



Selfies: An Exploration into the Brand Effects of Visual Imagery with Earned Media

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Outline of Presentation

- What's a selfie?
- Who posts selfies?
- Why do they do it?
- Why are selfies of interest to fashion brands?
- What academic research has been done on selfies?
- What is the gap in the literature?
- What theory can help fill the gap?
- What are the results to date?
- What issues and concepts need to be further explored?
- What are the issues do the industry need to be aware of?



Taking images of yourself – is nothing new



Self portraiture
Commissioned portraits
Camera
Camera with self timer
The photo booth
The polaroid camera
The camera phone
'The selfie'



What is a selfie?

Self generated, self selected picture to communicate transitory message in a particular moment in time taken to be immediately distributed to others via social media networks (Soerjoatmodjo, 2014)



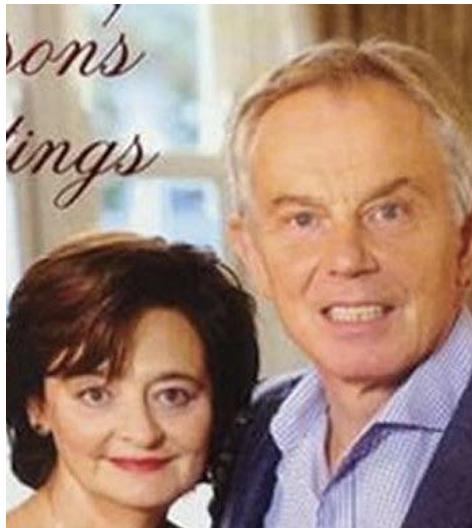
“the selfie is a mirror, and a camera, and a stage or billboard all at once” (Warfield 2014)

*“Visual culture”
(Franco, 2013)*

*“Visual promiscuity”
(Nelson, 2013)*

*Social conformity?
(Nelson, 2013; Franco, 2013)*

*“vainglory”
(Nelson, 2013)*



Who posts Selfies?



- Significantly more women
- Typically young people estimated median age is 23.7 years (Selfiecity, 2014)

Why do People take Selfies?

- Self expression
- Killing time
- Recording memorable moments
- Affirmation from social media friends (Soerjoatmodjo, 2014)
- Narcissism
- Vanity
- Self disclosure (Gasbo and Wittberger 2014).



Selfies facilitate the opportunity to ...

- Share a presentation of the self and identity (Soerjoatmodjo, 2014);
- Create a life narrative through images (Rutledge, 2013);
- 'protest' against airbrushed images portrayed in popular media (Gervais, 2013);
- Self disclosure (Christofides et al. 2013)
- Create an 'avatar' /alternative version of oneself (Franco, 2013)



Likewise, fashion serves as a vehicle for self expression.



Why are selfies of interest to fashion brands?

Serve as a medium for stimulating earned media – visual eWOM

What academic research has been done on selfies?

