is supported.

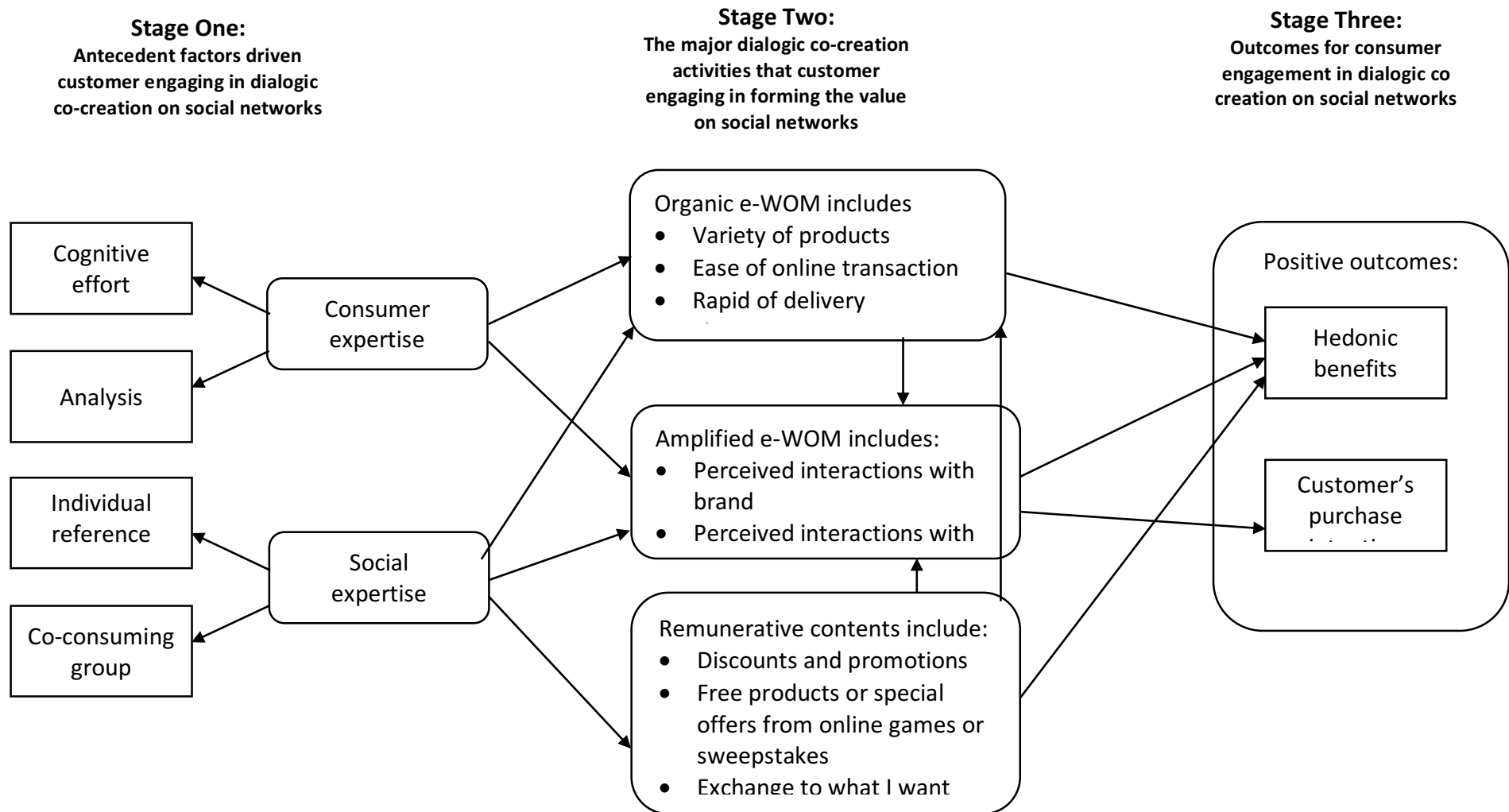
## 8.9 Summary

This chapter presented the results of the pilot test (n=60) and main survey (n=401) of the quantitative study. First, the data preparation and descriptive data process for both the pilot test and the main survey study. The demographic information from the pilot test and the main survey is slightly different. The majority of respondents from the pilot study are aged between 24 and 27, while half the participants in the main survey are aged between 28 and 30. However, the pilot study and main survey respondents are female customers with a high educational level and an acceptable level of personal income per month. They enjoy browsing and interacting with the international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo. Notably, the respondents from the pilot study are mainly from the Tier 1 cities in mainland China. However, almost half of the participants in the main survey live in Tier 2 cities in mainland China.

An EFA of the pilot study data set was conducted to reduce the number of observed variables. Both an EFA and a CFA were conducted for the main survey data set in order to achieve a parsimonious factorial structure. A set of goodness-of-fit indices was employed and specified to evaluate the model fit in the CFA process. In addition, one-factor congeneric measurement models were assessed to detect the factor loadings of each observed variable on its respective latent variable. Other crucial assessments, including reliability and validity of constructs testing and common method bias, were conducted in the CFA of the main survey data. The results proved that the structural model could be subjected to the next step of SEM.

Finally, the results of the SEM were reported in the last section of this chapter. The conceptual model with the causal relationships between the latent constructs that were established in Chapter 4 were tested. The evaluation of the model fit was undertaken according to the same goodness-of-fit indices. Based on the model modification indices, three new paths were added to the structural path model. A fitter and more parsimonious model was achieved after re-modification of the structural path model. Subsequently, the hypotheses were tested. The results of the beta coefficients of the direct, indirect and total effect and significance level of each hypothesis was outlined. The majority of the hypotheses are supported, although six hypotheses were rejected due to a low significance level ( $p > \text{or} = 0.05$ ). A valid conceptual model is presented in Figure 8.5.

Figure 8.5: A valid conceptual model based on the quantitative study in this research





## Chapter 9 Discussions

### 9.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a detailed discussion of findings regarding each research objective. It starts with an overall summary of this thesis, which it is helpful to review the previous chapters in terms of rationale and content (Section 9.1). Then, it is followed by the discussion of the literature review of the social media marketing studies in Chinese and fast fashion context (Section 9.3). The next section (Section 9.4) provides the discussion of literature review of C-D logic theory and existing models of customer engagement in value formation process. Subsequently, a detailed discussion of the findings of qualitative study in line with its research objectives (objective 3 and 4) is provided individually in Section 9.5 and Section 9.6. Furthermore, the research objective 5 and 6 based on the findings from quantitative study are discussed separately in Section 9.7 and Section 9.8. Finally, a conclusion based on the discussions is drawn along with a developed conceptual model (Section 9.9).

### 9.2 Summary of this thesis

Middle class Chinese customers are increasingly becoming more independent in terms of fashion shopping (BCG, 2014). Compared to the past when they passively followed other's suggestions or a brand's orientation, nowadays Chinese customers desire to show their unique fashion styles and share their personal fashion opinions with others. More importantly, Chinese fashion shoppers are now acting as both customers and social media users (KPMG, 2014). Social networking sites (SNS) provide an ideal public and virtual environment for Chinese fashion customers to maximally gratify their needs (Zhang *et al.*, 2015). This is because social networking platforms are based on the principle of value co-creation, where the customers voluntarily contribute to and consume the contents.

In addition, the recent market reports (e.g., PwC, 2017; BCG, 2017) have pointed out that young Chinese female customers (aged between 18 and 35) who live in Tier 1 mainland cities and possess high educational level and incomes would like to spend more time on browsing and searching fashion information on social media. However, this study shows that not only are the savvy and affluent customers who come from metropolitan cities passionate about fashion consumption but also the shoppers who live in Tier 2 cities are gradually spending their time and energy on drilling down and learning the granular fashion information online.

The Chinese domestic social networking platform Sina Weibo especially provides a new channel for customers to accessibly communicate with brands and other customers, search and gather information from brands and customer reviews, enjoy creative and influential content for entertainment, and use the content as an essential vehicle for online consumption (Zhang *et al.*, 2015). Accordingly, a new type of shopping behaviour for Chinese fashion customers has gradually formed based on what Sina Weibo offers. However, previous marketing paradigms still focus

on how brands or service providers can involve customers in their facilitated marketing communication activities and improve their brand performance. The emerging of customer-dominant logic (C-D logic) provides a new perspective to guide marketing and consumer behaviours study.

The literature covering C-D logic emphasises the importance of investigating from the customer's perspective, particularly to understand customer logic, customer value formation processes, and customer ecosystems (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015; Heinonen *et al.*, 2010; Tynan *et al.*, 2014). By explicitly adopting a customer-based approach to investigate the phenomenon of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities on social media, this study aims to understand Chinese female customers' motivations, preferences, and perceived values as they relate to active interactions with international fast fashion brands and other customers on the Chinese social networking platform Sina Weibo. Accordingly, the proposed six objectives of this study serve to better comprehend the roles of Chinese female fast fashion shoppers and their online social behaviours towards the marketing communicational activities facilitated by brands on a SNS.

In order to address these objectives, a thorough literature review (Chapter 2, 3 and 4) of three dimensions was conducted. These include social media marketing in the fast fashion and Chinese contexts, C-D logic, and existing models of customer engagement in value formation process on social media. A series of research gaps were identified and a conceptual framework including several hypotheses were proposed based on the literature review (Chapter 5). Subsequently, the research design was outlined based on the philosophical paradigm of pragmatism. The qualitative netnographic study was conducted at first to explore and establish two templates to identify the antecedent factors that motivate Chinese customers to engage in the dialogic co-creation activities and the popular topics of dialogic co-creation activities that Chinese customers prefer to engage in. The subsequent quantitative study was conducted to test the relationships between the identified antecedent factors and the different types of dialogic co-creation activities: customer engagement in dialogic co-creation and its positive outcomes.

### **9.3 Objective 1**

***To review the literature in terms of social media marketing in fast fashion and Chinese context, and to understand the Chinese fast fashion shoppers' social interactions on a Chinese social networking site***

A systemic review of 61 journal articles in social media marketing discipline has confirmed that the amount of studies for investigating the application of social media for marketing communication has increased in recent years. Tafesse (2016) summarised three dominant theoretical dimensions of the studies towards social media marketing that are related to uses and gratifications theory, online brand community, and online advertisement. Studies related to the first dimension accentuate the key gratification and motivations from the customer's perspective driving them to engage in social media marketing activities and co-create value with

brands. These drivers include perceiving information and economics rewards, receiving social connections, and receiving hedonic experiences (Mutinga *et al.*, 2011; Dolan *et al.*, 2016; Phua *et al.*, 2017). Studies towards the second dimension mainly investigate the outcomes for brands to adopt online brand community or brand fan pages, such as creating value for brands, perceiving brand equity, maintaining the brand–customer relationships, and improving the brand’s image and reputation (Park and Kim, 2014; Groeger *et al.*, 2016; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016). Studies subscribed to the third dimension consider the main function of social media brand pages as an online advertisement. Therefore, these studies principally emphasise the content characteristics of the brand-generated posts to attract customer to engage (Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Kim *et al.*, 2015; De Vries *et al.*, 2012; Chu and Kim, 2011). These three theoretical dimensions have all focused on the notion of customer engagement, which is basically defined as a customer’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioural motivations to positively interact with brands and actively to be involved in brand-facilitated activities (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Dessart *et al.*, 2016; Baldus *et al.*, 2015; Brodie *et al.*, 2013). The specific customer engagement behaviours include liking, commenting, and sharing brand-generated content on social media (Simon *et al.*, 2013; Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Dessart *et al.*, 2015). It is worth noting that despite previous scholars having put efforts towards investigating the effect of social media marketing on customer engagement behaviour, three main research gaps were identified:

(1). There is a limited number of studies focusing on customer perspective.

The notion of ‘customer engagement’ is well documented in the marketing communication literature (Islam and Rahman, 2016). However, a small amount of research provides a thorough understanding from the customer’s perspective of all the dimensions, including the drivers, processes, and consequences of customer engagement in virtual environment. most of studies have explored the antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement in social media but lack information on the processes (e.g., Claffey and Brady, 2014; Wirtz *et al.*, 2013; De Vries and Carlson, 2014; Chan *et al.*, 2014; Dwivedi, 2015; Gummerus *et al.*, 2012; Rose *et al.*, 2011 and Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010). Some studies have outlined the key processes and the outcomes but without the investigation of the antecedent factors (e.g., Harwood and Garry, 2015; O’Brien *et al.*, 2015; Brodie *et al.*, 2013). Other studies have examined the relationship between the antecedents and different types of customer engagement but without consideration of the outcomes (e.g., Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Tsai and Men, 2013; Chu and Kim, 2011).

The general antecedents of customer engagement, concluded from previous studies, focus on three aspects. The first aspect is related to a customer’s psychological stimulations, such as customer trust (So *et al.*, 2016) or customer satisfaction (Chueng *et al.*, 2015). The second aspect reflects a customer’s perceived benefits (e.g., Verhagen *et al.*, 2015; Franzak *et al.*, 2014). The third dimension delineates a customer’s personality (e.g., Yoo and Gretzel, 2011). The key dimensions of customer engagement in an online environment have been classified as cognitive, affective, and activity (e.g., Dessart *et al.*, 2015; Hollebeek, 2011a). In addition, in terms of the consequences of customer engagement, extensive studies have

outlined the consequences that benefit the brands (e.g., Dijkmans *et al.*, 2015; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Cheung *et al.*, 2015). Several studies have mentioned the consequences from the customer's perspective. These positive outcomes included customer value (e.g., Hollebeek, 2013), customer loyalty (e.g., Vivek *et al.*, 2012), and customer empowerment (e.g., Brodie *et al.*, 2013).

More importantly, some factors, such as customer perceived benefits, customer's trust, and customer satisfaction, have been considered as antecedents in other studies (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, 2013; So *et al.*, 2016), but considered as consequences in other studies (Hollebeek, 2013; Vivek *et al.*, 2012; Gummerus *et al.*, 2012). Conversely, some factors created as the consequences of customer engagement can also be looped back as the drivers to influence customer engagement behaviour (Vivek *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, a specific research context should be decided upon as a focus. Based on the study context, the specific antecedents, preferences, and consequences towards the target participants' engagement behaviour can be further explored and empirically investigated.

(2). There is a limited number of studies that focus on the context of fast fashion.

The studies specific to understanding customer engagement behaviours do not focus on the industry category of fast fashion (De Vries *et al.*, 2014). Some notable studies, such as Kim and Ko (2012) and Godey *et al.* (2016), have dug into the context of luxury fashion. They emphasised that social media marketing activities, including WOM, interaction, entertainment, trendiness, and customisation, play an important role in attracting customers to engage with a brand's fan page on social media. However, these social media marketing strategies may not be adequate for fast fashion brands and their target customers. Miller (2013) has explicated the difference between luxury fashion and fast fashion brands. He claimed that luxury fashion brands are generally associated with eminent product designers to produce exclusive items in slow procedure, while fast fashion brands usually provide new products to the market weekly with low price and quality. In addition, the fast fashion shoppers prefer to constantly be informed of the latest product trends and to purchase fashion items in an affordable manner (Gabrielli *et al.*, 2013; Cachon and Swinney, 2011). According to the fast fashion customers' characteristics, it is a requirement for fast fashion brands and marketers to provide updated product information rapidly and to offer economic incentives for the target customers (Ramanathan *et al.*, 2017).

Other studies, such as Kim and Johnson (2016) and Geissinger and Laurell (2016), have investigated Western fashion brands. Kim and Johnson (2016) assumed that brand awareness may have an influence on customer engagement behaviour. Additionally, they found that the informational and emotional brand-generated content can be deemed as a visual stimulation to influence a customer's engagement behaviour with a brand's fan page on social media. They also recommended that future research should investigate diverse business contexts and different product categories to provide extensive implications for social media marketing studies. Geissinger and Laurell (2016) recognised that fashion brands with

higher turnovers are discussed by social media users more frequently compared to those fashion brands with lower turnovers. In addition, they suggested that the different forms of social media have an influence on customer engagement behaviour. For example, micro blogs are more popular for fashion customers when producing fashion-related contents.

Although these studies have contributed valuable findings towards social media marketing strategies for general fashion brands in the Western market, they did not specify marketing applications for the fast fashion industry. Halvorsen *et al.* (2013) highlighted that fashion trends and information can be quickly diffused across social media platforms to please fashion shoppers. More importantly, fashion customers can gather up-to-date information and self-educate themselves in fashion on social media. Geissinger and Laurell (2016) emphasised that social media users engage in marketing activities with fashion brands because of their personal interests, values, and self-concepts. Among these discussed factors, it is necessary to outline the essential and unique attributes for the social media marketing strategies that focus on the fast fashion brands and their target customers. Specifically, according to the fast fashion shoppers' online engagement preferences, future study needs to find out the popular topics of brand-generated posts to satisfy customers' needs.

(3). There is a limited number of studies exploring social media users in non-Western countries.

Extensive studies have focused on the developed countries' social media users, but researcheres have scantly paid attention to social media users living in developing countries (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016). the reviewed journal articles on customer engagement behaviours have only investigated customers of 16 countries, focusing mainly on Western and European countries' customers, such as the US, the UK, Sweden, Norway, Spain, Italy, Finland, and Switzerland. Some studies have been conducted in developed countries of the East, such as Korea and Singapore. However, the rapid economic growth in some eastern countries provides tremendous business opportunities for international brands. For instance, China is one of the emerging fashion markets with a potential population of fast fashion shoppers at 730 million (PwC, 2017). The distinctiveness of the Chinese social media environment that only allows domestic social media to be used should especially arouse scholarly interests. In addition, Chinese customers' fashion shopping behaviour is different from the shoppers from other areas, as it has been confirmed that Chinese customers rely more on information from social media rather than on information from a brand's official website (China Fashion Industry, 2014). Furthermore, Chinese customers' online engagement behaviours have evolved in terms of their preferences and considered values (Duan and Dholakia, 2015). Previously, Chinese customers tended to be pragmatists who emphasised utilitarian values. However, nowadays, the hedonic experience is the dominant desire for Chinese customers. Therefore, in order enrich the emerging study area of customer online engagement behaviour and social media marketing, it is valuable to investigate the Chinese and fast fashion context.

In conclusion, while the concept of customer engagement has been increasingly discussed within marketing research, the scope and the content of this concept has evolved (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010). The new notion of co-creation, which emphasises the essentials of interactions and collaborations between the customer and the service provider, has been introduced in various marketing research domains (Cova *et al.*, 2011; Merrilees, 2016). However, Mustak *et al.* (2013) criticised that many studies that have explored the notion of co-creation have not specified whether customer engagement occurs during the offered co-creation experience or during the self-directed value creation process. This is a very important issue, as in the customer-oriented perspective, not only is the emerged value controlled by customers, but the value creation process is also dominated by customers (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015; Heinonen *et al.* 2010; Grönroos and Ravald 2011; Grönroos 2011). Mustak *et al.* (2013) insisted that a consistent exploration of the understanding of customer engagement in value creation and co-creation processes from the customer's perspective is necessary.

#### **9.4 Objective 2**

***To review the literature regarding customer-dominant logic and existing models of customer engagement in value formation in the social media environment by considering antecedents, activities and outcomes***

In this study 585 journal papers related to customer dominant logic were collected, 81 journal articles that have investigated the phenomenon of customer engagement in value formation process from customer perspective were systematically reviewed, and 25 articles that have developed a conceptual model of customer engagement in value formation in online or offline environment were found. The purpose of the literature review of C-D logic theory was to understand the definition, development, and implications of this new marketing paradigm. While relying more on the customer's perspective, C-D logic can be described as an evolutionary marketing theory that extends previous service-dominant logic and current value formation thoughts. Although the tendency of customer empowerment and customer centricity in value co-creation processes has been emphasised in S-D logic (e.g., Flint and Woodruff, 2014; Lusch and Vargo, 2011), the starting point in this marketing paradigm claims that value is initiated and oriented by service providers. However, according to C-D logic, customers are the dominant value creators during value-generating experiences, while service providers merely play the role of value co-creators or value facilitators (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010).

Based on the literature review of C-D logic, several conclusions can be drawn. First, value can not only be co-created by customers and service providers, but it also can be formed in a customer ecosystem. The customer ecosystem in C-D logic refers to the customer sphere that involves other actors and customers. Second, value creation or co-creation processes are not always deliberately generated by service providers but also naturally emerge in customer experiences. Third, value creation or co-creation is not only based on tangible and intangible resources, but also driven by customer logic. Forth, value formation processes can be recognised as a dialogic co-

creation process or an interactional practice across the engagement platforms. Fifth, value-in-use is not restricted to customer behavioural experiences, but also includes the mental activities in a longitudinal time-frame.

That C-D logic emphasises the exploration and investigation into how customers live in their daily lives and create value in their networks implies several new directions for future research. First, C-D logic stresses the understandings of the customer's mind-set and logic towards the value formation experiences in their daily lives. The customer's logic can reflect on the motivations for customers to be involved in the value formation process. Therefore, it is compulsory to understand the logic that drives customers to engage in the value formation process. Second, C-D logic aims to identify the relevance of the activities and practices that demonstrate how customers typically experience the creation of value in their daily lives. In other words, understanding the customers' preferred activities can explain how they would like to engage in the value formation process. Third, C-D logic requires future study to employ new research methods such as netnography to explore the value-in-use in customer's life and ecosystem (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015; Heinonen *et al.* 2013).

According to the implications of C-D logic, it is necessary to have a systematic scope to analyse the value formation process from the customer's perspective. However, in terms of the review of relevant studies, very few studies (e.g., Nambisan & Baron, 2009) have established and empirically tested a conceptual model to generalise how customers engage in the value formation process from customer's perspective. Although many researches have contributed the findings of the connections between customer engagement in value co-creation processes and its outcomes from customer's perspective (e.g., Etgar, 2008; Hibbert *et al.*, 2012; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016), the majority of these studies apply S-D logic as the fundamental research theory. The other studies that adopt C-D logic have put little effort into examining the relationships between customer logic, customer engagement in value formation processes, and the outcomes from the customer's perspective. Moreover, studies that focus on investigating customer value formation experiences in online environment are scarce. Therefore, it is necessary for future studies to gain a more comprehensive model that enhances the understanding of customer engagement in value formation processes in online environment. The findings regarding the relationships between the antecedents and consequences from customer's perspective can provide tremendous practical implications either for academics or marketers.

After reviewing C-D logic theory, this study explored the antecedent factors that can reflect customer logic to drive customer engaging in value formation process in a social media environment. Many different theoretical or conceptual frameworks have provided potential clues related to the antecedent factors that motivate customer to become engaged in value formation processes. According to the literature review (Section 4.2.1), a customer's expertise (e.g., Schreier and Pruegl, 2008; Mahr and Lievens, 2012; Hoyer *et al.*, 2010; Packard and Wooten, 2013; Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013) and social expertise (e.g., Alden *et al.*, 2016; Shao and

Ross, 2015; Heinonen, 2011; Zolkepli *et al.*, 2015; Blazevic *et al.*, 2014) have been justified as the crucial antecedent factors to influence customer engagement behaviours towards value formation processes in a social media environment. Consumer expertise refers to the extent to which the customer possesses an interest in a specific context, product-related knowledge, and previous, related experiences (Schreier and Pruegl, 2008). Social expertise is explained as the level of a customer's social ability or the social capital that a customer has (Paredes *et al.*, 2014). Although most of the studies have not focused on the fast fashion customers, few studies have generalised that sharing fashion information and consumption experiences and interacting with other users have been deemed as the key aims for fashion customers when engaging in dialogic co-creation on social media (Wang *et al.*, 2012; Mowen *et al.*, 2007; Kang *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, McKinsey (2012) pointed out that 68% of online users play a role as social enthusiasts who pay great attention to contributing content and interacting with other users on SNSs.

Furthermore, there are other factors that have been deemed as the antecedents of driving customer engagement in value formation in online environments. For instance, the uses and gratifications theory has been widely adopted in marketing communication and customer online social behavioural studies (Chen, 2011). The theory identifies three types of benefits as the motivations for customers to engage in the virtual customer environment (Nambisan and Baron, 2009). Tsai (2013) stated that economic incentives, product-related information gathering, and social integration are the key drivers for customers to engage in the e-WOM in social media. In addition, other factors, such as a customer's personality (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010), a customer's self-enhancement (Eisingerich *et al.*, 2015), and gender factors (He *et al.*, 2008), have been discussed as the antecedents of motivating customer engagement in value co-creation or creation processes on social media.

Subsequently, this study has reviewed the relevant literature in terms of the value co-creation or creation processes. Both the C2C and C2B interactive activities have been proposed as the value formation experiences in social media environments (Chae and Ko, 2016; Finne and Grönroos, 2017). Mustak *et al.* (2013) suggested that research should not only focus on the dyadic perspective of co-creation activities (e.g., merely B2C or C2C interactions), but also recommended investigating from a network perspective. Specifically, the different topics of user-generated content and brand-generated content are constituted as the key dialogic co-creation activities on SNSs (Kim and Johnson, 2016; Tafesse, 2014). Furthermore, the informational contents, entertaining contents, and remunerative contents have been recommended as the major types of social media contents to attract customer engagement in dialogic co-creation or creation activities (Azar *et al.*, 2016; Dolan *et al.*, 2015; Muntinga *et al.*, 2011). However, in the context of fashion, both the organic and amplified e-WOM content are considered as popular activities for fashion customers when engaging on social media (Kulmala *et al.*, 2013).

The organic e-WOM contents include customer discussions about product and brand information, the ease of online transaction, the delivery speed of online purchases, the environment of online/offline stores, and the customer's previous consumption



experiences (Zhang *et al.*, 2017). The content belonging to amplified e-WOM include perceived interactivity from brands and celebrities (Xiang's *et al.*, 2016; Labrecque, 2014). The entertaining content refers to the brand-generated contents that did not include any product or brand information but rather aim to entertain customers (Godey *et al.*, 2016; Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014). The remunerative content is defined as the economic incentives that attract customers to engage in generating content and interacting with brands (Azar's *et al.*, 2016; De Vries *et al.*, 2012).

Lastly, the study has also reviewed the value outcomes towards customer engagement in value formation processes of the social media environment. Three key implications can be drawn in terms of the review of this domain. First, with a few exceptions (e.g., Chen *et al.*, 2015; Prahalad and Ramswamy, 2004), the majority of the studies (e.g., Hibbert *et al.*, 2012; Troye and Supphellen, 2012) have investigated the outcomes from the service provider's perspective. The consequences from the customer's perspective are still scarce, and further empirical researches in this area are recommended for strengthening the knowledge of this domain. Second, although the perceiving customer value is one of the integral components in value co-creation experiences (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Payne *et al.*, 2008; Yi and Gong, 2013), very few empirical studies have explicitly examined the relationships between customer engagement in value formation process and the value outcomes. Future studies can enhance the understanding between customer engagement in value formation process and the emerged value that customer perceived. Third, the customer value has been considered as benefits that the customer perceives from the value formation process (Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). Specifically, the utilitarian benefits, hedonic benefits, and interpersonal benefits have been proposed as the three key customer benefits that customers can perceive from the engagement in value formation processes (Chen *et al.*, 2015). Utilitarian benefits include useful information, practical knowledge, and economic rewards that customer gain from the value formation process (Chen *et al.*, 2015). Hedonic benefits refer to the satisfaction, pleasure, and relaxation that customer perceive from the engagement in value creation or co-creation activities (Nambisan and Baron, 2009). Interpersonal benefits contain the social supports and social recognition that customers gain from the interactive and co-creative activities with brands or other customers.

### **9.5 Objective 3**

***To identify, via netnographic study, the antecedents which drive customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities for customer value formation on a Chinese social networking site***

In this research, 3,000 user-generated comments from selected international fast fashion brands' (including ZARA, H&M, and UNIQLO) Sina Weibo pages were collected. The collected comments were first categorised as C2C interactions, C2B interactions, and customer individual comments. It was found that 1,287 comments related to C2C interactions, 994 comments related to C2B interactions, and 719 comments related to individual customer comments that did not receive any replies.

Then, using a set of data analysis methods including coding, content analysis, and template analysis, a template to outline the key antecedent factors reflecting the logic of Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers' online social behaviours was created. These exploratory findings from the netnographic study provided substantial evidence to confirm the identified antecedent factors of the literature and to suggest the underlying antecedent factors that motivate Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers to engage in the value formation process. Table 9.1 summarises the identified antecedent factors and the number of collected customer-generated comments that reflect customer logics to engage in C2C and C2B interactions on Sina Weibo.

Table 9.1: A summary of identified antecedent factors that influence customer engagement in C2C and C2B interactions on Sina Weibo

Antecedent factors	Sub-factors	Number of collected customer-generated comments	Key attributes
Consumer expertise	Customer's cognitive effort	550	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers can describe the item by words and by picture.</li> </ul>
	Customer's analysis ability	687	Customer can analyse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>product's characteristics</li> <li>product's design</li> <li>product's price</li> <li>product's function</li> <li>product's quality</li> <li>brand's marketing strategy</li> <li>brand's after-sales service</li> </ul>
	Elaboration	303	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers can distinguish the different products</li> </ul>
	Customer's memory	780	Customers can remember: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>product information</li> <li>previous online/offline shopping experiences</li> <li>other customer's critical reviews</li> </ul>
	Customer's self-enhancement	148	Customers seek for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>useful suggestions</li> <li>assistance towards shopping</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• job opportunity from the brand</li> </ul>
Social expertise	Interactions with individual reference group	348	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers usually tag their friends in relevant brand posts</li> </ul>
	Interactions with other customers	939	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers interact with other customers who have similar interests, attitudes and experiences</li> </ul>
	Interactions with brands	994	Customers share: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• issues related to brand or shopping experience</li> <li>• personal feelings</li> </ul>

Source: based on the qualitative findings

The literature suggested that both the consumer expertise and social expertise are key drivers for online users to engage in the value co-creation or creation activities on social media (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). According to the netnographic findings, the antecedent factors of consumer expertise and social expertise are interconnected to be revealed through C2C and C2B interactions on brand's Sina Weibo. The results show that the active users who are willing to contribute comments on brand's Sina Weibo are those customers who can mutually engage in different types of dialogic co-creation activities. Specifically, these customers are passionate about fashion and fast fashion consumption. More so, they are willing to share their repertoires through interactions and online communications.

Previously, relevant literature indicated that Chinese customers are eager to gain peer interactions on social media, especially interactions among their social reference group (i.e., friends, family) (Zhu *et al.*, 2016; Yan *et al.*, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2013; Wang *et al.*, 2012). Through the discussions of and suggestions from the customer's reference group, customer receive reliable product information and product reviews, thereby receiving influence on their brand attitude and purchase intentions (Wang *et al.*, 2012). Particularly, Chinese customers usually perceive peer pressure through interactions, which may influence them to purchase a similar brand or product as their friends do, even they are not willing to.

However, the netnographic findings show that Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers' online social behaviours have changed. The reason for Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers to engage in interactions on social media is no longer to play a role as a passive information receiver, but rather to be an active information creator. Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers seek an opportunity to stand out and express their own opinions towards fashion trend development, a variety of fashion styles, and the evaluation of different fashion brands and products. Furthermore, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers are not restricted to interact with people who are from their familiar reference group,

but rather they are able to discuss with other strangers on social media. Through the observations of the C2C and C2B interactions, it was identified that customers who are willing to co-create a dialogue on Sina Weibo usually put forth high cognitive efforts, have high product or brand analysis abilities, and have a good memory for product information. This resonates with the literature, which suggested that customer cognitive effort, customer analysis ability, customer elaboration, and the customer memory are considered as the key components to evaluate a consumer's expertise (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). However, the findings have also identified a new factor to reflect consumer expertise, which is self-enhancement.

Specifically, customer memory has been evaluated as the most important element in consumer expertise, as there were 780 customer-generated comments related to this aspect. The netnographic data showed that Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers can not only keep the product information in their mind, but also remember their previous online and offline shopping experiences. According to these memories, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers leave critical product reviews and shopping experience reviews on brands' Sina Weibo accounts. Surprisingly, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers also pay attention to which celebrity has worn which products so that they may imitate the celebrity.

In addition, there were 687 customer-generated comments related to customer analysis ability, which can be deemed the second most essential dimension of consumer expertise. From the analysis of these comments, it showed that Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers are very willing to provide a detailed product review, covering a product's characteristics, quality, price, and function. They also commented on after-sale services, the delivery speed of online purchases, the security of online transaction, and the ease of product return. More so, they even provided practical suggestions for future brand development, product design, and marketing strategies.

Furthermore, 550 customer-generated comments were collected that relate to customer cognitive effort, which is considered as the third most important element in consumer expertise. Through the analysis of these comments, the studied showed that Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers like to use a product's pictures found on the internet or taken in person at the store to identify for which item they seek more information. For instance, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers may attach a product's photo on a brand's Sina Weibo and ask whether anyone knows where the item can be purchased or ask for a review of the product.

Regarding customer elaboration, there were only 303 customer-generated comments. Customer elaboration refers to a customer's ability to distinguish between different brands' versions of a similar product and to discriminate between authentic and fake product information on social media. In addition to these four identified elements of consumer expertise, the factor of self-enhancement was also found to have an influence on Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers' online social behaviours. There were 147 customer-generated comments related to the

dimension of customer self-enhancement. Previous studies have suggested that the factor of self-enhancement can be considered as one of the antecedent factors of motivating customers to engage in online discussions and interactions (Wallace *et al.*, 2014; Hammedi *et al.*, 2015). According to the netnographic findings, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers like to enhance their understandings and knowledge of fashion, not only focusing on fashion shopping, but also on the information about supply chain, manufactory, and product sustainability. What is more, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers seek employment opportunities with their favourite brands on Sina Weibo.

In addition to the customer-generated comments reflecting consumer expertise, there were a variety of comments regarding customer social expertise. The literature indicated that a customer's ability to interact with brands, celebrities, and other actors on social media can be considered as a customer's social expertise (Blazevic *et al.*, 2014). Compared to interacting with brands, more Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers prefer conversing with other customers on a brand's Sina Weibo. Specifically, most of the Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers would rather spend time communicating with other customers who hold similar interests and brand attitudes and have similar shopping experiences than with the members of their reference group. However, several customers still tag their friends on Sina Weibo for a product recommendation. In terms of the dialogic co-creation between brand and customers, the netnographic findings show that Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers perceive fashion brand accounts as that of a close friend rather than that of an abstract entity. Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers not only share their concerns relating to products and services, but also express their daily feelings with fashion brands on Sina Weibo. This is consistent to Sheth and Kim's (2018) point of view, which fashion brands generally personify themselves to attract customers to interact.

Moreover, the netnographic findings reveal other characteristics and habits of those Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers who prefer engaging in dialogic co-creation. The first habit is to attach selfies on brand-generated post, especially selfies including the brand's product. Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers are willing to tell others how they look when they are using or wearing the product. Second, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers like to express their positive or negative emotions with brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. These emotions may not towards the brand or product but stem from their personal life. For instance, they directly express their loneliness, tiredness, and depression on a brand's Sina Weibo. Third, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers also compliment brands. These compliments are not restricted to products but also apply to background pictures, the background music, and brand-generated videos that the brands utilise on Sina Weibo. Fourth, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers express their intentions to purchase a specific item that they saw on a brand's Sina Weibo. If the item is out of stock, they leave a comment asking whether anyone can help them buy the product in another city or country. Fifth, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers implement a variety of GIFs, emojis, and memes to express their feelings without any words.

In conclusion, as Heinonen and Strandvik (2015) have suggested, future studies on exploring C-D logic should put efforts towards understanding and categorising the idiosyncratic customer logic. Based on the understandings of customer logic, the study can further explain customer behaviour towards a specific product context. Therefore, through analysing numerous of Chinese customer-generated comments, the findings revealed the distinct logic, characteristics, and habits of Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers when engaging in dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo. The developed template also put forth the key factors and sub-factors that reflect logic of Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers when engaging in a set of interactive and communication activities with brands and other customers. The findings highlighted that Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers are gradually becoming more independent, intelligent, and capable for product analysis in the process of fast fashion consumption. They are no longer restricted to being a passive information receiver but prefer to co-create value with brands and other customers or create value for themselves.

#### 9.6 Objective 4

***To identify, via netnographic study, the major types of dialogic co-creation activities that involve customer-brand interactions and customer-customer interactions for customer value formation on a Chinese social networking site***

In the netnographic study, 300 selected brand-generated posts concerning international fast fashion were collected, analysed, and categorised. Through the observations, it was identified that Chinese customer engagement in dialogic co-creation on Sina Weibo is a dynamically and iteratively interactive process among brands and other actors. Table 9.2 summarises the key topics and sub-topics that customers prefer to engage in dialogic co-creation on Sina Weibo.

Table 9.2: A summary of the key topics and sub-topics of dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo

Topics	Sub-topics	Number of collected posts of this topic	Contents
Organic e-WOM	Product/brand information	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the new launch product</li> </ul>
	Transaction and delivery service	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce how ease and security to use different online transaction and delivery service</li> </ul>
	Physical/online store information	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide the details of physical/online store information</li> </ul>
	Product	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call for customers'</li> </ul>

	sustainability		action to donate old clothes • Broadcast product sustainability's information
Amplified e-WOM	Perceived brand's interactivity	26	• Brand replies customer effectively, politely and patiently.
	Perceived celebrity's interactivity	18	• Celebrities have face-to-face interactions via online video chat application
	Celebrity endorsement information	27	• Brand advertises the products endorsed by celebrities
Entertainment	The influential and creative topics	22	• A set of meaningful topics
	Fun games and videos	16	• A variety of online games and fun videos • Call for customers' action to design an online game or video
	General greetings and festival wishes from brand	17	• Brand will send greetings on weekdays to cheer customers up • Brand will send wishes on special Chinese festivals
	Brand's anecdote	12	• Brand's stories • Employees' stories
Remuneration	Economic incentives	43	• Product discount, prize draw and red envelope.
	Other rewards	31	• Other gifts

Source: based on the qualitative findings

Significantly, most of the Chinese customers who have engaged in the dialogic co-creation activities consider the interactions with international fast fashion brands and other customers on Sina Weibo as part of their daily lives or one of their casual activities. They are not forced to become involved in the brand-facilitated activities but are willing to share, advocate, learn, socialise, and co-create value on Sina Weibo. In other words, the value-in-use happens in customer engagement with discussion and interaction experiences on Sina Weibo. However, it was found that the different topics of the dialogic co-creation may yield diverse intensity levels of customer engagement. According to the literature, organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM,

entertainment, and remuneration are considered as the four key topics of dialogic co-creation activities that are facilitated by fast fashion brands on SNSs (Zhang *et al.*, 2017; Labrecque, 2014; Xiang *et al.*, 2016; Godey *et al.*, 2016; Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014; Azar *et al.*, 2016; De Vries *et al.*, 2017). The netnographic findings support that the four major topics of dialogic co-creation can be deemed as the most popular interactive activities for attracting Chinese customers to leave their comments under the brand posts. Specifically, there are three major implications in terms of the netnographic findings of the dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo.

First, in terms of the three selected international fast fashion brands (ZARA, H&M, and UNIQLO), it was identified that the Chinese customers are more fond of the brand of UNIQLO on Sina Weibo, as this brand has the highest number of followers (UNIQLO: 5,139,232 followers until as of 1 March 2017), compared to the other two (ZARA: 666,395 followers as of March 2017; H&M: 896,113 followers as of 1 March 2017). However, all three selected international fast fashion brands are successful at facilitating different types of the dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo. According to the number of received customer-generated comments towards the brand posts, ZARA generated brand posts related to the topic of organic e-WOM more frequently than did the other two brands. Of the collected ZARA-generated posts, 43% are related to this topic, while only 14% of the collected H&M-generated posts and 40% of the collected UNIQLO-generated posts relate. H&M successfully facilitated the amplified e-WOM activities on Sina Weibo, with 57% of the collected H&M-generated posts related to this topic. One outstanding example is that H&M mentioned that the Chinese popular celebrities Fan Binbin and Li Chen would endorse their brand in 2017 in one of their brand posts, which attracted over 100,000 customer-generated comments. UNIQLO put more effort into facilitating remunerative and organic e-WOM activities. In all, 39% and 41% of UNIQLO-generated posts related to these two topics respectively.

Second, another outstanding finding is that these four topics did not appear alone in brand posts but were often mixed with other topics. In turn, a variety of types of the mix-topic brand-generated posts were identified. The most common mix-topic posts contained the combination of amplified e-WOM and remuneration, totalling 31. Generally, this type of post included information about celebrity endorsement and asked customers to leave their comments for their favourite idol because the brand would select a few customers to receive an item that their idol endorsed. It was also identified that under this type of brand post customers liked to express their purchase intentions directly even when there was no prize to win. H&M usually adopted this strategy in facilitating dialogic co-creation activities with customers on Sina Weibo. The second most common type of mix-topic post included a combination of organic e-WOM and remuneration, totalling 28. For example, brands usually introduced their newly launched products in the posts and asked customers to pick their favourite item and provide the reason for their choice. Brands would select several customers to receive their favourite item for free. UNIQLO has been found to use this strategy regularly to generate brand posts on Sina Weibo.



The netnographic findings also revealed a variety of sub-topics that involved these four identified topics. In terms of the sub-topics of organic e-WOM in SNSs, Zhang *et al.* (2017) identified three dimensions, including the information of brand and product, the information of transaction and delivery service, and the information of online or offline physical stores. However, the netnographic findings suggested that Chinese customers also pay great attention towards the information of product sustainability, such as the activities related to the recycling and donation of old clothes. Even so, there was a higher number of negative customer-generated comments towards the information of transaction and delivery service. Chinese customers also made many complaints about the brand's physical store's service and environment.

With regards to the activities of amplified e-WOM, three dimensions of the content were identified from the literature (e.g., Labrecque, 2014; Xiang *et al.*, 2016). The first dimension is related to perceived brand interactivity. Through the observations, it was found that international fast fashion brands usually do not reply to every single comment but will give effective and sufficient support to the most common problems that customer face. Moreover, if one customer-generated comment receives a reply from a brand, it will attract more customers to become involved in the discussion of that topic. The second dimension is related to perceived celebrity interactivity. Surprisingly, the interaction between customers and celebrities is not restricted to the text but depends on face-to-face interactions on social media. Specifically, brands invite a celebrity to facilitate a real-time online video chat on Sina Weibo rather than post a recorded video. The third dimension is concerned with perceived celebrity endorsement information. As discussed before, this type of information usually induces Chinese customers' purchase intentions.

Although the topic of entertainment is not as popular as the other topics, it has developed the most dimensions of sub-topics for customers to consume and utilise. Most of the previous studies (e.g. Dolan *et al.*, 2015; Muntinga *et al.* 2011) have not provided a systematic categorisation of entertaining content on social media. Rather, they have generalised that the entertaining content did not mention any brand or product information but included fun games and videos, greetings, word play, and slogans. From the netnographic findings, four main sub-topics of entertaining content were identified and include the influential and creative topics, fun games, and videos, greetings and wishes, and brand anecdotes. The aim of influential and creative topics in entertaining content is to call the customers to action. For instance, brands ask customers to discuss their favourite song, film, country, of festival or to share their most exciting, influential stories on Sina Weibo. In addition, the fun games and videos are not only facilitated by brands but also often prompt customers to upload their own vlogs or to design a digital game on Sina Weibo. Furthermore, the use of a brand's anecdote has been considered as a new sub-topic in entertaining contents, as it does not focus on the products but rather broadcasts employees' stories or the situations of the brand's manufacturing in developing countries.

In terms of the topic of remuneration, De Vries *et al.* (2017) emphasised that economic incentives comprise the key content of remunerative activities on social media. In addition to prizes, product discounts, and free items, the netnographic findings also indicated that the Chinese traditional 'red envelope' (it is a Chinese custom to give red envelope in Chinese New Year. The red envelope means luckiness and best wishes. Nowadays, it can be given in any special Chinese festivals rather than just in Chinese New Year) has been included in the economic incentives in remunerative activities on Sina Weibo. International fast fashion brands release several red pockets to their followers during the Chinese New Year or other traditional Chinese festivals. Another popular type of remunerative activity is to ask customers to tag their friends in brand posts or share the brand posts on their personal Sina Weibo page. Through a drawing, brands then select a few customers to receive their product or product discounts.