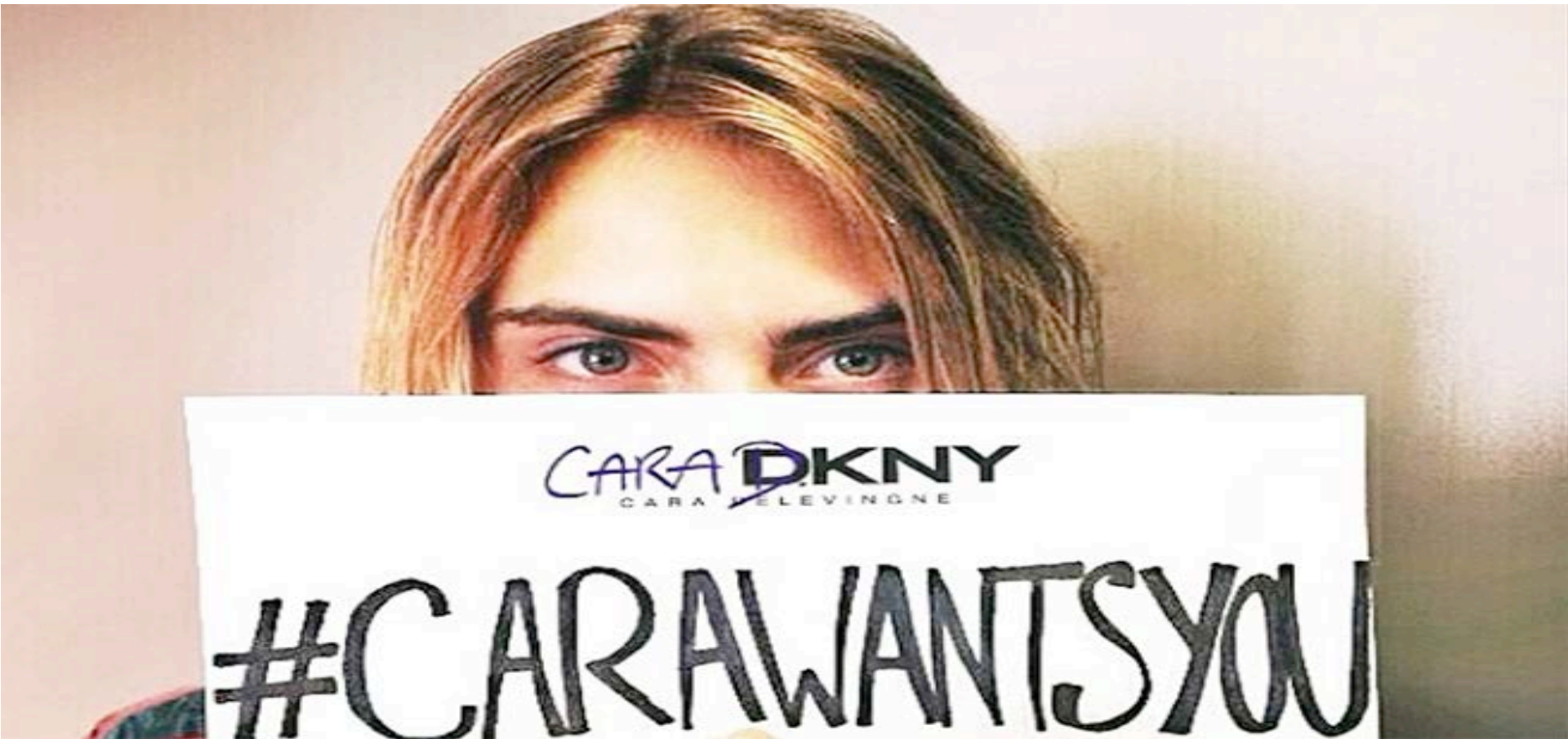
- Academic research has mainly been limited to social-psychological role of the selfie (e.g. work of Pogontseva & Grinkova, 2014; Warfield, 2014)
- Marketing aspect largely ignored so far – early findings mixed (can be both positive and negative (Houghton et al., 2013) for brands

Just because they are popular doesn't make them right

“increased frequency of sharing photographs of the self, regardless of the type of target sharing the photographs, is related to a decrease in intimacy.”
(Houghton et al. 2013)

... implications for stimulating earned media.

What is the gap in the literature?



A substantial research stream exists with regards to WOM and eWOM (King et al. 2014)

Extant research:

- Types of eWOM: discussion groups, blogs, product reviews;
- Motives for engaging in eWOM online;
- Motives for reading/listening online;

Gap: Visual imagery via eWOM has been ignored.

Point to consider: Social media is not owned media

“If social media were truly owned, brands would have control over the experience, access to their fans and full use of the data. But the reality is quite different... It’s true that you own your accounts and profiles. That’s like having your name on the mailbox. But .. they can enter your apartment at will, renovate the building whenever they like.” (Bonchek, 2014)

Voice
The
Brand’s
web site

Footprint
The brand’s
ads, emails,
twitter
feeds

Shadow
What
everyone
says about
the brand



What issues and concepts need to be further explored?

Customer equity: i.e. value the customer brings to the brand in terms of bringing attention and awareness to the brand.