In summary, the netnographic study has contributed valuable knowledge towards the customer engagement in value formation processes. From the customer's perspective, C-D logic underlines the understandings of value formation processes, including the exploration of the activities, the time, the location, and the actors involved. The netnographic findings in this study have provided reliable evidence to demonstrate how the value formation processes happen in the customer's ecosystem. It has answered a set of questions that Heinonen and Strandvik (2015) put forth in the C-D logic theory. These questions included the following: What are the contents of the value formation activities? How is the value formation process facilitated? When and where does the value formation process happen? Who are actors involved in the value formation process? In addition, the researcher has also analysed the positive and negative dimensions of the content in value formation processes from the customer's perspective.

## **9.7 Objective 5**

***To establish and test the relationships between the identified antecedent factors that motivate customers to engage in dialogic co-creation and the different types of dialogic co-creation activities on a Chinese social networking site***

Two independent constructs of the antecedent factors (consumer expertise and social expertise) were tested for their effects on motivating Chinese customers to engage in different types of dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo. A set of quantitative data analyses (EFA, CFA and SEM) was conducted for the pilot survey and the main survey and three key findings were acquired to achieve this research objective.

First, the researcher identified the key components included in the identified antecedent factors that reflect Chinese customers' logic on engaging in dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo. Second the researcher identified the popular topics of the dialogic co-creation activities facilitated by the international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo. Third, following Heinonen and Strandvik's (2015) suggestion to examine the relationships between customer logics and customer

engagement behaviour towards different activities, the researcher found which antecedent factors yielded essential effects on driving Chinese customers to engage in interactions and the value creation process on Sina Weibo. Discussion of these key findings is presented in the following sections.

#### (1) Key components of antecedent factors

In terms of the identified antecedent factors (consumer expertise and social expertise), the result of the main survey's EFA extracted the key components that perfectly measured these two constructs in the current research context. According to Barrutia and Gilsanz (2013), the construct of consumer expertise includes four components: cognitive effort, analysis, elaboration and memory. However, only two measurement items for cognitive effort and one measurement item for analysis were extracted from the main survey's EFA. Specifically, the descriptions of these items are: CE03 – I can find my preferred brands for this product on Sina Weibo without much effort; CE04 – I can immediately identify the brands for this product I want on Sina Weibo, even if mixed with others that are similar; AN01– I enjoy learning about this product on Sina Weibo. In other words, this finding indicates that Chinese customers have higher capabilities for making cognitive effort, conducting product analysis and enjoy gathering new information towards fast fashion consumption compared to the other dimensions of consumer expertise. Barrutia and Gilsanz, (2013) also emphasised the effect of cognitive effort on evaluating consumer expertise in the e-commerce shopping environment. They claimed that customers are usually overwhelmed by the amount of online information. Those customers who have a higher cognitive effort can exploit and filter the useful information effectively compared to those customers who do not. This is consistent with the netnographic finding, which suggests the antecedent factor of customers' cognitive effort has been identified in most of the customer-generated comments on international fast fashion brands' Sina Weibo presence.

Furthermore, the finding also sheds light on identifying the important dimensions of the construct of customers' social expertise in this research context. A customer's individual reference group (i.e. friends, family) and a customer's co-consuming group (i.e. other customers) have been identified as key customer social capital in the literature (Barrutia *et al.*, 2016; Alden *et al.*, 2016). The quantitative finding provides considerable support for the effect of these two dimensions on customers' social expertise. Specifically, two measurement items in the customer's individual reference group (ID02 – I usually speak with colleagues and friends about how to use Sina Weibo for gathering brand and product information; and ID03 – I get useful information on Sina Weibo when colleagues and friends tag me in) and one measurement item of the customer's co-consuming group (CO02 – I spend time on brands' Sina Weibo interacting with other consumers about the brand or other topics) have been extracted as the key components of the construct of social expertise. This finding suggests that socialising is another important motive that influences Chinese customers to engage in dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo. In addition, Chinese customers still rely on their social reference group to search for fast fashion product information, even though they gradually become independent and intelligent.

The results of exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis of the main survey confirm that both consumer expertise and social expertise are considered as initial reasons for Chinese customers to engage in international fast fashion brand pages on Sina Weibo.

## (2) Major types of dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo

The quantitative findings also identified certain major types of the dialogic co-creation activities facilitated by international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo. According to the literature, the topics of organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertainment and remuneration are deemed as the key types of the dialogic co-creation activities in the context of fast fashion (Zhang *et al.*, 2017; Labrecque, 2014; Xiang *et al.*, 2016; Enginkaya and Yilmaz, 2014; Godey *et al.*, 2016; Azar *et al.*, 2016; De Vries *et al.*, 2017). However, only the constructs of organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM and remuneration were extracted in the factorial structure in EFA of the main survey. The current quantitative finding implies that Chinese customers may prefer seeking information, interaction and economic rewards rather than hedonic experience from international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo. This is consistent to Kasanov's (2016) viewpoint. However, the reason the construct of entertainment has not been extracted may not be because Chinese customers lack interest in this topic, but that the content of the measurement items employed in previous studies were not suitable for this research context. Most of the measurement items of the construct of entertaining topic from previous empirical studies (e.g. Godey *et al.*, 2016; Lee and Ma, 2012; De Vries *et al.*, 2012) only considered whether the social media contents are gratified or not but did not examine the effect of the specific entertaining activities. According to the netnographic findings, there was a set of new topics (i.e. influential and creative content, fun games and videos) in entertainment activities that should be examined in future study.

In terms of the construct of organic e-WOM, Zhang *et al.* (2017) identified three key themes referred to this topic: product or brand information, transaction and delivery service, and physical or online store information. The quantitative finding is consistent with Zhang *et al.*'s (2017) identification. Specifically, four measurement items were extracted: *PR01 – I discuss the variety of the product offered on the brand's Sina Weibo*; *TR01 – I discuss ease of transactions on the brand's Sina Weibo*; *TR03 – I speak of the rapid delivery on the brand's Sina Weibo*; *PH01 – I tell others about my shopping experiences with this brand on the brand's Sina Weibo*. Notably, there was one measurement item describing the content of negative e-WOM that was not extracted. In other words, it indicates that Chinese customers may not like to discuss a brand's notoriety on Sina Weibo. However, this finding is different to the result from the netnographic study. The researcher identified that customer-generated comments related to the topics of online transactions and physical store service were usually negative.

With regard to the construct of amplified e-WOM, perceived brand interaction and celebrity interaction were considered as the two dimensions of amplified e-WOM

(Labrecque, 2014; Xiang *et al.*, 2016). The quantitative result offers statistical support to confirm these two dimensions can be used to measure the construct of amplified e-WOM. Specifically, the measurement items (*PA01 – Brand’s post on Sina Weibo shows me what other members are like, especially some celebrities I’m interested in; PA02 – The interaction with other members on Sina Weibo makes me feel comfortable, especially with some celebrities I hardly contact in real life, as if I were with friends; PE04 – Brand listens to what I have to say on Sina Weibo*) were extracted in EFA of the main survey. This finding indicates that Chinese customers really enjoy communicating with brands and celebrities on social networking platforms. The easy and comfortable interactions between customer and brands/celebrities has made Chinese customers feel that these official social media accounts are not an artificial image but a real person with distinct characteristics. The netnographic finding also supports that the topic of amplified e-WOM yields significant effect on attracting customer-generated comments.

Furthermore, the quantitative findings prove that the remunerative activities are considered as a popular topic to attract Chinese customers to engage. All measurement items from previous literature (Azar *et al.*, 2016; De Vries *et al.*, 2017) were extracted, which included: *RE01 – I interact with brands on Sina Weibo in order to access discounts and promotions; RE02 – I like to interact with brands on Sina Weibo as they offer contests/games/sweepstakes from which I can access free products or other special offers; RE03 – I can get something in exchange for my participation/contribution to a brand’s Sina Weibo page*. This finding indicates that Chinese customers would like to gain a variety of tangible rewards through their engagement on brands’ Sina Weibo pages. The netnographic results also support this finding, as the brand-generated posts related to remunerative content received a substantial number of customer comments.

### (3) The effects of antecedent factors on motivating customer engagement in dialogic co-creation

After examining the relationships between identified antecedent factors and different types of dialogic co-creation activities, the results prove that consumer expertise has a significant impact on motivating Chinese customers to engage in organic e-WOM activities and amplified e-WOM activities on Sina Weibo. This is consistent with previous studies’ findings (Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Packard and Wooten, 2013; Lu *et al.*, 2014; Wolny and Mueller, 2013). In other words, it reflects that Chinese customers who possess high cognitive effort and product analysis capability have a greater willingness to engage in sharing opinions, information and experiences. Packard and Wooten (2013) claim that such customer online social behaviour can be explained as customers who are familiar with a specific product category are more eager to engage in e-WOM activity, as they are confident to share their knowledge and they believe their opinions can provide assistance to others. Furthermore, the quantitative result also indicates that Chinese customers who enjoy learning product and brand information are also willing to interact with brands and celebrities on Sina Weibo. According to Lu *et al.* (2014), a customer’s brand awareness will motivate him/her to seek more information about the brand and interact with brand. Gong and Li (2017) also claimed that celebrity attractiveness will

motivate customers to follow and look for interactions with the celebrity on social media.

Additionally, a higher level of customer's social expertise will motivate Chinese customers to engage in the organic e-WOM and remunerative activities on Sina Weibo. This is consistent with previous scholars' findings (Wolny and Mueller, 2013; Smith *et al.*, 2007; Xu-Priour *et al.*, 2014). These scholars held the view that the members of a customer's social group will influence a customer's engagement behaviour in e-WOM. Although Chinese customers are now more independent, they have inherited and are influenced by the collectivist culture. In addition, as more remunerative activities on social media require customers to invite their social contacts to engage, customers who have a larger number of social connections will have a greater opportunity to be involved in the remunerative activities (Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2013). However, the result shows that customers' social expertise will not foster customers' engagement in the amplified e-WOM activities. This finding is different to the previous literature (Sheth and Kim, 2018; Aral and Walker, 2011; Vivek *et al.*, 2012), which stated that customers' brand attitude, preference and behaviour would be influenced by their reference group. The researcher considers that Chinese customers may have their own preferences towards brand and celebrity. Interacting with a brand or celebrity is not a collective activity. Customers can initiate engagement in any kind of dialogic co-creation and create value by themselves.

## **9.8 Objective 6**

***To establish and examine the relationships regarding customer engagement in major types of dialogic co-creation activities and the outcomes in terms of perceived customer benefits and customer purchase intention***

This quantitative study examined the established relationships between customer engagement in different types of dialogic co-creation activities and their consequences, which were identified from the literature review. The empirical findings provided a set of valuable contributions. First, in terms of the three types of customer benefits, the quantitative results identified which kind of customer benefit was received by Chinese customers after they engaged in the dialogic co-creation experience on Sina Weibo. In addition, the quantitative findings specified which type of dialogic co-creation activity will enhance customers' perceived benefits and purchase intention. Furthermore, the results provide additional findings to highlight the relationships between different themes of dialogic co-creation activities. These key findings will be discussed respectively in the following section.

### **(1) The key components of customer perceived benefits**

Utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal benefits are proposed as the key components of customers' perceived benefits from social media engagement (Chen *et al.*, 2015; Liang *et al.* 2012). However, the result of EFA of the main survey shows that only hedonic benefits have been identified in the factorial structure. Specifically, the measurement items that were extracted are: HE01 – I gain a sense of happiness from

engaging with brands on Sina Weibo; HE02 – I enjoy the pleasant and relaxed emotion gained from engaging with brands on Sina Weibo; HE04 – I pass my time away engaging with brands on Sina Weibo when bored. In other words, this result indicates that Chinese customers perceived more hedonic benefits than other types of benefits from their engagement in dialogic co-creation with international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo. Notably, the construct of entertainment activities was not extracted in EFA of the main survey. Therefore, the hedonic benefits that Chinese customers perceived do not stem from the entertainment activities but from the e-WOM and remunerative activities on Sina Weibo. Chen *et al.* (2015) explained that the positive interactive activity can be considered as a mental incentive process that may result in providing hedonic value for customers.

The researcher considers that there are a number of reasons the other types of benefits (utilitarian and interpersonal benefits) were not emphasised by customers. First, with regard to the utilitarian benefits, the purpose of Chinese customers who engage in the dialogic co-creation activities may not be to seek useful information but to share their expertise, opinions and experiences. Therefore, Chinese customers may not care about whether they have received practical information on Sina Weibo. Zhang *et al.* (2017) also found that customers engaging in social interaction would not impact on customers' perceived functional value. Furthermore, as the economic rewards offered by international fast fashion can only benefit a few customers, the majority of customers have not received any prizes. Second, in terms of the interpersonal benefits, although Chinese customers enjoy interacting with brands and other customers on Sina Weibo, they may prefer standing out to express their points of view towards fashion and introducing their fashion taste and style to other users. However, they pay less attention to whether they get social support or praise from other customers for their viewpoints. They also care less about whether other customers have listened to their opinions or followed their suggestions. This finding implies new understandings towards Chinese fast fashion shoppers' logic and online social behaviour.

## (2) The effect of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities on perceived customer benefits

The quantitative result supports the hypothesis that Chinese customers' active engagement in dialogic co-creation with brands and other customers on Sina Weibo will enhance customers' perceived hedonic benefits. Although Chen *et al.* (2015) emphasised that three types of customer benefits (utilitarian, hedonic and interpersonal) can be created by customers through their participation in virtual communities, they did not specify the effects of customer engagement in different types of activities on customers' perceived benefits. The quantitative study has proved that customer engagement in organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM and remunerative activities will enhance customers' perception of hedonic benefits.

Previous literature has pointed out that online interactions can be considered as a pleasurable and hedonic experience for customers (Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Chen *et al.*, 2015). The quantitative result in this study is consistent with this finding,

which indicates that Chinese customers perceive hedonic feelings and pass the times they are bored by sharing opinions, information and experiences about fast fashion shopping with others on Sina Weibo. In addition, the result implies that Chinese customers are gratified by interacting with the brands or celebrities they like. Lee and Jang (2013) mentioned that interacting with public figures on social media can make customers feel self-satisfied and help them to temporarily escape from reality. Furthermore, when customers engage in remunerative activities, they expect to receive a prize or other type of economic reward, which would make them feel pleasure during their engagement process. Once their expectation has been fulfilled, they will perceive a higher level of hedonic benefits compared to those whose expectations have not been fulfilled.

### (3) The effect of customer engagement in dialogic co-creation activities on customer purchase intention

A customer's purchase intention has been considered as another essential outcome of engagement in dialogic co-creation activities (See-To and Ho, 2014; Erkan and Evans, 2016). However, the quantitative finding of this study confirms that Chinese customers only engaging in amplified e-WOM will improve their purchase intention. This differs from previous empirical findings (Chu and Sung, 2015). Sharing brand information, product reviews and customer consumption experiences via e-WOM has been deemed as a reliable resource for customers. After engaging in the online discussions, customers may resolve their concerns and uncertainties, which can improve their purchase intention (Adjei *et al.*, 2010; Cheema and Kaikati, 2010). However, this kind of customer logic may only be suitable for Western customers. The quantitative finding indicates that Chinese customers' purchase intention may not be easily influenced by their social contacts. As discussed previously, Chinese customers have unique opinions and preferences towards fashion consumption.

Although Chinese customers' purchase intention may not be affected by C2C interactions, the result indicates Chinese customers are strongly influenced by the brands and celebrities that they like. The more frequently customers interact with their favourite brands or celebrities, the higher the potential for them to be induced to purchase an item (Xiang *et al.*, 2016; Boerman *et al.*, 2017). The netnographic findings also support this result, as the researcher found that Chinese customers left more comments to express their purchase intention on the brand posts related to amplified e-WOM activities compared to the other types of activities on Sina Weibo.

Furthermore, the quantitative finding demonstrates that remunerative activities will not increase Chinese customers' purchase intention. Although previous studies mentioned that customers will generate positive attitudes towards brands after they receive economic rewards from brands on social media (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013), they did not consider that very few customers gain such rewards. Therefore, it is possible that customers engaging in remunerative activities will not improve their intention to buy from this brand.

### (4) The relationships between the major types of dialogic co-creation activities



In addition to the above three findings, another key finding from the quantitative study is that there are positive relationships among the different types of dialogic co-creation activities. Most of the previous studies categorised a variety of themes for social media marketing activities (e.g. Kim and Ko, 2012; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016; Heinonen, 2011) or brand-generated posts on social media (e.g. Tafesse, 2015; Dolan *et al.*, 2015; Wagner *et al.*, 2017; Kim and Johnson, 2016). However, few studies have identified and examined whether there is a stimulative effect between two types of dialogic co-creation activities. The quantitative results indicate that organic e-WOM activities will induce Chinese customers to engage in amplified e-WOM activities on Sina Weibo. Although some previous scholars (i.e. De Matos and Rossi 2008) have argued that organic e-WOM and amplified e-WOM are two distinctive types of e-WOM activities, the netnographic findings from this research have provided evidence that some brand-generated posts included both types of e-WOM content and attracted a significant number of customer comments.

Furthermore, the quantitative findings also show that remunerative activities will induce Chinese customers to engage in organic e-WOM activities on Sina Weibo. Muntinga *et al.* (2011) emphasised that the economic incentives would attract customers to engage in interactive activities on social media, but they did not validate the relationship between the two types of social media activities. In addition, the netnographic findings identified 28 pieces of brand-generated posts containing remunerative and organic e-WOM content, which yielded a significant effect on attracting customers to generate comments. For instance, one brand-generated post showed newly launched products and asked customers to choose their favourite item. Five customers who left comments specifying the reason for their choice were chosen to be sent their favourite item free of charge.

Apart from these, the quantitative findings also imply that remunerative activities will induce Chinese customers to engage in amplified e-WOM activities on Sina Weibo. Very few studies proposed the potential relationship between these two types of social media activities. However, the netnographic study identified that there were 31 pieces of brand-generated posts that included remunerative and amplified e-WOM content. Typical examples of this type of brand-generated post are brand-facilitated interactions among customers or the brand posting a celebrity endorsement and asking customers to express what they want to tell their idol or the brand. Five customers who left comments would be selected to receive a prize.

Although these potential relationships among the different types of dialogic co-creation activities have been identified in a quantitative study, a further test that uses a new sample should be conducted in future. The limitations of the survey sample will be discussed in the next chapter (in Section 10.5). However, these findings can provide valuable and practical insights for international fast fashion brands that want to facilitate relationships with Chinese customers on Chinese social networking platforms.

### **9.9 Objective 7**

***To extend the understandings of Customer-Dominant Logic by empirically establishing a more comprehensive set of attributes in a specific research context***

Extant literature (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015; Heinonen *et al.*, 2010; Heinonen *et al.*, 2013) has provided comprehensive discussions in terms of the definition and characteristics of C-D logic. This study will extend the understandings of the C-D logic by empirically identifying the key attributes regarding customer perspective, customer logic, customer value formation process, service provider's offerings and customer ecosystem in a specific research context.

According to the literature review (Section 3.4), most of the previous marketing studies that focus on investigating customer engagement in value co-creation have applied S-D logic to consider customers as value co-creators in this process (Etgar, 2008; Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Carbonell *et al.*, 2014; Smaliukiene *et al.*, 2015; France *et al.*, 2015; Witell *et al.*, 2017). A analysis of the netnographic data and online survey data confirms that Chinese young female fast fashion customers play the role of value creators and value co-creators simultaneously when they engage in dialogic co-creation activities with international fast fashion brands and other customers on a Chinese social networking platform. The findings of this study acknowledge that C-D logic, considering the customer's perspective, becomes more relevant for scholars to apply in the marketing studies regarding customer engagement behaviour on social media. The attributes related to the five characteristics of C-D logic will be now be discussed.

Firstly, in terms of the attributes of customer perspective, the findings acknowledge that the value formation process does not embed in a provider's specific service but happens in customer's daily life. Previous studies based on S-D logic emphasise value is created when customers engage in the provider-facilitated process and cooperated with the service provider (Hoyer *et al.*, 2010; Pongsakornrunsilp and Schroeder, 2011; Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2016). However, C-D logic highlights that the service providers only play a role as value facilitators and service providers should put efforts on how to embed service/facilitated activities in customer's daily life (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). The netnographic findings show that Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers enjoy browsing brand pages, generating contents and interacting with brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. They consider engagement in the dialogic co-creation activities on social media as one of their leisure activities. In other words, it confirms that the value is not created in a specific service/activity facilitated by service providers, but rather is generated in customer's daily life.

Secondly, in terms of the attributes of customer logic, previous studies consider the variety of operand and operant resources as the drivers to motivate customers to engage in the value co-creation process (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Vargo *et al.*, 2008; Grönroos, 2008; Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014). However, C-D logic emphasises

the customer logic should be considered as the antecedent factor that influences customer's action, behaviours and preferences (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). The definition of customer logic in C-D logic is a type of customer sense that guide the customer to make an appropriate choice, to conduct a task and to achieve his/her goals (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015).

Heinonen and Strandvik (2015) encouraged scholars to identify and categorise the antecedent factors that can represent customer logic. Accordingly, the netnographic findings confirm that the consumer expertise and social expertise can be considered as the antecedent factors to motivate Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers to engage in dialogic co-creation activities with international fast fashion brands and other customers on a Chinese social networking platform. In other words, customer logic can be understood as customer's capabilities to evaluate product/brand information, share shopping experience and product review and gather social support from their social context in this specific research context. These capabilities have been confirmed in the quantitative study as enhancing customers' motivation to engage in dialogic co-creation activities on a SNS. Specifically, customer expertise will influence customer engagement in organic e-WOM activities and amplified e-WOM activities on SNSs. Moreover, customer's social expertise will influence customers to engage in organic e-WOM activities and remunerating activities on SNSs.

Thirdly, in terms of service provider's offerings, S-D logic considers the offerings as the products, services or solutions that provided by firms (Grönroos, 2004; Grönroos, 2006 and Grönroos, 2008). However, C-D logic defines the service provider's offerings as the products, services, solutions, activities or experiences that customers decided to user/engage (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). More importantly, service providers should consider how to embed their offerings in the customer's daily life and assist customers to generate value for themselves (Heinonen, 2010). Specifically, service providers need to put efforts on engaging in customer's value formation process and identify what, when, where and how to design and provide offerings for customers to achieve their value (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015).

In this specific research context, the netnographic findings show that international fast fashion brands considered as service providers have engaged in customer value formation process by facilitating dialogic co-creation activities and interacting with customers. The offerings included: (1) the brand pages that the international fast fashion brands have set up on Sina Weibo; (2) the different types of dialogic co-creation activities including organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertaining and remunerative activities; (3) the brands' replies to customers' comments on Sina Weibo. Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers have utilised these offerings to generate value and receive benefits from the dialogic co-creation engagement process.

Fourthly, according to C-D logic, customer value formation process is based on customer value-in-use (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). C-D logic emphasises that value is not created through the cooperation between the customer and service provider in a specific activity but formed in the whole interactive process that customers engage in their daily lives (Heinonen *et al.*, 2013). Heinonen and Strandvik (2015) suggest that evaluation of the customer value formation process should be based on the process and outcome of the experience that customer has engaged in. The outcome of customer value formation process can be positive or negative (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). Heinonen and Strandvik (2015) also suggest that the customer value formation process needs to be explored by understanding customer logic and the service provider's offerings.

Based on the empirical findings, the customer value formation process in this research context can be described as Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers motivated by their consumer expertise and social expertise to engage in four popular types of dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo. Through sharing product/brand information, personal shopping experiences and product reviews, interacting and discussing the product-unrelated topics (e.g. entertaining topics, remunerative topics) with brands and other customers, customers generate hedonic benefits and enhance their purchase intention.

Fifthly, the customer ecosystem is another characteristic that has been emphasised in C-D logic (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). In S-D logic, value co-creation is considered as a dyadic process that happened between a customer and one specific service provider (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Vargo *et al.*, 2008; Grönroos, 2008). However, in C-D logic, customer value formation appears within the customer ecosystem, which includes customers, different service providers and other customers. Customer stands at the central among these actors (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). Based on the empirical findings of this thesis, the customer ecosystem in this specific research context can be described as the Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers, international fast fashion brands and other customers who also engaged in the dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo.

In conclusion, this study is one of the first to identify and examine the attributes in C-D logic in the research context of Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers' engagement behaviour on a Chinese SNS. This study identifies the importance of C-D logic and how it can be applied in customer engagement behaviour study. Taken a customer-dominant perspective, this study provides a clear illustration of how Chinese female fast fashion customers engage in dialogic co-creation activities on a Chinese SNS, which enhances the understanding of their online social behaviour. This study also confirms the important link between customer logic and customer engagement in the value formation process, which has not been empirically acknowledged before.

### 9.10 Summary

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of each research objective based on the qualitative and quantitative findings, giving insights into understanding customers' logic, value formation process and perceived values from customer engagement.

First, from the literature review (Chapter 2, 3 and 4), the researcher identified the research gaps based on marketing communication studies, customer online social behaviour studies and fast fashion and the Chinese context. In order to address the key research problem (how Chinese customers engage in the value formation process with international fast fashion brands on a Chinese social networking platform), the researcher adopted C-D logic and identified the antecedent factors, the key types of dialogic co-creation activities for fast fashion customers and the positive consequences of customer engagement.

Second, via the netnographic study, the researcher confirmed that the antecedent factors (consumer expertise and social expertise) can reflect Chinese customers' logic towards engaging in dialogic co-creation with brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. In other words, Chinese customers' motivations to engage in dialogic co-creation activities are to share their opinion of products/brands, fashion styles and previous consumption experiences and to interact with brands, celebrities and other customers. In addition, Chinese customers are eager to increase their knowledge of fashion and fashion shopping. The researcher also identified a set of distinctive online social behaviours, including sharing selfies taken in changing rooms, and using the online video chat application to get involved in face-to-face interactions with celebrities. In addition, Chinese customers consider fashion brands as a personalised account rather than an official account to share their daily lives.

Third, via the netnographic study, the researcher identified that organic e-WOM and remunerative activities are the most popular dialogic co-creation activities for Chinese customers on Sina Weibo. In addition, the researcher also discovered a set of new sub-topics for the major types of dialogic co-creation activities, including the brand-generated posts related to product/brand sustainability, brand antecedents and the economic reward of the 'red envelope'. In addition, the researcher found that brand-generated posts not only include one type of topic but mix with other topics to attract customers to generate comments. Essentially, brand-generated posts mix organic e-WOM content with remunerative content or combine amplified e-WOM content with remunerative content and have a significant effect on the number customer comments.

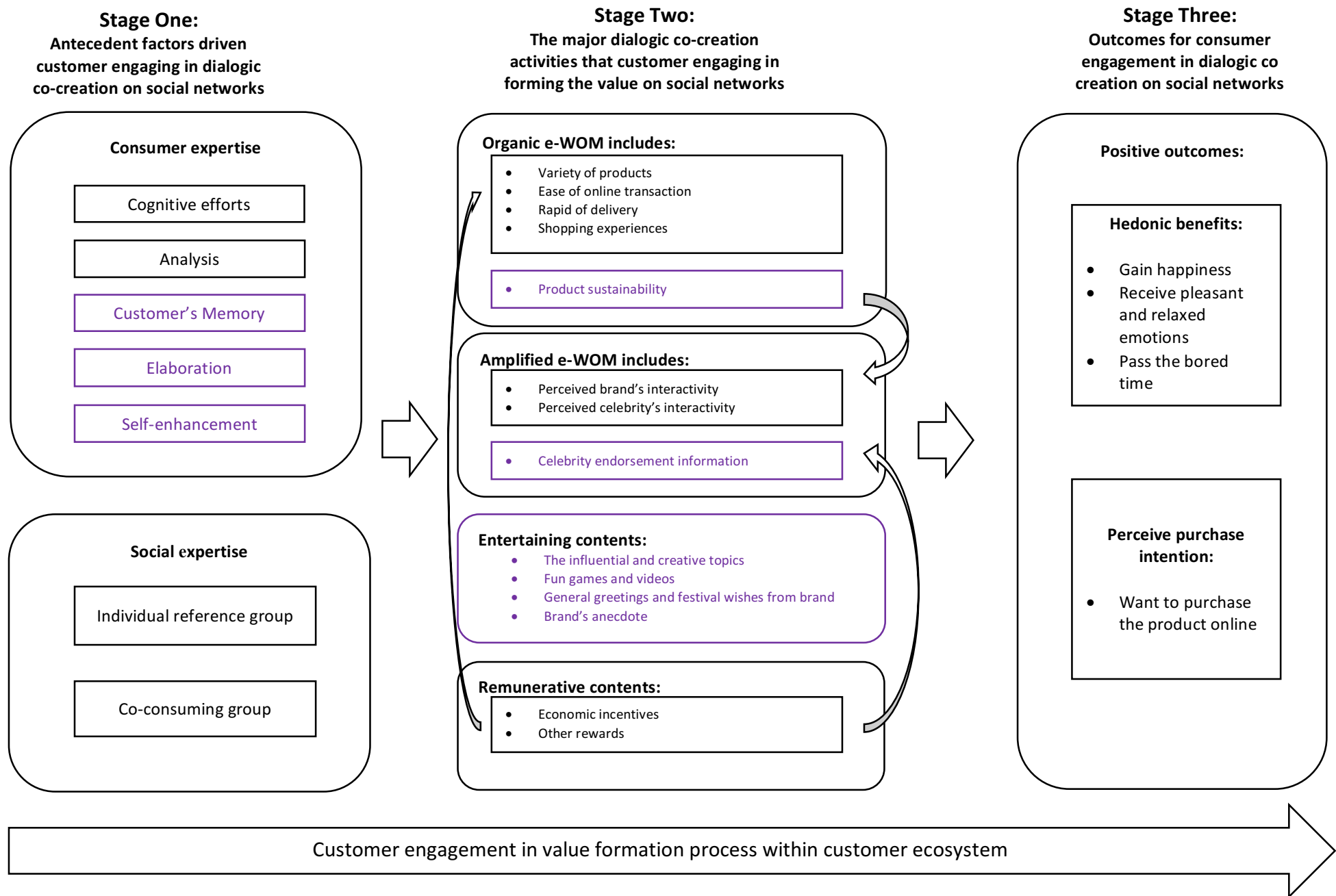
Fourth, the quantitative study based on the online survey identified the key components of customer logic, dialogic co-creation activities and customers' perceived benefits. The findings indicate that Chinese customers have high cognitive effort, product analysis ability and social ability. Moreover, Chinese customers prefer to engage in organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM and remunerative activities with international fast fashion brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. In addition,

Chinese customers focus on hedonic benefits, which means they pursue pleasurable and relaxing experiences and pass their leisure time on social networking platforms.

Fifth, the quantitative study tested and confirmed that consumer expertise will motivate Chinese customers to engage in organic e-WOM and amplified e-WOM activities on Sina Weibo. It confirmed that social expertise will drive Chinese customers to engage in remunerative activities. In addition, organic e-WOM and remunerative activities will influence Chinese customers' perception of hedonic benefits, while amplified e-WOM activities will influence Chinese customers' perception of hedonic benefits and their purchase intention. It also found there are potential relationships among the different types of dialogic co-creation activities.

Finally, a new structural path model was established and tested for validity to conclude the empirical findings. Figure 9.1 summaries an integrated conceptual model based on both qualitative and quantitative findings. The purpose of this diagram is to provide a holistic picture of how Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers engage in dialogic co-creation activities with international fast fashion brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. In this model, the contents in purple are the exploratory findings from qualitative (netnographic) study, while the contents in black are the valid findings from the quantitative study (online survey).

Figure 9.1: A conceptual model based on both qualitative and quantitative findings



## **Chapter 10 Conclusion**

### **10.1 Introduction**

The final chapter of this thesis aims to draw a synthetical conclusion by illustrating the contributions, implications, limitations and future directions of this research. First, it outlines the contributions to the knowledge in terms of marketing communication, C-D logic, customer engagement in dialogic co-creation (Section 10.2). In addition, it subsequently discusses the contributions to the methodology and marketing practice (Section 10.2). Second, it provides the theoretical and managerial implications based on a set of contributions (Section 10.3). Third, it points out the limitations of this thesis (Section 10.4). Finally, the directions for future study related to this research topic are given in the last section (Section 10.5).

### **10.2 Contributions**

Overall, this thesis has provided significant and valuable contributions to the theoretical, methodological and practical domains through establishing and testing the first conceptual model that merges the knowledge of marketing communication, C-D logic and customer engagement in value formation process. According to the qualitative and quantitative findings, a set of the unique and distinctive of Chinese customers online social behaviours towards engaging in dialogic co-creation activities with international fast fashion brands and other customers on Sina Weibo have been identified. Specifically, there are five dimensions of the theoretical contributions, two aspects of the methodological contributions and three dimensions of the practical contributions based on the findings of this thesis respectively. The following sections discuss these contributions in details.

#### **10.2.1 Contributions to theory**

The first theoretical contribution of this thesis is it provides a holistic view to understand customer engagement in value formation process from customer's perspective. By adopting C-D logic, this study considers beyond the visible resources that it provided by a company to investigate the customer logic, customer activities and customer ecosystem that influences customer engagement behaviour towards value creation/co-creation activities in virtual environment. Although there is a great amount of previous studies that have investigated the customer engagement behaviours on social media platforms (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Maslowska *et al.*, 2016), few of them have put efforts on exploring the antecedents, process and consequences of customer engagement situation simultaneously. The findings of netnographic study and online survey have offered substantial evidence to advance the understandings towards customer engagement behaviours in such research context. The findings support that customers are capable to both create and co-create value in their engagement process.

Second, this thesis has provided the understanding towards customer logic. As Heinonen and Strandvik (2015) highlighted that understanding customer logic is



particularly essential but also difficult for service provider. Each customer has a subjective logic to allocate their tangible and intangible resources and to influence their behaviour on involving in a business practice. Investigating from customer perspective is not following the conventional configuration of customer behaviour to understand customer's needs and expectations but identifying the antecedents that reflect customer mental drivers on their behaviours. This study has explored and tested the key antecedent factors that motivate customer engagement in value formation process on a social networking platform. The findings indicate that Chinese customers who possess consumer expertise and social expertise are actively engaging in dialogic co-creation activities on a Chinese SNS.

The third theoretical contribution is regards to understand the customer preferred activities that embedded in customer's daily life. The notion of value formation in C-D logic is different from the concept of value co-creation in S-D logic (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). C-D logic requires service providers to look insight in customer's daily life, customer's interests and customer's habits, as they need to facilitate the customer activities that can be embed in customer's routine. Through the investigation, this study offered a contextualised understanding of customer value formation process, which has answered the questions towards when, where and how customers engage in dialogic co-creation activities. In addition, it has also answered the questions in terms of what activities and who are involved in the customer value formation process. Specifically, it identified that most of the Chinese fast fashion shoppers are interested in engaging in the brand-facilitated activities on Chinese social networking platform, Sina Weibo. These customers usually browse and interact with international fast fashion brands many times a day or at least twice a day. In addition, they prefer to engage in discussions and interactions with brands, celebrities and other customers related to the informational and remunerative topics. The predominant benefits that customer received after their engagement are the hedonic value, which provide them pleasurable and relaxing experiences and help them to pass their leisure time.

Fourth, this thesis has provided understanding towards customer ecosystem in value formation process. In this research context, Chinese customers not only engage in C2B communications but also involved in C2C interactions on Sina Weibo. The actors existing in customer ecosystem include customer's reference group (i.e. friends, family and peers), brands, celebrities and other customers. Additionally, the findings of this study have identified the roles that customer act in their ecosystem. The first and the most important role is value generator or contributor. Specifically, customer left comments on brand-generated posts for sharing personal opinions and relevant experiences and providing practical suggestions and products reviews. The second and common role is value co-creator. For instance, customer interacts with brands, celebrities or other customers on a social networking site to exchange the information or other benefits. The last role that customer plays in value formation process is value receiver. Generally, customer will be tag in the brand-generated posts by their reference group members (i.e. friends, peers) for product recommendations. Moreover, customer received replies from brand and other customers to resolve their uncertainty and issues related to fashion consumption.

The findings also confirmed that customer value emerges when customers are playing a variety of roles in their ecosystem.

Last, this study has advanced the understandings towards Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers' online social behaviours. Chinese customers have their distinctive engagement behaviours compared to the western customers, which can be concluded in five dimensions. First, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers rely on social media and social networking platform to search brand and product information and consumption reviews rather than depend on the resources from brand's official website or other traditional channels (e.g., TV, radio or magazine). Second, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers become more confident and independent on fashion consumption compared to previously. They would like to show others about their fashion taste and preference on online public area, even to share their selfies under brand-generated posts. In contrast, most of the western customers express complaints or negative product reviews on fashion brand pages on Twitter or Facebook (Gamboa and Gonçalves, 2014; Smith *et al.*, 2012). Although Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers' have generated negative e-WOM towards online/offline store service and store environment, they provided practical suggestions for brands to improve after sales service. Third, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers' environmental consciousness is gradually improving. They not only focus on fast fashion shopping but also willing to engage in the product sustainability's activities, such as old clothes donation and recycling. Moreover, they are also care about the relevant strategies that fast fashion brands have facilitated to reduce the resource wasting and environment pollution. Fourth, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers consider international fast fashion brand accounts as one of their close friends. In addition to gain information and economic rewards, they also express their personal emotions and concerns with brands. Fifth, among the variety of customer benefits, Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers prefer receiving hedonic benefits after engaged in the dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo. Chinese young female fast fashion shoppers perceive the online interactions with brands and other customers as an enjoyable and entertaining experience.

### **10.2.2 Contributions to methodology**

In addition to the academic contributions, this study has also made contributions to the research methodology, pertaining to investigating customer engagement in value formation process.

First, according to the literature review (Section 4.2), there is still very limited study has investigated customer logic and customer experience by using netnographic method. This study has implemented netnographic study to receive the exact nature of Chinese customers engaging in the dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo. Furthermore, through the online observation, it has identified the distinctive behaviours and preferences of Chinese customer engagement on a SNS. Heinonen and Strandvik (2015) stressed that customer logic is a complex notion, which cannot be explained simply by understanding customer needs and expectations. They criticised that the traditional method usually adopts the factors from provider's

perspective to understand customer logic and customer engagement behaviour rather than observe customer experiences to find out the suitable explanation of customer logic. They call for the future study to adopt netnographic approach to gain the holistic understanding towards customer logic and customer experience. Based on Heinonen and Strandvik's (2015) suggestion, this study discovers customer logic via netnographic study, which is different from conventional studies that purely focus on investigating customer's characteristics, customer needs or benefits. In addition, the researcher has been immersive in the scenario to understand customer engagement experience and identify the popular topics that customer prefer to engage in the dialogic co-creation. Through analysing customer-generated comments and brand-generated posts and comments, it has identified the key antecedent factors and other novel findings that influence customers on engaging in the interactions and discussions with international fast fashion brands and other customers on a SNS.

Second, in addition to netnographic method, this study emphasises the essential of complementing other research methods, such as online survey to gain comprehensive understanding of customer logic and customer engagement in value formation process. Weijio *et al.*, (2014) argued that researchers should not consider netnography as an ideal method to understand the complex of customer engagement phenomenon, as it cannot provide in-depth findings to verify the netnographic data. Therefore, a mix-method has been employed to validate the qualitative findings. However, through the quantitative data analysis process, a significant issue in terms of the survey constructs has been identified. Specifically, in order to validate the hypothesised relationships among customer logics, different types of dialogic co-creation activities and consequences of customer engagement, a set of measurement items have been adopted from previous empirical quantitative studies. However, some of these adopted measurement items cannot perfectly measure their respective construct. For instance, the selected measurement items from Godey *et al.*, (2016) and Enginkaya and Yilmaz, (2014) cannot properly measure the construct of entertaining contents in this research context. One of the reason to explain this identified issue is most of the previous empirical studies (e.g., Godey *et al.*, 2016; Lee and Ma, 2012; de Vries *et al.*, 2012) only evaluated whether the social media contents are funny and entertaining rather than specified the different topics of entertaining contents. Another reason is that there are a variety of new emerging topics of dialogic co-creation activities have not been formulated and validated as the measurement items. For instance, brand's anecdote is a new sub-topic of the entertaining contents, which has been identified from netnographic study. The netnographic study in this thesis has provided additional evidences towards the descriptions of the dialogic co-creation activities, which need to be further validated.

### **10.2.3 Contributions to practice**

This study has been able to provide some practical contributions to assist the international fast fashion brands to facilitate social media marketing strategy on Chinese social networking platform. First, the customer sample adopted in this research was the young Chinese customers who have actively engaged and interacted with international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo rather than the

general customer sample or student sample like some of existing studies have used (e.g., Kim and Song, 2017; Erkan and Evans, 2016). Through understanding Chinese customers' motivations towards engaging in dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo, this study has identified which type of Chinese customer have higher opportunity to get involved in the brand-facilitated activities on social media than the general social media users. Furthermore, by analysing the different contents of brand-generated posts on Sina Weibo, this study has categorised the main topics that Chinese customers are interested in co-create dialogues with brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. It also identified the topics that may easily to evoke negative effect and customer complains.

Second, as the netnographic study in this research was conducted in a real scenario, the Chinese social networking platform, Sina Weibo, it provides extremely distinctive findings to understand Sina Weibo's functions and characteristics compared to those studies (e.g., Kim and Johnson, 2016; Chae and Ko, 2016) that focused on western social media platforms. For instance, Sina Weibo will list the top five official accounts towards different business categories on the homepage. On the brand page, it will show the top 100 pieces of brand-generated posts that have received the most number of customer comments, likes and shares.

Third, the target international fast fashion brands that selected for this research are UNIQLO, ZARA and H&M. According to the qualitative and quantitative results, UNIQLO has been considered as the most popular international fast fashion brand for Chinese customers. Therefore, through observing and analysing the brand posts generated by UNIQLO, the implications can be utilised by other international fast fashion brands. The next section will discuss the implications based on these research contributions.

### **10.3 Implications of research findings**

Based on the contributions discussed above, there are some theoretical and managerial implications can be provided.

#### **10.3.1 Theoretical implications**

From theoretical perspective, this study has addresses several major debates in marketing communication and customer engagement study's domains. First, this study provides evidence to support the C-D logic that customers are predominantly considered as a value creator or co-creator in value formation process (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2015). Value is emerged in customer's daily life and ecosystem. This implies that the premises of S-D logic that provided by Vargo and Lusch (2008) and Gummesson (2008) may not suit to the marketing communication and customer engagement study in Chinese context. However, it does not mean the S-D logic is invalid. If the premises of S-D logic can be validated in other research context, it needs to demonstrate what is the role of customer in the value formation process.

Second, this study agrees that customer's logic is the key motivator to influence customer's action and resource allocation. Compared to previous studies (e.g.,

Nambisan and Baron, 2009; Buonincontri, 2017) that claimed customer benefits or other external factors are the key motivations to affect customer engagement behaviour, this study has considered customer's capabilities as the key drivers to reflect on how customers conduct dialogic co-creation with brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. The quantitative findings even confirmed that the consumer expertise and social expertise has positive effect on influencing Chinese customers' engagement in different types of dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo. However, other mental factors that may influence how customer lives in daily life and involved in marketing practices need to be further explored and investigated.

Third, this study agrees that the organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM, entertainment and remuneration are the four major types of dialogic co-creation activities among international fast fashion brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. Furthermore, it also enhances the understanding towards these four types of customer activities. Both the qualitative and quantitative results proved that the organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM and remuneration are not isolate to be appeared in brand-generated posts but have positive effect on each other. It recommends to re-test the effect among different dialogic co-creation activities in other research context.

Fourth, through the investigation, this research has been able to provide several implications of Chinese customers' online social behaviours. It emphasises that Chinese customers prefer sharing and expressing their opinions and experiences on social networking platform. However, Chinese customers expect to gain the hedonic value rather than the utilitarian value or social value from their online engagement experience. Such distinctive customer logic may different from the western customers' and other Asian countries' customers'. Therefore, this study implies that the other scholars can work on other specific contexts and explore other customers' online social behaviours based on the C-D logic.

### **10.3.2 Managerial implications**

The contributions of this study can provide several useful implications and directions for marketing practitioners to design and facilitate the social media marketing strategies on Chinese social media.

First, the Chinese social media users who are willing to involved in the discussions and interactions with international fast fashion brands usually are those young customers between 24 and 35 years old (Section 8.3). They are familiar with this brand. They have purchase experience with this brand and they are interested to know more about this brand (Section 9.5). This finding indicates that international fast fashion brands can maintain a reliable relationship with their existing customers via the present on Chinese social networking platform, Sina Weibo. However, brands still need to put efforts on how to attract the potential customers to engage in dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo. Here is three pieces of valuable suggestions:

- 1) Facilitate the activities that allow C2C interactions on SNSs

As the finding indicates that Chinese customers prefer to interact with other customers for information exchange and experience sharing, fast fashion brands can design the relevant activities to stimulate customers' interactions to exchange customer's opinions towards fashion shopping. In addition, as the finding indicates Chinese customers still rely on their reference group on social media, although they have become more independent than before, fast fashion brands can encourage customers to invite their friends or peers to engage in brand activities together.

2) Facilitate the activities that allow customers to share their interests

As the finding reveals that Chinese customers have higher opportunity to interact with the other customer who have similar interests and habits as themselves, fast fashion brands can generate different topics (i.e. music, film, food, traveling and festival) to allow customers can find other customers who share similar interests and develop their personal relationship after the interaction on social media.

3) Facilitate the activities that allow customers to help each other

As the result indicates that Chinese customers would like to express their opinions to help others to resolve relevant issues, fast fashion brands can encourage customers to provide their assistance when they see the questions that asked by other customers on brand page on Sina Weibo. Fast fashion brands can provide small rewards to those customers who always contribute their expertise to help others. The positive interactions among the customers can enhance the harmonious level of social media environment and attract more potential customers to get engage in.

Second, in addition to the C2C interactions, both the qualitative and quantitative findings of this study also suggest that Chinese customers expect to receive positive dialogues with brands on SNSs (Section 9.6; Section 9.8). The result indicates that UNIQLO has received the highest attention by Chinese customers compared to the other international fast fashion brands (ZARA and H&M) (Section 7.3). Specifically, Chinese customers would like to get replies from brands effectively rather than receive the advertisements of the product on social media. From this perspective, UNIQLO has facilitated C2B interactions in a high level to satisfy its customers. More essentially, the quantitative findings confirm that only amplified e-WOM will increase Chinese customer's purchase intention. In other words, fast fashion brands need to employ several dedicated social media staffs to continually interact and communicate with customers on SNSs. In addition, fast fashion brands need to find the proper celebrity to endorse their brands, especially the Chinese celebrities who are popular and can yield significant effect on influencing Chinese customers' attitudes.

Third, Chinese customers would like to engage in the organic e-WOM and remunerative activities on Sina Weibo (Section 9.8). Although these activities may not influence on their purchase intention, this study strongly recommends fast fashion brands to keep generating this two topics simultaneously on their brand posts. Specifically, fast fashion brands can use some economic incentives to attract more customers to leave comments and feedbacks towards the brand, product and

service on SNSs. In addition, although Chinese customers are not interested in entertaining topics as much as the other topics, this study suggests fast fashion brands to discourse innovative topic to entertain their customers on SNSs.

#### **10.4 Research limitations**

This thesis has put efforts on enhancing the understanding of how Chinese customers engage in dialogic co-creation activities with international fast fashion brands and other customers on Sina Weibo. Although it has provided many contributions to knowledge and practice, it involves several the limitations.

First, in terms of the customer logic, there may be other factors that have not been considered to understand Chinese customers' logic. This thesis has identified the key antecedent factors of consumer expertise and social expertise can reflect the majority of Chinese fast fashion shoppers' logic towards engaging in the dialogic co-creation activities on Sina Weibo. However, as customer logic is a complex concept cannot only be concluded by two factors, this requires further investigation to find out other potential factors can denote customer's logic. Heinonen and Strandvik (2015) also suggested that the future study should explore customer logic from customer's mental perspective.

Second, with regards to the dialogic co-creation activities, the measurement items may not measure their respective constructs very well. For instance, during the measurement item purification process, the construct of entertaining activities has been removed from the factor structure, which indicates that the measurement items adopted from Godey *et al.*, (2016) and Enginkaya and Yilmaz, (2014) cannot properly measure the construct of entertaining activities in this research context. The future study is recommended to define the specific contents that involved in the entertaining activities on social media. Furthermore, other constructs including organic e-WOM, amplified e-WOM and remuneration are required to be re-defined and validated, as there were several items from these constructs have been removed in the EFA and CFA process in main survey.

Third, regarding the consequence of customer engaging in dialogic co-creation activities, this study has discussed more about the positive results compared to the negative outcomes. However, it is valuable to explore the negative effects and conflicts that may yield from the value formation process, which can enhance the understanding of Chinese customer engagement behaviour on social networking sites. Marketers can improve their marketing strategies to avoid the value co-destruction happened.

Fourth, the results from netnographic study are limited to the scope of time and context. As the netnographic data was collected in specific time and context. Chinese customers' thoughts and behaviours are changing, therefore, the netnographic study on the same topic that conduct in one year later may get different results. In addition, the researcher has only observed and collected the customer-generated comments from three selected international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo, the

future study is suggested to observe and collect customer-generated comments from other international fast fashion brands and other Chinese social networking platforms such as Wechat.

Sixth, although a sufficient sample (n=401) has been collected to generate a reliable result of the structural equation model, the target respondents of this sample was the young Chinese female fast fashion shoppers aged between 24-35, which indicates that the results of the online survey cannot provide generalised findings. In order to completely understand Chinese customers' online social behaviours on Chinese social media, future study should target different demographic respondents to provide implications for the brands in other business contexts.

### **10.5 Directions for future research**

Having discussed the limitations of this thesis, this section provides suggestions for the future study to extend the knowledge of marketing communication, C-D logic and customer engagement behaviour.

First, this study has investigated the Chinese fast fashion shoppers' online social behaviours and has identified the interesting attributes related to the target customers' engagement preferences. As the fast fashion customers' logic may be different from the customers who prefer luxury shopping. For instance, Kim and Ko (2012) has identified that the social media marketing activity such as customization is one of the popular topic for luxury shoppers. Therefore, the future study is recommended to explore the antecedents, activities and consequences that influence on luxury fashion customers' engagement behaviour on social media.

Second, according to C-D logic, customer value is embedded in customer's daily life or customer's interests. In order to get insight of customer value formation process, new methods are required to adopt in future study. In spite of the netnography that suggested by Heinonen and Strandvik, (2015), the other methods such as experiment, interviews that can get access to more specific data from customer's perspective are recommended. Finne and Grönroos (2017) claim that the new techniques that connected to customer's nervous system can provide accurately more insights of customer's mind and logic. They also mention that the combination of big data and neuromarketing can push the development of marketing study and practice.

Third, it is calling for conducting a comparative study to analyse the difference of customer engagement logics, preferences and behaviours between Chinese customers and western customers. In addition, the future studies can investigate the other culture or psychological factors that influence on the western and non-Western customers' logics towards online social behaviours. Furthermore, the future studies are recommended to compare the different types of customer value formation process that embedded in customer's mundane life between western and non-western customers. The findings must provide valuable implications for global fashion marketers to design their social media marketing strategies.



Fourth, the netnographic findings have identified that young Chinese female fast fashion shoppers have increased their environmental consciousness and prefer engaging in the organic e-WOM activities that related to product sustainability's topic. This study has only identified that young Chinese female fast fashion shoppers pay attention to donating old clothes donation and product recycling. Future study could focus on identifying more dialogic co-creation topics regarding product sustainability. Future study could also to examine the effect of customer engaging in dialogic co-creation activities about product sustainability on customer purchase intention.

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### Appendix 1: Summary of the key studies that have investigated value co-creation process

Context	Investigation's perspective	Summary of Study	Methodology	Findings	Author(s) and Journal
Co-production	Customer	A five-stage of customer engaging in a co-production process framework has been established.	Analytical framework	This framework tries to evaluate the customer resources and customer motivations as the antecedences, cost calculation as the process and the customer performances, customer benefits as the outcomes during the co-production process.	Etgar (2008)  Journal of the Academic marketing
Service recovery	Customer	This study explores the customer's performance in service recovery process and validates this framework.	Mix-method  Focus group interview  Small group interview  223 Experiments	The results reveal that the when customer engage in the service recovery experience, will improve service satisfaction and their intention to engage in the service co-creation process in future.	Dong <i>et al.</i> , (2008)  Journal of the academy of marketing science
Technological brand	Customer	This study develops and tests a conceptual model in terms of customers participating in virtual value creation process.	Quantitative method  Online survey with 152 valid responses	The results show that customer's concerning benefits will impact on their motivations on engaging in the value creation activities.	Nambisan & Baron, (2009)  Journal of product innovation management
New product development	Customer	This study investigates how customers engage in the virtual co-creation experiences for new product development.	Quantitative method  727 pieces of online survey	The results identify a set of customer internal and external factors influencing on customer virtual co-creation	Füller <i>et al.</i> , (2009)  Journal of Management Information Systems

				experiences including the co-creation task and product, customer involvement, customer enjoyment and customer characteristics.	
Service marketing	All actors	This paper provides a value co-creation process framework through the actors' resources integration, actor-to-actor interactions and mutual benefits received.	Conceptual framework development	The framework implies that the quality and quantity of the actor's resources integrations may influence on the interactions among many actors.	Gummesson & Mele (2010)  Journal of Business Marketing Management
Furniture market	Both consumers and retailers	The study categories the value co-creation process from different actor's perspectives including the customer, supplier and encounter.	Qualitative method  Multiple case studies	The findings recognise that both the upstream and downstream are essential in the value co-creation process. Retailers are the value facilitators and co-creation supporters, while consumers are the value co-creators.	Andreu <i>et al.</i> , (2010)  Journal of Retailing and Consumer Service
New product development	Customer and firm	This study outlines the motivations for customer to cooperate with firm for the new product development, the process for this co-creation and the outcomes for customers and firms from the co-creation engagement.	Conceptual framework	Four types of co-creation process have been recognised, which indicate that the co-creation process should be transparency. More so, it suggests that firms need to protect their intellectual property when they provide the resources for customer	Hoyer <i>et al.</i> , (2010)  Journal of Service Research

				to co-product products.	
Football fan club	Consumer	This study demonstrates the process of individual consumers participating in the value co-creation process in the context of football fan club.	Qualitative method  Netnography	The results show that the main goals of each consumer engage in co-creation process are to pursue information collection, social relationship and community identity development, collective resources contributions and brand culture supporting.	Pongsakornrunsilp & Schroeder, (2011)  Marketing Theory
Services	Customer	This study provides a script to describe the value creation process from customer perspective.	Service script development	The customer scripts including the customer resources' integration, customers' performances have positive influences on value co-creation process with service providers.	Eichentopf <i>et al.</i> , (2011)  Journal of Service Management
General service context	Customer	This study seeks to establish a model to illustrate how customers integrate the relevant resources in value creation process.	Theoretical model	It identifies the characteristics of the learning resources, the components in the learning process and the activities for the resources integration.	Hibbert <i>et al.</i> , (2012)  Journal of Service Research
Service	Customer and provider	This paper outlines the value co-creation process by identifying the resources involved, the activities and the parties, and recognises the value customer	Conceptual model development	The finding acknowledges that value is not objective but subjective by different stakeholders in this process.	Gummerus (2013)  Marketing Theory

		received.			
Rail service	Customer	This study find out the drivers, types and outcomes of the consumer engagement in value co-creation process.	Qualitative method  Case study	The findings show that consumer engagement behaviours influence on the direct value co-creation process with service provider, and indirect co-creation with other stakeholders through the resources integration.	Jaakkola & Alexander (2014)  Journal of Service Management
Brand	Customer	This conceptual paper provides a model in terms of value co-creation between customers and brand by considering the antecedences, interactive processes and outcomes for customers via brand co-creation.	Conceptual model development	This model suggests that the level of customer-brand co-creation depends on customer engagement, customer self-congruity and category involvement.	France <i>et al.</i> , (2015)  Marketing Intelligence & Management
Art auction	Customer and salesperson	This study presents a dyadic model for value co-creation process between customer and salesperson.	Qualitative method  Individual interview	The results identify the customer value is formulated by the communications and dialogues. And they are desire to be encouraged to express their opinions about the products.	Baumann & Le Meunier-FitzHugh, (2015)  Journal of Marketing Management
Online travel forum	Customer, service provider, co-creation encounter	This study considers customer's, service provider's and encounter's roles on the co-creation process in a context of online travel	Qualitative method Case study  Netnogeaphy	They identified that online forum provides sufficient and relevant sources from customer's reviews, experience sharing for the guests to	Smaliukiene <i>et al.</i> , (2015)  Journal of Business Economics and

		forum.		integrate and co-create contents with other members.	Management
Customer usage process	Customer	This study aims to review the literature towards customers usage process through the customer value creation and identifies different dimensions in this thorough process.	Conceptual framework	It outlines three dimensions to evaluate the customer usage process in the value creation experience, which are actor intensity, resource intensity and interaction intensity.	Pfisterer & Roth, (2015)  Marketing Theory
Social media	Customer	This study aims to explore a comprehensive process for firms to facilitate co-creation activities with consumers on social media.	Proposed model	Five steps including Interact, Engage, Propose, Act, Realise have been recognised in the consumer engagement for value co-creation on social media.	Kao <i>et al.</i> , (2016)  Journal of Service Marketing
Online food retail	Consumer and firm	A holistic model including the components of antecedents, non-paying consumer engaging activities and values from both firm and consumer's perspective has been developed in this study.	Mix-method: Two field studies  434 piece of quantitative survey  17 participants for face-to-face interviews	The study confirms that co-creation among individual networks is one of outstanding non-paying consumer engagement behaviours.	Groeger <i>et al.</i> , (2016)  Journal of Strategic Marketing
Brand	Firm	This study presents brand value co-creation framework to demonstrate that how do different stakeholders engage in	Qualitative method  Case study	The findings show that brand value is created by every stakeholders engaged in this process personally. And firms need to gather the	Ramaswamy & Ozcan (2016)  International of Research in Marketing

		this process.		brand resources from each stakeholder to generate mutual outcomes.	
Luxury fashion brand	Customer	This study evaluates the value co-creation process between customers and luxury fashion brands, and examine the outcome of brand value and customer purchase intention from the co-creation process.	Mix-method  10 Individuals interview  418 participants for survey sample	The results highlight that customer-brand co-creation experience will improve the level of brand value generation and so that to increase customer's purchase intention.	Choi <i>et al.</i> , (2016)  Journal of Business Research
Communication service	Service practitioner	This paper reviews the motivations and outcomes for the service provider to develop the interpersonal communication with their clients.	Literature review	It concludes that the interpersonal communication between customers and service provider will enhance the quality of the value co-creation process.	Patterson, (2016)  Journal of Service Marketing
Social media brands' posts	Customer	This study explores the antecedents of the customer personalities and the customer received value as outcomes in the process of customer engagement in service delivery online.	Qualitative method Personal interview	It identified seven key types of personal traits from those customers who enjoy engaging in online activities.	Marbach <i>et al.</i> , (2016)  Journal of Marketing Management
Brand	Customer	This study identifies the antecedents and consequences of customer engagement in customer ecosystem.	Conceptual model	It shows that the dialogue is the most important element in customer engagement activities and it provides	Maslowska <i>et al.</i> , (2016)  Journal of Marketing Management

				the academic terms that used in describing the customer engagement.	
International weigh management firm	Customer	This study build up a conceptual model of customers' behaviours towards value co-creation. It identifies the antecedents and consequences for customers to engage in the value co-creation process in the service system.	Quantitative  583 pieces of online survey	The three types of embeddedness (structural, relational and cultural) are the main antecedents and the factors of object-oriented, self-oriented and brand-oriented are identified as the outcomes of customer value creation behaviour.	Laud & Karpen, (2017)  Journal of Service Theory and Practice
Tourism	Customer	This study examines the antecedences and consequences for the tourists engaging in the overall value co-creation process with tourism service providers.	Quantitative approach  385 survey collected	The findings prove that the degree of co-creation outcomes is influenced by tourists' skills, abilities, resources combination and involvements.	Buonincontri (2017)  Tourism Management

## Appendix 2: Netnographic study in marketing and consumer behaviour literature













No.	Author(s)	Topic	Timeframe	Sample	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods
1	Centeno & Wang (2017)	Co-creating the brand identity between celebrities and consumers on different social media.	Two-week observation for four celebrities on Facebook and Twitter. Five-year observation for YouTube video posts.	304 posts 34,767 comments	Unobtrusive observation	Coding Categorising
2	Schembri & Latimer (2016)	Brand culture study through online brand community.	Three-week of covert observation. Eleven-week of main data collection.	Did not mention.	Non-participant observation	Coding the textual and visual data Categorising the data into different themes
3	Kulmala <i>et al.</i> , (2012)	Investigate the contents of fashion blogs that attract consumers get engage in e-WOM.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three-month's observation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,726 pages of textual data.</li> <li>325 entries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unobtrusive observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coding</li> <li>Content analysis</li> <li>Visual analysis</li> <li>Interpretive analysis</li> </ul>
4	Skålén <i>et al.</i> , (2015)	Evaluate the co-creation between firms and brand communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One year's observation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14,362 comments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unobtrusive observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coding</li> <li>Constant comparative method</li> </ul>
5	Gebauer <i>et al.</i> , (2013)	Co-creation among the members in online innovation communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 weeks' observation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12,200 comments</li> <li>6,194 messages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unobtrusive observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coding</li> <li>Content analysis</li> <li>Interpretive analysis</li> <li>Categorising</li> </ul>
6	Mahr & Lievens (2012)	Co-creation between lead users and firms in virtual communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eight-month's observation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>676 contributions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unobtrusive observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coding</li> <li>Hypotheses testing</li> </ul>
7	Zaglia (2013)	Brand communities on social media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15 months' observation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>128 discussion threads.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lurking observation</li> <li>Researcher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coding</li> <li>Categorising</li> </ul>











					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>participation</li> <li>Filed notes making</li> </ul>	
8	Adjei <i>et al.</i> , (2010)	Conversations among online brand community's members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One year's observation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>212 threads</li> <li>636 posts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unobtrusive observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coding</li> <li>Categorising</li> </ul>
9	Colliander & Wien (2013)	Consumers' defense in online communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not mention.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>53 threads</li> <li>1,074 posts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unobtrusive observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coding</li> <li>Categorising the Iterative data</li> </ul>
10	Parrott <i>et al.</i> , (2015)	User-generated content in online fashion communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>234 posts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unobtrusive observation</li> <li>Researcher participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coding</li> <li>Categorising the theme</li> </ul>
11	Pongsakornrunsilp & Schroeder (2011)	Consumers engage in co-creation activities in online brand community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not mention.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not mention.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unobtrusive observation</li> <li>Researcher participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coding</li> <li>Categorising the Iterative data</li> </ul>

### Appendix 3: Samples of netnographic data collected on Sina Weibo during 1 Sep 2016 to 1 Mar 2017



The sample of netnographic data collected from ZARA's Sina Weibo during 1 Sep 2016 to 1 Mar 2017

No	Date	Posts	Post's translations	Comments	Comment's translations
1	20.12	<p>ZARA打折现已开始！线下店铺与网上商店秋冬折扣季现已开始，欢迎点击 <a href="#">网页链接</a>或移步线下门店选购。#ZARASALE#</p>  <p>avortle   103   797   599</p>	<p>Zara's items are on sale in both online and offline store, please click this link or welcome to our physical store.</p>	<p>-南瓜不瓜-：还补货么，看上的一款，没码了 </p> <p>ZARA：您好！请您提供下所需查找的商品编号或者清晰商品图片，以便我们为您核实并更好地给您答复。感谢您对 ZARA 的关注和喜爱！</p> <p>-南瓜不瓜-：谢谢啦！我在实体店买下啦！真的超火！我怕手慢无 </p> <p>罗超小小哥 dream：回复@ZARA:三天前看到有款民族风的花纹的亮色的方形围巾，现在下架了，我找不到了！请问还会上货吗？刚想买的，他就下架了。伤心。</p> <p>ZARA：回复@罗超小小哥 dream:您好，折扣季期间，商品库存实时变化，暂无法查询商品实际库存及补货信息，具体商品数量以官网页面显示或实体店实际销售为准，诚邀您尽快选购。感谢您对 ZARA 的关注和喜爱！</p> <p>一枚奋一代 in 雨城：@一枚奋一代 in 雨城：为什么在官网上买了衣服，付款成功就不见了？！也没确认订单    也没发邮箱，是不是遭骗了      </p> <p>@ZARA</p> <p>夜清月寒：最坑爹的一次购物，一星期前实体店买的冬大衣 999 元，一星期后看下官网降价一</p>	<p>Nan: Will this item be re-stored later? There is one I like but lack of my size now.</p> <p>Zara replied to Nan: Thank you for your asking. Could you give me the item number that you are looking for?</p> <p>Nan replied to ZARA: Thank you! I have already bought from physical store!</p> <p>Luo replied to ZARA: I have seen a floral print, square shaped</p>

				<p>半，499。降价幅度如此之大，购物体验好差。</p> <p> 退货时，说吊牌绳剪断不退，店大欺客啊。 </p> <p>豆豆龙 hj：回复 @ZARA: 我上周买的西装外套定了两个码到货付款，留下一件另件拒收，但留下的码数弄错申请退货申不了？</p> <p>九零在奋斗：我咋没办法直接评论啊</p> <p>chenv8888_94441：@ZARA 退衣服上门服务怎么是圆通呢，服务太差劲，两天了，衣服还没拿走</p>	<p>scarf with bright colour on the website three days ago, but I cannot find this item now. Could you advise me how can I buy it online?</p> <p>ZARA replied to Luo: Hi, dear, the product stock may change during the seasonal sale. Please keep your eyes on our official website if it is back to stock later. Thank you for your attention and we advise you to buy the item as soon as possible in case it will be out of stock again.</p> <p>Yi: Why I did not</p>
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					<p>get any receipt after I made the online payment?</p> <p>  </p> <p>  </p> <p>@ZARA?</p> <p>Ye: I bought a coat in physical store which has cost me 999RMB. After a week, I saw that coat is on sale and only cause 499RMB!</p> <p> I want to return it but the sells told me that as the labal has been taken off and I cannot return it</p> <p>anymore! </p> <p>Do replied to ZARA: I have bought two items. I want to</p>
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					<p>keep one of it and return another one. But the one I want to keep is the wrong size! What should I do now?</p> <p>Jiu: Why I cannot leave comment to ZARA?</p> <p>Chen: How to apply for the return service at home?</p>
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2	16.1 1	<p>2016-11-16 11:40 come from 微博 weibo.com</p> <p>#正式开幕# 海口·海航日月广场 地址：海南省海口市琼山区国兴大道8号GF层 (近兴丹路) <a href="#">网页链接</a></p>  <p>海航日月广场 / 海口 ZARA</p> <p>favorite   7   169   49</p>	<p>New physical store opens in Haikou! Address: GF Floor, No.8, Guoxing Road, Qiongsan district, Haikou.</p>	 <p>麻辣兔妈 🍌🍌: 买你们的鞋 磨成这样客服说是正常现象😂😂😂 评论配图</p> <p>2016-11-16 12:05 Reply 18</p> <p>大脚怪-CJJ ★: 回复@麻辣兔妈:我的两小时还包括了坐飞机一个多小时四十五分</p> <p>2016-11-17 10:05 Reply Like</p> <p>麻辣兔妈 🍌🍌: 回复@大脚怪-CJJ:我穿了半小时 送孩子去幼儿园 家附近😂😂😂</p> <p>2016-11-16 19:04 Reply Like</p> <p>麻辣兔妈 🍌🍌: 回复@毒街:我第一次被磨成这样 走了不到1km 两只脚都是</p> <p>2016-11-16 19:04 Reply Like</p> <p>麻辣兔妈 🍌🍌: 回复@嚼着锅巴的金刚鹦鹉:自己明知zara鞋子不舒服 还是觉得好看买了 真是作 而且现在衣服质量简直糟糕! 我给我儿子买同一件衣服换了四次 全是一下水同一个地方开线 第四次洗完洗完还是那个地方开线 我服气了 不换了</p> <p>2016-11-16 19:03 Reply Like</p> <p>嚼着锅巴的金刚鹦鹉: 就不能买他家的鞋</p> <p>2016-11-16 16:22 Reply Like</p> <p>毒街 🍌: 我可以说是正常吗.....😂, 每个人的脚敏感度不一样。有些人穿新鞋不会磨脚。我就穿新鞋, 无论什么鞋都磨。其实磨脚是很正常的事。穿几次就没事了.....可以贴创口贴。</p> <p>2016-11-16 13:32 Reply Like</p> <p>-LJ兔纸 🍌: 这叫正常现象? 😂 陪了</p> <p>2016-11-16 13:11 Reply Like</p> <p>大脚怪-CJJ ★: 我十月一穿的就两小时也这样</p> <p>2016-11-16 12:50</p> <p>四季莫奈 🍌🍌: 他家的鞋都这样</p> <p>2016-11-16 12:37</p>	<p>Ma: Look at my feet! It is hurt now because of wearing your shoes!</p> <p>Si replied to Ma: Yes! ZARA's shoes are horrible!</p> <p>Da replied to Ma: I worn it only 2 hours and got hurt like this as well!</p> <p>Ma replied to Da: I worn it only half hour!!</p> <p>Da replied to Ma: My 2 hours included sitting in a flight for one hour 45 minutes.</p> <p>Du replied to Ma: I think this is very normal! It is not</p>
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					<p>caused by its shoes! It is your feet's shape. Some people wearing new shoes will get hurt, some people won't!</p> <p>Li replied Du: How can you say this is normal?</p> <p>Ju replied to Ma: You should not buy ZARA's shoes again!</p> <p>Ma replied to Ju: I know! But I like its design!</p>
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The sample of netnographic data collected from H&M's Sina Weibo during 1 Sep 2016 to 1 Mar 2017

No.	Date	Posts	Post's translations	Comments	Comment's translations
3		<p>2016-10-21 21:46 come from 360安全浏览器</p> <p>#KENZOxHM#的明星look第二弹亮相! @宋茜 身着粉黑色翻毛领皮夹克示范前卫造型, 帅到移不开眼! 等待入手, 你也可以像她一样演绎复古魅惑! 查看图片</p>  <p>2016-10-21 21:18 come from iPhone 7 Plus 739144 23824 122756</p>	<p>#KENZOxHM @Songxian wear our new collection! So cool! You can get the same item as her!</p>	<p>是许宛宛宛宛宛... 超级好看 求链接</p> <p>2016-10-21 21:53 Reply 41</p> <p>可素罐子000: 回复@CHOCO阿竹:最小号就行吧? 我身高165, 体重120, 这款偏大吧</p> <p>2016-11-6 12:29 Reply Like</p> <p>花花花生啊: 回复@可素罐子000:我可以晚上去店里看看, 你要多大码</p> <p>2016-11-5 15:51 Reply Like</p> <p>可素罐子000: 回复@CHOCO阿竹:买不到了吧? 不会再发售了吧?</p> <p>2016-11-5 15:46 Reply Like</p> <p>花花花生啊: 回复@可素罐子000:卖了</p> <p>2016-11-5 15:43 Reply Like</p> <p>可素罐子000: 回复@CHOCO阿竹:亲抢到了?</p> <p>2016-11-5 15:43 Reply Like</p> <p>可素罐子000: 回复@CHOCO阿竹:亲卖吗? 我买</p> <p>2016-11-5 15:42 Reply Like</p> <p>占地吉普: 回复@可素罐子000:现在没有了</p> <p>2016-11-5 15:42 Reply Like</p> <p>可素罐子000: 回复@占地吉普:你抢到了? ?</p> <p>2016-11-5 15:42 Reply Like</p> <p>花花花生啊: 回复@XU_WANHONG:2799</p> <p>2016-11-3 20:29 Reply Like</p>	<p>Shi: So beautiful! Give me the link!</p> <p>Ke replied to Shi: My height is 165cm, weight 120g, do you think I can get the small size?</p> <p>Hua replied to Ke: I will go to the physical store to have a look tonight. I can help you to check the size.</p> <p>Hua replied to</p>

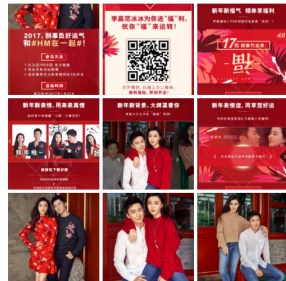


					<p>Xu: the item no. is 2799</p> <p>Ke replied to CH: Can you buy it? I think it is sold out!</p> <p>Ke replied to CH: I want to buy yours if you have bought it!</p> <p>Hua replied to Ke: It is sold out now!</p> <p>Ke replied to CH: Have you bought it?</p> <p>ZH replied to Ke: It is sold out now!</p> <p>CH replied to Ke: It is sold out!</p>
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4

2017-1-13 19:00 come from 微博 weibo.com

新春到来，别辜负了你的好运气！@李晨 @范冰冰 准备了超多高颜值福利，邀你和好友一起赢取！点击 [网页链接](#) 看看他们如何甜腻撒狗粮吧！即日起至1月22日，转发参与本条#微博有奖互动#，就有机会Get明星签名神秘大礼，戳海报了解详情，升级新春时魅力！和#HM在一起#，“福”来运转！#HM2017CNY#



favorite

1453

270

279

Spring is coming! Don't waste your good luck to get our gifts! @Li chen @Fan binbin have prepared lots of surprises to our customers! From now on till 22 Jan, share this post or leave your comment here. You will have the opportunity to get these gifts!

Love晨兔兔 🧧🧧: 好运来吧！已经入手一件啦[嘻嘻][嘻嘻]@乐天派Yoyoo @Young\_LC @ChenBao清儿 查看图片



2017-1-14 02:32

Reply | 2

Love晨兔兔 🧧🧧: 回复@零零\_星星:那可能是卖完了，她们现在都是要去实体店买了

2017-1-14 23:43

Reply | Like

零零\_星星 🧧: 回复@Love晨兔兔:下载了看了没有👀

2017-1-14 23:42

Reply | Like

Love晨兔兔 🧧🧧: 回复@零零\_星星:你下载HM的app就有了

2017-1-14 21:27

Reply | Like

零零\_星星 🧧: 亲你这个链接吗我上官网没找到

2017-1-14 21:08

Reply | Like

红秀GRAZIA 🧧🧧: 小编预测又要断货的节奏，还不去H&M全国门店或网上商店get大黑牛、冰冰同款？别忘了扫二维码领特别优惠券、甜腻表情包哦！

2017-1-13 19:50

Reply | 8

AIKE婷婷: H&M网上没有旗舰店呀！怎么买？？

2017-1-14 00:38

Reply | 2

温陈调 🧧🧧: 看中了两款冰冰穿的👗👗

2017-1-13 23:48

Reply | Like

且品一杯茶 🧧: 这是实话，我一直没有抢到，就不能多备点货？！

2017-1-13 21:44

Reply | 3

日辰水水 🧧🧧: #李晨# 狗粮一把又一把👉 @晨宝家的萌车车 @晨间一壶逍遥酒 @晨小兔的小兔牙 查看图片



2017-1-13 19:08

Reply | 7

Lo: I want to get the good luck! I have bought one item from H&M!

Li replied to Lo: Dear, could you give me the link for this item you have bought?

Lo replied to Li: You can search this item from H&M's mobile app!

Li replied to Lo: I have downloaded it and it is sold out now! Lo replied to Li: Maybe you

					<p>can go to physical store to have a look!</p> <p>Hong: I guess it will be sold out soon in online store! Why not go to physical store to have a look!</p> <p>AI replied to Hong: Why H&amp;M do not have flagship store?</p> <p>Lan replied to Hong: I want to buy two same items as bin bin wearing.</p> <p>Qie replied to Hong: Why I</p>
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					<p>always cannot get the item I want! Could H&amp;M re-stock soon?</p> <p>Ri: They are such a lovely couple!</p>
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The sample of netnographic data collected from Uniqlo's Sina Weibo during 1 Sep 2016 to 1 Mar 2017

No.	Date	Posts	Post's translations	Comments	Comment's translations
5		<p>2017-1-2 11:01 come from 微博 weibo.com</p> <p> #新年U惊喜#元旦到了，新的一年正式开始！怎样开始新的旅程呢？对于时尚的U星人来说今年肯定有不同类型的过年计划吧！转发微博选出你的新年愿望并说出理由还有机会获得优衣库准备的新年礼物哦！各位U星人，元旦快乐！</p>  <p>favorite   9882   891   601</p>	<p>New Year begins! How you are going to begin this year? I know you must have different plan this year! Leave your comments here or share this post to let us know what is your new year wish? You may have the opportunity to win our surprise! Wish everyone a very happy new year!</p>	<p>摆RP的-YUMI 🍀🍀: #新年U惊喜#旅行篇~今年身份有了很大的转变，结束了7年的爱情长跑，步入婚姻。庆幸上图书馆时有你，吃饭堂时有你，回家买房子的时候是跟你，学士服是你，穿婚纱时，还是你。因为工作，我们没有蜜月的旅行，2017年我希望穿着@优衣库_UNIQLO 的衣服，跟老公一起去海南弥补蜜月之旅 <a href="#">网页链接</a></p> <p>2017-1-4 17:31 <span>Reply   1</span></p> <p>摆RP的-YUMI 🍀🍀: @兔八哥不吃兔 ❤️❤️❤️</p> <p>2017-1-4 17:32 <span>Reply   Like</span></p> <p>哈喽潘小姐 🍀🍀🍀: #新年U惊喜#2017，潘潘祝大家新年快乐，希望宝贝平安成长，老公事业顺利，爸妈健康幸福，最后再祝自己越来越瘦越来越美运气越来越好❤️小女子潘潘，徽州人也，喜好多，爱优衣库美衣，虽不深藏天赋，但晓倾心相诉，虽无生生世世，但求今生相伴，虽不才华横溢，但字句皆真心❤️ <a href="#">网页链接</a></p> <p>2017-1-3 02:16 <span>Reply   1</span></p> <p>哈喽潘小姐 🍀🍀🍀: 卖萌 <a href="#">网页链接</a></p> <p>2017-1-3 03:17 <span>Reply   Like</span></p>	<p>Zan: I have got a new role in my life! I have finished 7 years relationship and get into a marriage with my love! I am so lucky to have you in my life! We went to school together! We</p>

				<p>速度WITH激情 🇨🇳: #新年U惊喜#脱单 ❤️ 2017-1-2 22:48 <span>Reply</span> <span>👍 1</span></p> <p>momoko抹茶家de小公主 🇨🇳: #新年U惊喜# 随着钟声敲响，不知不觉已经到了2017年，在新的一年里我希望能顺利顺利的，心想事成，好运连连！新年里穿着美美的衣服一起和宝贝、家人过春节！ <span>👉 查看图片</span></p>  <p>2017-1-2 20:56 <span>Reply</span> <span>👍 1</span></p> <p>日和子 🇨🇳: #新年U惊喜# @优衣库_UNIQLO 日语过N2啊😂😂😂逢考必过！已经努力了很久了！ <span>👍👍👍</span></p> <p>2017-1-2 18:51 <span>Reply</span> <span>👍 1</span></p> <p>Beautiful ~ Moon 🇨🇳: #新年U惊喜#我单身，29岁，但是我并不恐惧。和同岁的闺蜜每年一起旅行两次，是我们的约定，希望我们的30岁不慌不忙、优雅安乐。❤️❤️❤️@优衣库_UNIQLO</p> <p>2017-1-2 16:21 <span>Reply</span> <span>👍 1</span></p> <p>我承认我是汽车控 🇨🇳: #新年U惊喜#希望抢到回家的车票，尽管车票难买，尽管舟车劳顿，尽管假期是真的很短，但回家的心坚不可摧，有钱没钱都要回家过年！愿今年能顺利回家！🙏🙏@优衣库_UNIQLO</p> <p>2017-1-2 16:20 <span>Reply</span> <span>👍 1</span></p> <p>Bie山楨豆MinHo 🇨🇳: 我的新年愿望就是带爸妈去旅行，爸妈辛苦几十年从来都没离开过我们住的这个城市，本想今年带他们出去旅游的，可一整年工作都好忙，年假也不给休，一直也没有成行，好想新年能抽出时间带父母去北京看天安门、长城，吃北京烤鸭！还希望一家人能健康幸福每一天，健康幸福最重要 ❤️@优衣库_UNIQLO，</p> <p>2017-1-11 17:53 <span>Reply</span> <span>👍 Like</span></p>	<p>bought a house together! Unfortunately , we did not have our honeymoon after our wedding! This year I want to wear Uniqlo's clothes to our honeymoon!</p> <p>Zan: @Tu ❤️👍❤️👍</p> <p>Ha: Happy New Year to everyone! I wish my baby growing up healthly! I wish my husband working hardly! I wish my parents living a happy life! I wish I</p>
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					<p>can become more and more beautiful! I love my life! I love Uniqlo!</p> <p>Ha: Try to look cute!</p> <p>Su: I wish I can find my one and only this year!</p> <p>Mo: Cannot believe it is already in 2017! I wish my family and my friends are all very best! (comment with picture).</p> <p>Ri: I want to pass my Japanese</p>
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					<p>test!</p> <p>Bea: I am 29 this year! But I am not scared that I did not get married yet! I wish I can live happily everyday!</p> <p>Wo: I wish I can get the bus ticket to back home this year! I want to reunion with my family!</p> <p>Bie: I wish I can take my parent to travel around the world this year!</p>
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[illegible]

Miss U have prepared lots of gifts for you on Christmas, such as selfie sticks, clothes ect. Follow us on Sina Weibo and leave your comments here, you will have the opportunity to get our gifts.

优衣库\_UNIQLO 🙋🏻: 恭喜以下优星人中奖: @请叫我不懂小姐\_ @三线开金花 @徐大展 @呵城子\_ @真二货小星星 @会好好都会好 @付小雷在奋斗 @Lunzi吃着盾冬叉的粮等锤基的糖 @谭俊达 @哇是沙溪夫人 请留意你们的私信哦!

2017-1-10 14:18 Reply 👍 4

Lunzi吃着盾冬叉的粮等锤基的糖: 谢谢优衣库! 还没收到私信呢

2017-1-11 19:56 Reply 👍 Like

会好好都会好 🙋🏻: 没有私信? @优衣库\_UNIQLO

2017-1-10 19:25 Reply 👍 Like

请叫我不懂小姐 🙋🏻: 谢谢小编💖💖可是还未有收到私信呢。

2017-1-10 15:04 Reply 👍 Like

付小雷在奋斗 🙋🏻: 太棒了

2017-1-10 15:01 Reply 👍 Like

哇是沙溪夫人: 谢谢小优, 送给我妈妈, 她会很高兴的💖

2017-1-10 14:22 Reply 👍 Like

从前有颗芋头 🙋🏻: 都没有人陪我过圣诞🎄小优看我到我给我个安慰吧

2016-12-23 09:51 Reply 👍 2

从前有颗芋头 🙋🏻: 回复@一只粉红色的大象耶:我真可怜 唉

2016-12-23 09:51 Reply 👍 Like

PinkDumbo 🙋🏻: 哈哈哈哈哈

2016-12-23 09:51 Reply 👍 Like

江南丝雨Ss 🙋🏻: #这个圣诞“优”礼了#到优衣库购物有好礼 圣诞节快乐。我把圣诞袜已高高挂起, 期待收到礼物的惊喜@优衣库\_UNIQLO [评论配图](#)

2016-12-24 22:30 Reply 👍 2

江南丝雨Ss 🙋🏻: 最喜欢粉色了

2016-12-24 22:30 Reply 👍 Like

Uniqlo: Congratulations to these customers who have won our prize!

Lun: Thank you Uniqlo!!

Hui: Thank you! Why I did not get the private message to inform this.

Qing: Thank you Uniqlo!

Fu: Thank you! I am so happy!

Wa: Thank you Uniqlo! I will give this prize to my

Lun: Thank  
you Uniqlo!!

Hui: Thank you! Why I did not get the private message to inform this.

Qing: Thank  
you Uniqlo!

Fu: Thank  
you! I am so  
happy!

Wa: Thank  
you Uniqlo! I  
will give this  
prize to my



					<p>mum!</p> <p>Cong: No one company with me for Christmas!</p> <p>Cong replied Yi: I am so poor!</p> <p>Jiang: I am so happy to get this prize. (comment with selfie)</p> <p>Jiang: I love pink so much!</p>
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## Appendix 4: Content adequacy assessment sheet



### Feedback Sheet for the content adequacy assessment of Online Survey

#### 网上调查初步研究反馈表

After checked the draft of online survey, could you give us your evaluations regarding to the questionnaire structure, the questions and related choices design, the survey constructs and selected measurement items, wording and timing?

针对网上调查问卷的结构，问题以及选项的设置，所选用的问卷构想以及相关测量的条目，用语表达以及问卷用时，完成问卷之后，你能告诉我们对这份问卷的评价吗？

Your feedback will help us to improve our quality for online survey. Thank you!

你的反馈可以帮助我们提高下网上调查问卷的质量。谢谢！

1. Are the selected measurement items appropriate to represent the survey constructs? Could you specify which one is unsuitable according to the survey.  
你觉得所选用的测量条目都能代表问卷的构想吗？根据所给的问卷，你能指出哪一条是不合适的呢？

2. Could you understand the wording in this questionnaire?  
你能理解这份问卷里面的所有问题吗?
- (a). Totally understand.  
完全能懂。
- (b). Confused to some of the questions. Could you please mention which one?  
对于一些问题感到很疑惑。可以请你指出是哪些问题让你感到疑惑吗?
- (c). Confused to most of the questions. Could you please mention which one?  
绝大部分问题都看不懂。可以请你指出是哪些问题让你感到疑惑吗?
- (d). Difficult to understand.  
整份问卷的问题都很难理解。
3. Do you think that the timing for finishing the questionnaire is acceptable?  
对于你而言，完成这份问卷所花的时间是你可以接受的范围吗?
- (a) There are a lot of questions and I have no patient to finish all of them.  
这份问卷的问题太多了，我没有耐心完成所有问题。
- (b) The number of questions is appropriate, I can finish all of them.  
这份问卷的问题数目是合适的，我能完成所有的题目。
4. Other suggestions for this questionnaire, please mention here.

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—

如果对于这份问卷，你还有其他建议，请在此提及。

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Thank you so much for your feedback, if you have any problem, please contact with me! [xuefeng.huang@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:xuefeng.huang@manchester.ac.uk)

非常感谢你的反馈，如果你有任何问题，请联系我！

[xuefeng.huang@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:xuefeng.huang@manchester.ac.uk)

## Appendix 5: English version of online survey in this study

The University  
of Manchester

MANCHESTER  
1824

### The Survey of Chinese Female Fashion Consumers Engagement in Social Media Marketing Activities

Dear Participant:

I am Andrea (Xuefeng) Huang, a PhD student at the University of Manchester. I am doing doctoral research to find out how Chinese female fashion consumers aged 24-35 get involved in social media marketing activities with international fast fashion brands on Chinese social media platform Sina Weibo. I am inviting you to take part in this online survey, which may take you approximately 10-12 minutes to complete. All responses will be totally confidential and all the respondents will always remain anonymous. The data will be transferred to the university computer or personal laptop (with password owned by only the researcher herself) and used for academic research purposes only.

In order to save your time, could you confirm the following four pieces of statements prior to completing this questionnaire?

- You are a female consumer who are living in mainland China currently.  
☐ Yes      ☐ No
- Your age is between 24-35.  
☐ Yes      ☐ No
- You follow international fast fashion brands (such as Uniqlo, Zara or H&M) on Sina Weibo.  
☐ Yes      ☐ No
- You are willing to share your experience and opinions about following and interacting with fast fashion brands on sina weibo.  
☐ Yes      ☐ No
- If you agree to take part in this survey voluntarily, please tick the box here.  
☐ Yes      ☐ No

If you have ticked no to any of the above, please withdraw from this survey.

For more information for this study, please contact the researcher: Email: [xuefeng.huang@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:xuefeng.huang@manchester.ac.uk)

Sincerely

Andrea

## Section One: Personal information

1. Age:  
(a). 24-27 (b). 28-31; (c). 32-35;
2. Educational level:  
(a). High school or lower; (b). College; (c). Bachelor degree; (d). Master degree;  
(e). PhD or higher
3. Personal Monthly incomes:  
(a). Less than 5,000rmb; (b). 5,000-15,000rmb; (c). 15,001-25,000rmb; (d). 25,001-35,000rmb; (e). Over 35,000rmb; (f). I have no incomes at this moment.
4. Monthly spending on fast fashion shopping:  
(a). Less than 1,000rmb; (b). 1,001-3,000rmb; (c). 3,001-5,000rmb; (d). 5,001-8,000rmb; (e). More than 8,000rmb
5. Please select the city tiers and specify which city you live in currently.  
(a) Tier 1 cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen)  
(b) Tier 2 cities (Tianjin, Chongqing, Nanking, Hangzhou, Wuhan, Chengdu)  
(c) Tier 3 cities (Suzhou, Wuxi, Ningbo, Foshan, Dongguan, Xi'an, Shenyang, Dalian)  
(d) Others, please mention here\_\_\_\_\_.
6. How often do you look at or engage in fast fashion brands' social media activities on Sina Weibo?  
(a) Many times per day (b) Once or twice per day; (c). 4-5 days per week (d). at least 2-3 days/week (e). Once a week; (f). Less than once a week.
7. Which international fast fashion brand(s) you have followed on Sina weibo?  
(multiple-choice question)  
(a) Uniqlo  
(b) ZARA  
(c) H&M  
(d) Others, please mention here\_\_\_\_\_.

Section Two: this section aims to measure the antecedent factors that motivate you to engage in social media marketing activities that facilitated by international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo. You are asked to rate the following statements which are truly describing yourself. **There is no “right” or “wrong” answer, please select the items as honestly as you can.**

Code	Statements	I strongly disagree with it						I strongly agree with it
CE01	I automatically know which international fast fashion brands to follow on Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CE02	I am quite loyal to one international fast fashion brand and only follow that brand on Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CE03	I can find my preferred international fast fashion brands and products' information on Sina Weibo without much effort.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CE04	I can immediately identify the international fast fashion brand's product I want on Sina Weibo, even if mixed with others are similar.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
AN01	I enjoy gathering about international fast fashion brands' and products' information on Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
AN02	I usually search for the information of the international fast fashion brands and products on Sina Weibo before buying it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
AN03	I keep current on the most recent updates and offers of the international fast fashion brands and products on Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

EL01	I have enough knowledge on this product to verify that international fast fashion brand's post on Sina Weibo claims are in fact true.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
EL02	After collecting the international fast fashion brands and products' information I need on Sina Weibo, I find it easy to know which is the best product among those offered on the site.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
EL03	I know which international fast fashion brands are best and worst for this brand/product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ME01	I can point out the specific attributes of the international fast fashion brand's product I want.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ME02	When studying several alternative offers for the international fast fashion brands and products on Sina Weibo, I can recall the difference between them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ME03	I can recall almost all international fast fashion brands and products' information from Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ID01	People around me know much about how to acquire these international fast fashion brands and products' information on Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ID02	I usually speak with colleagues and friends about how to use the Sina Weibo for gathering the international fast fashion brands and products' information.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

ID03	My colleagues/friends usually tag me in the fast fashion brand's post that included useful information.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CO01	I communicate with the international fast fashion brands and/or other brand users on Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CO02	I spend time on the international fast fashion brand's Sina Weibo and interacting with other consumers about the brand or other topics.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



Section Three: this section aims to identify the major types of international fast fashion brand's generated social media marketing activities that attract customers engage in. Please could you think about your experiences in terms of interactions with international fast fashion brands and other users on Sina Weibo? You are asked to rate the following statements which are truly describing yourself. **There is no "right" or "wrong" answer, please select the items as honestly as you can.**

Code	Statements	I strongly disagree with it						I strongly agree with it
PR01	I discuss the variety of the international fast fashion brand's product offered on the brand's Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PR02	I discuss the quality of the international fast fashion brand's product offered on the brand's Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PR03	I discuss the prices of products offered on the international fast fashion brand's Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PR04	I speak of the company's notoriety on the international fast fashion brand's Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TR01	I discuss ease of online transactions on the international fast fashion brand's Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TR02	I discuss security of online transactions and its mobile app on the international fast fashion brand's Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TR03	I speak of the rapid delivery on the international fast fashion brand's Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PH01	I tell others about my shopping experiences with	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	this international fast fashion brand on the brand's Sina Weibo.							
PE01	International fast fashion brand talks back to me if I post a message on their brand's Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PE02	International fast fashion brand responds to me quickly and efficiently on Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PE03	International fast fashion brand allows me to communicate directly with it on Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PE04	International fast fashion brand listens to what I have to say on Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PA01	International fast fashion brand's Sina Weibo shows what other members are like, especially some celebrities I'm interested in.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PA02	The interaction with other members on international fast fashion brand's Sina Weibo makes me feel comfortable, especially with some celebrities I hardly contact in real life, as if I were with friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PA03	I found myself comparing my opinion about international fast fashion brands and products with what other members said, especially with some celebrities' opinions on brand's Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
EN01	Content of international fast fashion brand's Sina Weibo seems interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

EN02	I like the influential and creative content on Sina Weibo which were generated by the international fast fashion brands.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
EN03	Games and/or videos created by the international fast fashion brands, provides opportunities for me to have fun time over Sina Weibo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
RE01	I interact with international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo in order to access discounts and promotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
RE02	I like to interact with international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo as they offer contests and games from which I can access free products or other special offers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
RE03	I want to get something in exchange for my participation/contribution on international fast fashion brand's Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section Four: this section aims to recognise the outcomes that yield from customer engagement in a set of social media marketing activities. You are asked to rate the following statements which are truly describing yourself. **There is no “right” or “wrong” answer, please select the items as honestly as you can.**

Code	Statements	I strongly disagree with it						I strongly agree with it
UT01	I got brand/product information through Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

UT02	I resolved uncertainties/doubts regarding buying brand's product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
UT03	I bought brand's products at a low price or great discount.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
UT04	I got specific products that I want.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
HE01	I gained a sense of happiness from engaging in brand's Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
HE02	I enjoyed the pleasant and relaxed emotion gained from engaging in brand's Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
HE03	I felt the enthusiasm of engaging in brand's Sina Weibo pick me up.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
HE04	I passed my time away on engaging in brand's Sina Weibo when bored.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IN01	I got sufficient social support or help from brands/other Sina Weibo users	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IN02	I gained acceptance and approval from brands/other Sina Weibo users.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IN03	I stay in touch with brands/other Sina Weibo users.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IN04	I impressed brands/other Sina Weibo users.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PU01	I would like to purchase the brand's products after engaged in the social media activities and	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	interactions with brands and other customers on Sina Weibo.							
PU02	I would like to recommend the brand's products to others after engaged in the social media activities and interactions with brands and other customers on Sina Weibo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PU03	I would use Sina Weibo for purchasing a product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## **Appendix 6: Quantitative findings of pilot study**

A pilot study was conducted to measure the reliability of all the survey measurement items and to perceive the initial factor structure. After excluding the missing data and some low quality responses, 60 valid responses were adopted to refine the measurement items by assessing the data reliability and EFA. A table summarising the demographic profile of the pilot study is presented below (see Table 11.1). The key information is:

- The majority (60%) of respondents in the pilot study are in the 24–27 age range, 18.33% in the range 28-30 range and 22.66% in the 31–35 range.
- In terms of educational level, nearly half of the respondents had at least a bachelor's degree (46.67%) and almost half had a master's degree (45%).
- With regard to personal monthly incomes, the respondents who earn 5,000-15,000rmb/month (approximately GBP500–1,500) account for the same percentage (33.33%) as the participants who earn 15,000–25,000rmb/month (approximately GBP1,500–2,500). A further 28.33% of respondents earn less than 5,000rmb/month (approximately GBP500).
- A total of 81.67% of respondents live in Tier 1 cities such as Beijing, Shanghai or Guangzhou in mainland China.
- Almost half the respondents (45%) claim that they spent less than RMB5,000 (approximately GBP500) on fast fashion shopping per month.
- Forty-five percent of participants said that they may check or interact with international fast fashion brands on Sina Weibo many times every day.
- In terms of the variety of international fast fashion brands, according to the pilot study, UNIQLO is the most popular brand; half of the respondents said they follow UNIQLO on Sina Weibo.

The pilot study's demographic data is consistent with the recent market report that emphasises that young Chinese females who have a higher education level and live in Tier 1 cities pay more attention to fashion shopping, and especially spend more time checking fashion and brand information on social media (PwC, 2016; BCG research, 2016).

Table 11.1: the demographic profile of the pilot study

Sample size (n)		%	N
Age:	24-27	60.00	36
	28-30	18.33	11
	31-35	21.66	13
Educational level:	High school or below	0	0
	College	5.00	3
	Bachelor degree	46.67	28
	Master degree	45.00	27
	PhD or higher	3.33	2
Personal Monthly incomes:	Less than 5,000rmb	28.33	17
	5,000-15,000rmb	33.33	20
	15,001-25,000rmb	33.33	20
	25,001-35,000rmb	0	0
	Over 35,000rmb	5.00	3
Monthly spending on fast fashion shopping:	Less than 500rmb	45.00	27
	501-1000rmb	26.67	16
	1001-3000rmb	28.33	17
	3001-5000rmb	0	0
	More than 5,000rmb	0	0
The city tiers they live in:	Tier 1 cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen)	81.67	49
	Tier 2 cities (Tianjin, Chongqing, Nanking, Hangzhou, Wuhan, Chengdu)	10.00	6
	Tier 3 cities (Suzhou, Wuxi, Ningbo, Foshan, Dongguan, Xi'an, Shenyang, Dalian)	5.00	3
	Others	3.33	2
The frequency of looking at or engaging in fast fashion brands' social media activities on Sina Weibo:	Many times per day	45.00	27
	Once or twice per day	28.33	17
	4-5 days per week	1.67	1
	at least 2-3 days/week	13.33	8
	Once a week	1.67	1
	Less than once a week	10.00	6
The international fast fashion brand they follow on Sina Weibo:	Uniqlo	50.00	30
	ZARA	43.33	26
	H&M	25.00	15
	Others	8.33	5

Source: Based on the data from pilot study.

### **11.1 Reliability test in pilot study**

Table 11.2 illustrates the results of the reliability test for the pilot study. Since the item PH01 (off/online shopping experience) was selected as a single item to be measured in the construct of organic e-WOM, it was not included in the reliability test. According to the reliability test, the results show that Cronbach's alpha for the constructs of individual reference groups, utilitarian benefits, hedonic benefits, interpersonal benefits and purchase intentions were all less than 0.70. Specifically, the items CE02, UT01, UT04, HE03, PU01, which have been highlighted in red, should be removed as their item-total correlations were all less than 0.30. Moreover, if these items were deleted, the Cronbach's alpha of that construct increased to 0.70. In another case, although the items-total correlations were all over 0.30, the Cronbach's alpha for the construct of interpersonal benefits is less than 0.70 (0.688). However, no matter which item was deleted, the Cronbach's alpha was still less than 0.70, so the researcher decided to retain these items in the factor structure. In summary, after the reliability test, items CE02, UT01, UT04, HE03, PU01 were deleted.



Table 11.2: Results of the reliability test in pilot study

Constructs	Variables	Items	Item description	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronback's alpha	Cronback's alpha if the items deleted
Consumer expertise	Cognitive effort	CE01	I automatically know which brands to follow on Sina Weibo.	.597	.751	.666
		CE02	I am quite loyal to one brand and only follow that brand on Sina Weibo.	.133		.882
		CE03	I can find my preferred brands of this product on Sina Weibo without much effort.	.774		.557
		CE04	I can immediately identify the brands of this product I want on Sina Weibo, even if mixed with others are similar.	.766		.556
	Analysis	AN01	I enjoy learning about this product on Sina Weibo.	.703	.876	.878
		AN02	I usually search for the latest information of the brands and products on Sina Weibo before buying it.	.793		.796
		AN03	I keep current on the most recent updates of the brands and products on Sina Weibo.	.795		.796
	Elaboration	EL01	I have enough knowledge on this product to verify that brand post on Sina Weibo claims are in fact true.	.686	.889	.922
		EL02	After collecting the brands and products information I need on Sina Weibo, I find it easy to know which is the best product among those offered on the site.	.848		.785
		EL03	I know what brands are best and worst for this product.	.828		.803
	Memory	ME01	I can point out the specific attributes of this product I want.	.646	.802	.737
		ME02	When studying several alternative offers for this brand and product on Sina Weibo, I can recall the difference between them.	.739		.629

		ME03	I can recall almost all brands and products information from Sina Weibo.	.573		.812
Social expertise	Individual reference group	ID01	People around me know much about how to acquire these brands and products information on Sina Weibo.	.486	.810	.905
		ID02	I usually speak with colleagues and friends about how to use the Sina Weibo for gathering the brand and product information.	.743		.648
		ID03	I get useful information on Sina Weibo through colleagues and friends tag me in.	.769		.620
	Co-consuming group	CO01	I communicate with the brand and/or other brand users on Sina Weibo.	.864	.938	/
		CO02	I spend time on brand's Sina Weibo interacting with other consumers about the brand or other topics.	.864		/
Organic e-WOM	Product/Brand information	PR01	I discuss the variety of the product offered on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.867	.867	.764
		PR02	I discuss the quality of the product offered on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.835		.781
		PR03	I discuss the prices of products offered on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.695		.839
		PR04	I speak of the company's notoriety on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.500		.911
	Transaction and delivery service.	TR01	I discuss ease of transactions on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.557	.820	.866
		TR02	I discuss security of transactions and its mobile app on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.773		.644
		TR03	I speak of the rapid delivery on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.706		.723
	Offline/online shopping experience	PH01	I tell others about my shopping experiences with this brand on the brand's Sina Weibo.	/	/	/
Amplified e-WOM	Perceived brand's interactivity	PE01	Brand will talk back to me if I post a message on brand page on Sina Weibo.	.696	.835	.777

		PE02	Brand would respond to me quickly and efficiently on Sina Weibo.	.494		.864
		PE03	Brand allows me to communicate directly with it on Sina Weibo.	.683		.794
		PE04	Brand listens to what I have to say on Sina Weibo.	.813		.720
	Parasocial interaction	PA01	Brand's post on Sina Weibo shows me what other members are like, especially some celebrities I'm interested in.	.772	.870	.815
		PA02	The interaction with other members on Sina Weibo makes me feel comfortable, especially with some celebrities I hardly contact in real life, as if I were with friends.	.836		.734
		PA03	I found myself comparing my opinion about products and brands with what other members said, especially with some celebrities' opinions on Sina Weibo.	.677		.890
Entertainment	Entertaining contents	EN01	I like the influential and creative contents on Sina Weibo which were generated by the brands.	.558	.811	.842
		EN02	Games and / or videos created by brands, provides opportunity for me to have fun time on Sina Weibo.	.710		.690
		EN03	Content of X brand's Sina Weibo seems interesting.	.713		.675
Remuneration	Rewards	RE01	I interact with brands on Sina Weibo in order to access discounts and promotions.	.900	.946	.915
		RE02	I like to interact with brands on Sina Weibo as they offer contests/ games/sweepstakes from which I can access free products or other special offers	.877		.929
		RE03	I can get something in exchange for my participation/ contribution on brand's Sina Weibo.	.892		.921

Customer benefits	Utilitarian benefits	UT01	I get brand/product information through Sina Weibo.	.233	.514	.500
		UT02	I resolve uncertainties/doubts regarding buying brand's product.	.575		.195
		UT03	I buy brand's products at a low price or great discount.	.619		.066
		UT04	I get specific products that I want.	-.071		.725
	Hedonic benefits	HE01	I gain a sense of happiness from engaging in brand's Sina Weibo.	.624	.598	.332
		HE02	I enjoy the pleasant and relaxed emotion gained from engaging in brand's Sina Weibo.	.558		.379
		HE03	I feel the enthusiasm of engaging in brand's Sina Weibo pick me up.	-.091		.833
		HE04	I pass my time away on engaging in brand's Sina Weibo when bored.	.583		.357
	Interpersonal benefits	IN01	I get sufficient social support or help from other Sina Weibo users	.470	.688	.625
		IN02	I gain acceptance and approval from other Sina Weibo users	.438		.643
		IN03	I stay in touch with other Sina Weibo users	.473		.622
		IN04	I impress other Sina Weibo users.	.505		.600
Purchase intention	Purchase intention	PU01	I would like to purchase the products from the brands that I follow on Sina Weibo.	.173	.614	.802
		PU02	I would like to recommend the brands' products that I follow on Sina Weibo to others.	.498		.414
		PU03	I would use the Internet for purchasing a product from the brands that I follow on Sina Weibo.	.670		-.103

Source: based on the result from reliability test in pilot study.

### 11.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis in pilot study

The remaining items from the reliability test were submitted to the next step of EFA. The aim of conducting EFA is:

1. to identify the underlying components of each construct and assess whether the items that measure the construct fall into the same component (Bryman and Cramer 1999);
2. to reduce a large set of observed variables to a small set of observed variables (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Fabrigar and Wegener, 2011).

After removing the invalid measurement items from the reliability test, the overall scales' reliability (Cronbach's alpha) met the minimum acceptable level ( $> 0.70$ ). Item-total correlations for all the observed variables were above 0.30. In total, 49 measurement items from the pilot survey were included in this step of EFA. This section describes the process and the results of the EFA. Table 8.5 summarises the results of the EFA for the pilot study.

As the sample size of the pilot study is small ( $n=60$ ), in order to have sufficient analysis of each observed item, Menon *et al.* (1996) suggest that when there are a set of constructs that need to be measured, examining fewer measurement items yields a more reliable outcome. Therefore, the constructs were categorised into four groups to ensure the ratio of examination per observed item for each round of EFA was at least 5:1. The categorisation of the constructs is based on the findings of literature review whereby the theoretically relevant constructs were classified together. The first group includes the constructs of consumer expertise and social expertise, which are deemed as the antecedent factors to motivate customer engagement in dialogic co-creation. The second group has the constructs of organic e-WOM and amplified e-WOM, which are considered as the informational contents of dialogic co-creation activities. The third group contains the constructs of entertaining and remunerative contents, which are the topics that merely focus on entertaining customers in dialogic co-creation activities. The fourth group includes the constructs of customer benefits and purchase intention, which are the outcomes from customers engaging in dialogic co-creation.

The following four paragraphs present the results of EFA for the four construct groups.

The first group's constructs (consumer expertise and social expertise) included 18 measurement items, which were theoretically categorised into six dimensions based on Barrutia and Gilsanz's (2013) model. After the first round of EFA in this group, the cross-loaded factors (e.g. CE01, AN02, AN03, ME01) were removed. Moreover, factor CE02 loaded in a component individually. Thus, it has been removed. In the second round of EFA in this group, the KOM value of sampling adequacy was 0.758, which indicates it achieved an acceptable level (George and Mallery, 2001). The significant value from the Bartlett's test of sphericity was less than 0.001. The communalities of each item were higher than 0.40.

However, this round of EFA came up with a four-factor solution in a rotated component matrix. Component 1 included five observed variables (EL02, ME02, EL03, EL01, ME03). Component 2 had three observed variables (CE04, CE03, AN01). The measurement items ID01, ID02 and ID03 loaded on component 3, while CO02 and CO03 loaded on component 4. This result is inevitable in EFA as the validated structure of the measurement construct may be different from the theoretically identified dimensions of the constructs. An acceptable explanation based on this result is that the four dimensions of consumer expertise were highly related to each other. In particular, the dimensions of customers' analysis and customers' cognitive effort were statistically shown to be correlated. The dimensions of customers' memory and customers' elaboration were inter-dependent in EFA. The researcher decided to keep these remaining measurement items for the next round of the EFA in the main survey. The analysis process for this round of EFA is presented in Table 11.3

Table 11.3: The first group of EFA in pilot study

<b>Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup></b>				
	Component			
	1	2	3	4
EL02	.867			
ME02	.825			
EL03	.792			
EL01	.769			
ME03	.765			
CE04		.896		
CE03		.882		
AN01		.869		
ID02			.879	
ID01			.843	
ID03			.709	
CO01				.933
CO02				.906

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.<sup>a</sup>

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Source: based on the result from EFA in pilot study.

The second group included the constructs ‘organic e-WOM’ and ‘amplified e-WOM’, which has 15 items. Most of the measurement items correlated well except for items PE01 and PE02, as PE01 was dropped into a component singly, while PE02 was cross-loaded in two components. After removing these two observed variables, the KMO value was 0.825, which can be considered as a very good acceptance (George and Mallery, 2001). The significant value based on Bartlett’s test of sphericity was less than 0.001. The communalities of all selected items were greater than 0.40. Two component-solution has been achieved in rotated component matrix. Component 1 included seven observed variables (TR03, TR02, PR03, PR02, PH01, PR01, TR01), which all belong to the organic e-WOM construct. Component 2 had six items (PA02, PA01, PE04, PE03, PA03 and PR04). Except for the variable PR04, the rest were all related to the amplified e-WOM construct. Therefore, the researcher decided to drop this item. The remaining items were subjected to the next round of EFA in the main survey. The analysis process for this round of EFA is presented in Table 11.4.

Table 11.4: The second group of EFA in pilot study

**Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component	
	1	2
TR03	.882	
TR02	.832	
PR03	.817	
PR02	.816	
PH01	.815	
PR01	.783	
TR01	.688	
PA02		.907
PA01		.889
PE04		.876
PE03		.766
PA03		.719
PR04		.658

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.<sup>a</sup>

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Source: based on the result from EFA in pilot study.

The third group included the constructs of entertainment and remuneration, a total of six items. These two constructs were considered as one-dimension constructs represented by three measurement items respectively. All the variables were very correlated; no item had a low value for item-to-total correlation. The result from the EFA showed that the KMO value of this group was 0.848 and its significant value was less than 0.001. Moreover, the communalities loading for each item in this group was greater than 0.50. In other words, no item needed to be removed or revised. However, only one component was extracted, which means the construct of entertainment and remuneration was statistically considered as one factor. The researcher decided to keep all items for the next round of EFA in the main survey and see what result would arise. The analysis process for this round of EFA is presented in Table 11.5.

Table 11.5: The third group of EFA in pilot study

**Communalities**

	Initial	Extraction
EN01	1.000	.509
EN02	1.000	.664
EN03	1.000	.647
RE01	1.000	.587
RE02	1.000	.686
RE03	1.000	.548

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: based on the result from EFA in pilot study.

The last group had 11 observed variables in EFA. After removing the cross-loaded item IN02, the group gained a three-component solution. The KMO value for this group (0.658) was higher than the minimum acceptable level (0.60). The Bartlett test of sphericity was significantly less than 0.001. The communalities loading of each item was greater than 0.50. However, the components extracted from the rotated component matrix were different from the theoretical categorisation. Component 1 included four items (HE01, HE02, HE04, PU03), which represented hedonic benefits and purchase intention. Component 2 included three items (IN03, IN04, PU02), which belonged to customers' interpersonal benefits and purchase intention. The researcher could not explain the statistical classification of this group's constructs and decided to send these items to the next round of EFA in the main survey. The analysis process for this round of EFA is presented in Table 11.6.



Table 11.6: The fourth group of EFA in pilot study

<b>Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup></b>			
	Component		
	1	2	3
PU03	.920		
HE01	.909		
HE04	.902		
HE02	.857		
IN04		.860	
IN03		.802	
PU02		.736	
UT02			.869
UT03			.795

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.<sup>a</sup>

a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

Source: based on the result from EFA in pilot study.

In summary, the results of EFA in the pilot study provided 9 items (AN02, AN03, CE01, ME01, PR04, PE01, PE02, IN01 and IN02) that needed to be taken out of the measuring model. After deleting these items, the internal consistency and reliability of the survey constructs is very high as the Cronbach's alpha for each construct is greater than 0.70. In addition, items assigned to each group consistently presented high communalities loadings on their constructs. This indicates that these items are highly correlated between the hypothesised variables and their measurement items. The remaining items were all accepted and employed in the main survey.

Table 11.7: Results of the exploratory factor analysis in pilot study

Construct	Sub-construct	Items	Item description	EFA		
				Communalities loading	MSA	Cumulative %
Consumer expertise	Cognitive effort	CE03	I can find my preferred brands of this product on Sina Weibo without much effort.	.853	0.758	82.284
		CE04	I can immediately identify the brands of this product I want on Sina Weibo, even if mixed with others are similar.	.907		
	Analysis	AN01	I enjoy learning about this product on Sina Weibo.	.854		
	Elaboration	EL01	I have enough knowledge on this product to verify that brand post on Sina Weibo claims are in fact true.	.672		
		EL02	After collecting the brands and products information I need on Sina Weibo, I find it easy to know which is the best product among those offered on the site.	.861		
		EL03	I know what brands are best and worst for this product.	.889		
	Memory	ME02	When studying several alternative offers for this brand and product on Sina Weibo, I can recall the difference between them.	.826		
		ME03	I can recall almost all brands and products information from Sina Weibo.	.706		
Social expertise	Individual reference group	ID01	People around me know much about how to acquire these brands and products information on Sina Weibo.	.748	0.825	71.140
		ID02	I usually speak with colleagues and friends about how to use the Sina Weibo for gathering the brand and product information.	.858		
		ID03	I get useful information on Sina Weibo through colleagues and friends tag me in.	.738		
	Co-consuming group	CO01	I communicate with the brand and/or other brand users on Sina Weibo.	.885		
		CO02	I spend time on brand's Sina Weibo interacting with other consumers about the brand or other topics.	.899		
Organic e-WOM	Product/Brand information	PR01	I discuss the variety of the product offered on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.778	0.825	71.140
		PR02	I discuss the quality of the product offered on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.739		

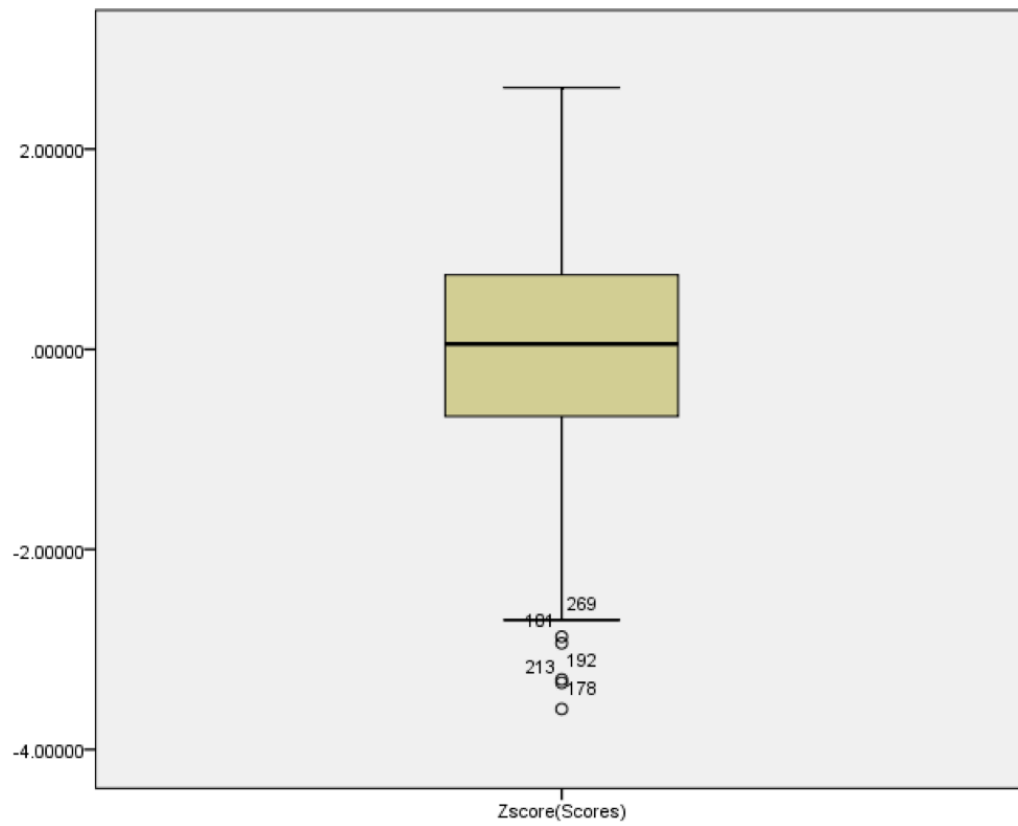
	Transaction and delivery service.	PR03	I discuss the prices of products offered on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.670	0.848	72.122
		TR01	I discuss ease of transactions on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.557		
		TR02	I discuss security of transactions and its mobile app on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.725		
		TR03	I speak of the rapid delivery on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.789		
	Offline/online shopping experience	PH01	I tell others about my shopping experiences with this brand on the brand's Sina Weibo.	.708		
Amplified e-WOM	Perceived brand's interactivity	PE03	Brand allows me to communicate directly with it on Sina Weibo.	.594	0.848	72.122
		PE04	Brand listens to what I have to say on Sina Weibo.	.816		
	Parasocial interaction	PA01	Brand's post on Sina Weibo shows me what other members are like, especially some celebrities I'm interested in.	.846		
		PA02	The interaction with other members on Sina Weibo makes me feel comfortable, especially with some celebrities I hardly contact in real life, as if I were with friends.	.882		
		PA03	I found myself comparing my opinion about products and brands with what other members said, especially with some celebrities' opinions on Sina Weibo.	.550		
Entertainment	Entertaining contents	EN01	I like the influential and creative contents on Sina Weibo which were generated by the brands.	.509	0.848	72.122
		EN02	Games and / or videos created by brands, provides opportunity for me to have fun time on Sina Weibo.	.664		
		EN03	Content of X brand's Sina Weibo seems interesting.	.647		
Remuneration	Rewards	RE01	I interact with brands on Sina Weibo in order to access discounts and promotions.	.587	0.848	72.122
		RE02	I like to interact with brands on Sina Weibo as they offer contests/ games/sweepstakes from which I can access free products or other special offers	.686		
		RE03	I can get something in exchange for my participation/ contribution on brand's Sina Weibo.	.548		
Customer	Utilitarian	UT02	I resolve uncertainties/doubts regarding buying brand's product.	.770	0.658	60.616

benefits	benefits	UT03	I buy brand's products at a low price or great discount.	.750		
	Hedonic benefits	HE01	I gain a sense of happiness from engaging in brand's Sina Weibo.	.883		
		HE02	I enjoy the pleasant and relaxed emotion gained from engaging in brand's Sina Weibo.	.775		
		HE04	I pass my time away on engaging in brand's Sina Weibo when bored.	.860		
	Interpersonal benefits	IN03	I stay in touch with other Sina Weibo users	.675		
		IN04	I impress other Sina Weibo users.	.759		
Purchase intention	Purchase intention	PU02	I would like to recommend the brands' products that I follow on Sina Weibo to others.	.636		
		PU03	I would use the Internet for purchasing a product from the brands that I follow on Sina Weibo.	.853		

\*MSA is measure of sampling adequacy, which is evaluated by KMO

Source: based on the results from the exploratory factor analysis in pilot study.

## Appendix 7: Result of univariate outliers in main survey



## Appendix 8: The descriptive statistics of main survey

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
CE03	401	1	7	5.40	1.233	-1.012	.122	1.591	.243
CE04	401	1	7	5.15	1.245	-.604	.122	.564	.243
AN01	401	1	7	5.45	1.115	-.872	.122	1.915	.243
EL01	401	1	7	4.99	1.338	-.536	.122	.057	.243
EL02	401	1	7	4.97	1.204	-.572	.122	.479	.243
ME01	401	1	7	5.15	1.257	-.673	.122	.625	.243
ME02	401	1	7	5.02	1.238	-.685	.122	.661	.243
ID01	401	1	7	5.19	1.215	-.923	.122	1.542	.243
PR01	401	1	7	4.73	1.276	-.662	.122	.628	.243
PR02	401	1	7	5.19	1.155	-.757	.122	1.228	.243
PR03	401	1	7	5.09	1.318	-.690	.122	.422	.243
TR02	401	1	7	4.94	1.326	-.624	.122	.613	.243
TR03	401	1	7	5.01	1.255	-.730	.122	.849	.243
PH01	401	1	7	5.21	1.233	-.951	.122	1.457	.243
PE02	401	1	7	4.76	1.198	-.563	.122	.854	.243
PE04	401	1	7	5.08	1.228	-.586	.122	.494	.243
PA01	401	1	7	5.20	1.196	-.699	.122	.941	.243
PA02	401	1	7	4.96	1.347	-.649	.122	.298	.243
EN01	401	2	7	5.40	1.101	-.523	.122	.045	.243
EN02	401	1	7	5.39	1.196	-.824	.122	1.155	.243
EN03	401	1	7	4.99	1.222	-.308	.122	.070	.243
RE01	401	1	7	4.82	1.392	-.581	.122	.171	.243
RE02	401	1	7	4.71	1.523	-.566	.122	-.242	.243
RE03	401	1	7	4.58	1.516	-.503	.122	-.323	.243
UT02	401	1	7	5.22	1.230	-.624	.122	.426	.243
UT03	401	1	7	5.12	1.311	-.573	.122	.056	.243
HE01	401	1	7	5.42	1.192	-.964	.122	1.659	.243
HE02	401	1	7	5.41	1.180	-.713	.122	.745	.243
HE04	401	1	7	5.42	1.174	-.855	.122	1.358	.243
IN03	401	1	7	5.07	1.254	-.456	.122	.352	.243
IN04	401	1	7	5.07	1.224	-.591	.122	.562	.243
PU02	401	1	7	5.37	1.155	-.569	.122	.505	.243
PU03	401	1	7	5.38	1.223	-.830	.122	1.037	.243
Valid N (listwise)	401								

## Appendix 9: Results of final round of EFA in main survey

### KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.826
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4293.876
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

### Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
CE03	1.000	.814
CE04	1.000	.818
AN01	1.000	.802
ID02	1.000	.768
ID03	1.000	.848
CO02	1.000	.838
PR01	1.000	.608
TR01	1.000	.696
TR03	1.000	.748
PH01	1.000	.715
PE04	1.000	.770
PA01	1.000	.826
PA02	1.000	.789
RE01	1.000	.788
RE02	1.000	.813
RE03	1.000	.786
HE01	1.000	.739
HE02	1.000	.583
HE04	1.000	.732
PU03	1.000	.676

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.634	28.170	28.170	5.634	28.170	28.170	2.677	13.384	13.384
2	2.796	13.978	42.148	2.796	13.978	42.148	2.659	13.295	26.679
3	2.067	10.337	52.485	2.067	10.337	52.485	2.516	12.580	39.259
4	1.986	9.930	62.415	1.986	9.930	62.415	2.467	12.335	51.594
5	1.354	6.768	69.183	1.354	6.768	69.183	2.444	12.221	63.814
6	1.319	6.593	75.776	1.319	6.593	75.776	2.392	11.962	75.776
7	.584	2.921	78.697						
8	.538	2.692	81.388						
9	.479	2.397	83.785						
10	.432	2.159	85.945						
11	.389	1.944	87.889						
12	.359	1.795	89.684						
13	.324	1.621	91.305						
14	.318	1.590	92.895						
15	.291	1.454	94.348						
16	.282	1.411	95.759						
17	.230	1.149	96.908						
18	.224	1.122	98.030						
19	.203	1.013	99.043						
20	.191	.957	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
TR03	.837					
PH01	.795					
TR01	.777					
PR01	.659					
HE01		.841				
HE04		.823				
PU03		.791				
HE02		.715				
ID03			.885			
CO02			.863			
ID02			.837			
PA01				.882		
PA02				.845		
PE04				.817		
CE03					.871	
CE04					.867	
AN01					.835	
RE02						.891
RE03						.886
RE01						.878

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. <sup>a</sup>

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.



## Appendix 10: Results of model fit indices from CFA in main survey

original model fit indices

### Model Fit Summary

#### CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	55	258.182	155	.000	1.666
Saturated model	210	.000	0		
Independence model	20	2942.756	190	.000	15.488

#### RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.074	.940	.919	.694
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.484	.344	.275	.311

#### Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.912	.892	.963	.954	.963
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

#### Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
Default model	.816	.744	.785
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	1.000	.000	.000

#### NCP

Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	103.182	62.862	151.395
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	2752.756	2580.809	2932.042

#### FMIN

Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	103.182	62.862	151.395
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	2752.756	2580.809	2932.042

#### FMIN

Model	FMIN	F0	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	.645	.258	.157	.378
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	7.357	6.882	6.452	7.330

#### RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.041	.032	.049	.961
Independence model	.190	.184	.196	.000

#### AIC

Model	AIC	BCC	BIC	CAIC
Default model	368.182	374.277	587.850	642.850
Saturated model	420.000	443.272	1258.732	1468.732
Independence model	2982.756	2984.972	3062.635	3082.635

#### ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
Default model	.920	.820	1.041	.936
Saturated model	1.050	1.050	1.050	1.108
Independence model	7.457	7.027	7.905	7.462

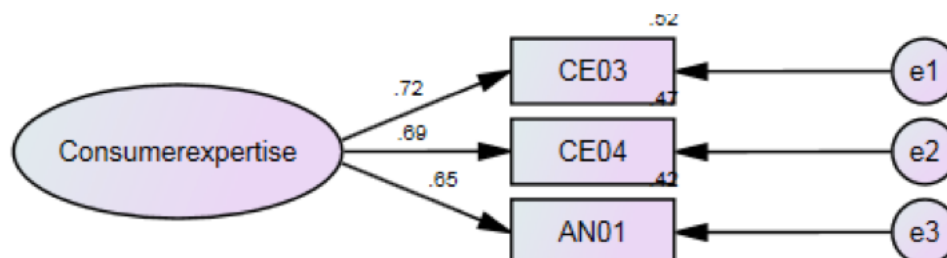
#### HOELTER

Model	HOELTER	HOELTER
	.05	.01
Default model	287	309
Independence model	31	33

## Appendix 11: One-factor Congeneric Measurement Models

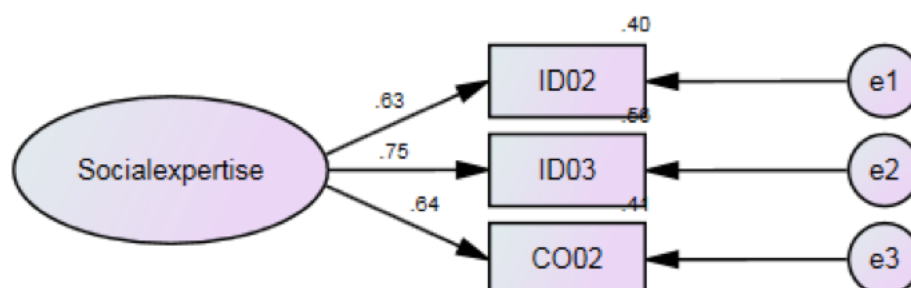
The one-factor congeneric measurement models for each latent variables are shown respectively as follows.

(a). One-factor congeneric measurement model for the latent variable of consumer expertise



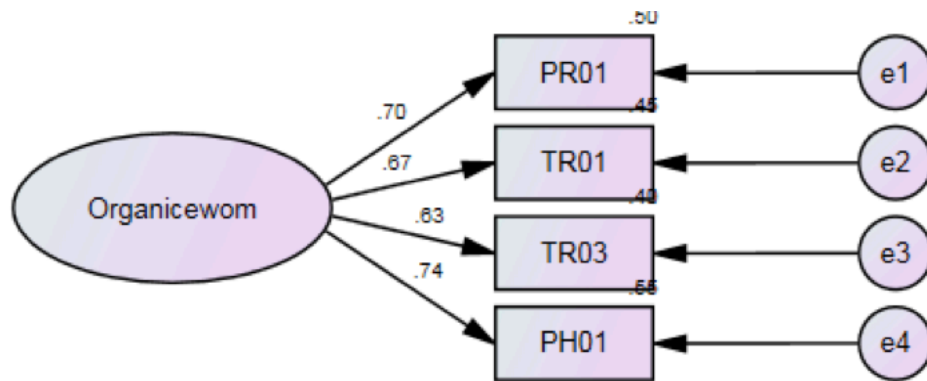
$X^2$	\	p	\	CFI	\	RMR	\
df	0	AGFI	\	TLI	\	RMSEA	\
$X^2 / df$	\	GFI	\	NFI	\	CAIA	\

(b). One-factor congeneric measurement model for the latent variable of social expertise



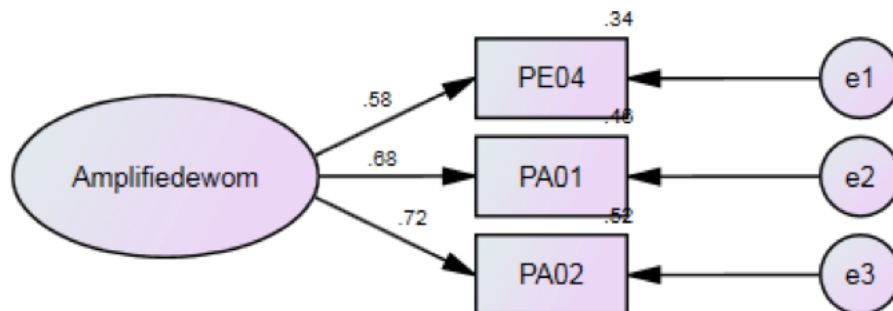
$X^2$	\	p	\	CFI	\	RMR	\
df	0	AGFI	\	TLI	\	RMSEA	\
$X^2 / df$	\	GFI	\	NFI	\	CAIA	\

(c). One-factor congeneric measurement model for the latent variable of organic e-WOM



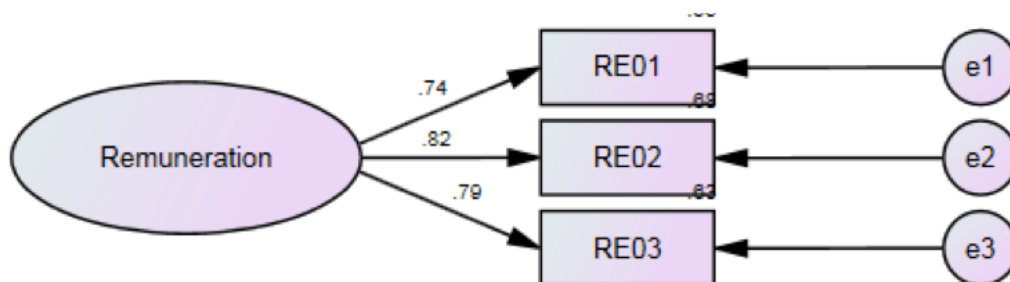
X <sup>2</sup>	2.182	p	.139	CFI	.998	RMR	.0092
df	1	AGFI	.973	TLI	.989	RMSEA	.054
X <sup>2</sup> / df	2.182	GFI	.997	NFI	.997	CAIA	65.130

(d). One-factor congeneric measurement model for the latent variable of amplified e-WOM



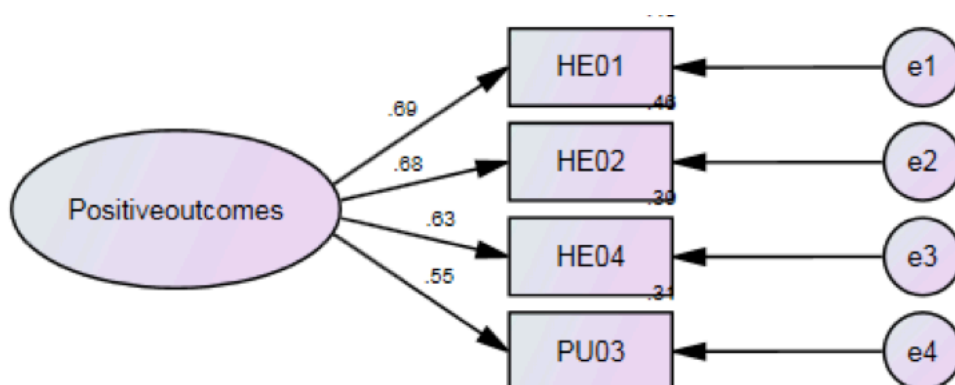
X <sup>2</sup>	\	p	\	CFI	\	RMR	\
df	0	AGFI	\	TLI	\	RMSEA	\
X <sup>2</sup> / df	\	GFI	\	NFI	\	CAIA	\

(e). One-factor congeneric measurement model for the latent variable of remuneration



$X^2$	\	p	\	CFI	\	RMR	\
df	0	AGFI	\	TLI	\	RMSEA	\
$X^2 / df$	\	GFI	\	NFI	\	CAIA	\

(d). One-factor congeneric measurement model for the latent variable of positive outcomes



$X^2$	2.418	p	.120	CFI	.998	RMR	.0119
df	1	AGFI	.970	TLI	.986	RMSEA	.060
$X^2 / df$	2.418	GFI	.997	NFI	.996	CAIA	65.364