Components of customer equity:

- Value
- Brand
- Relationship

(Lemon et al., 2001)

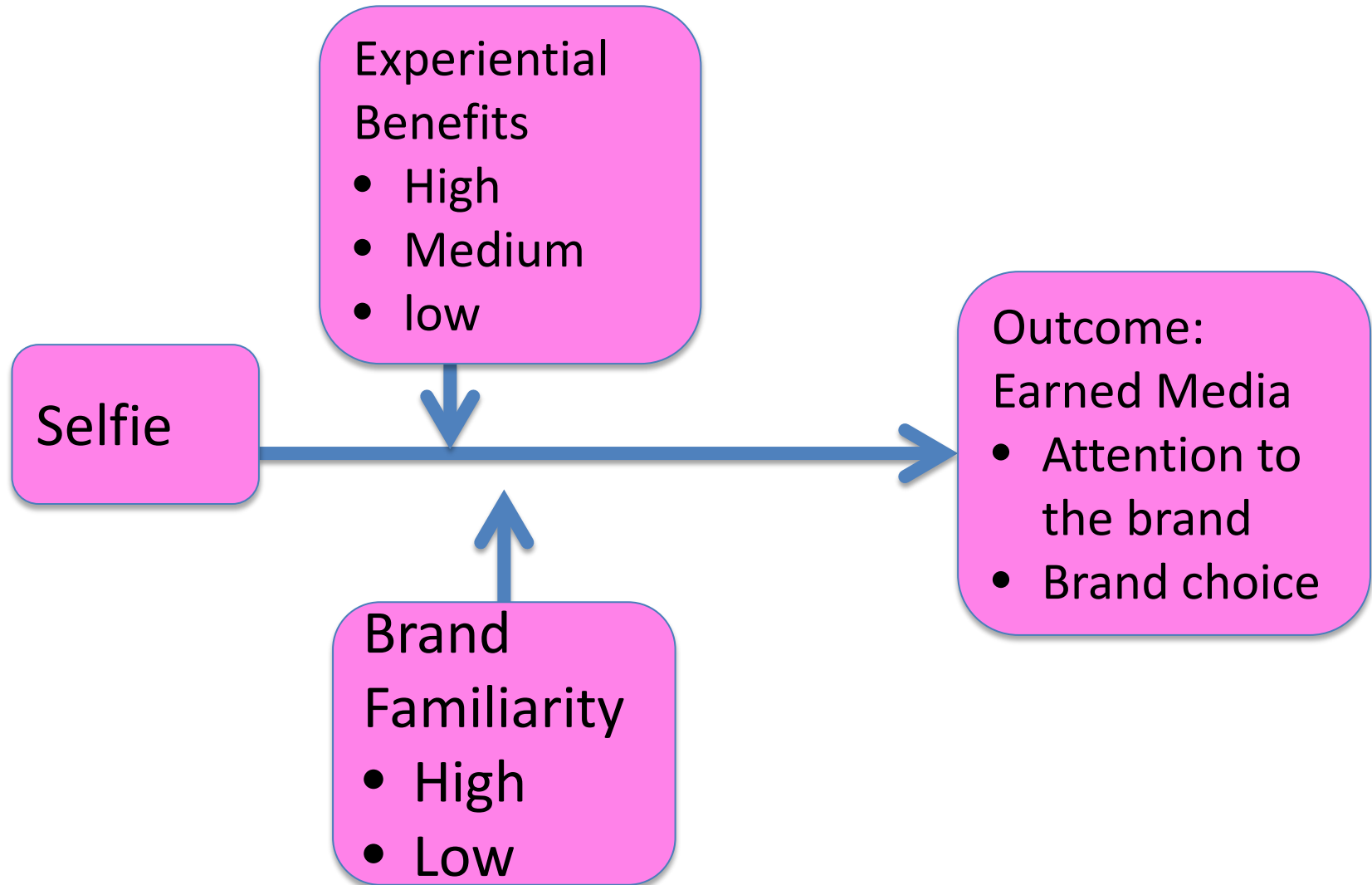
Further to explore ...

Whether this type of earned media is positive or negative – trade off for brands?



What theory can help fill the gap?

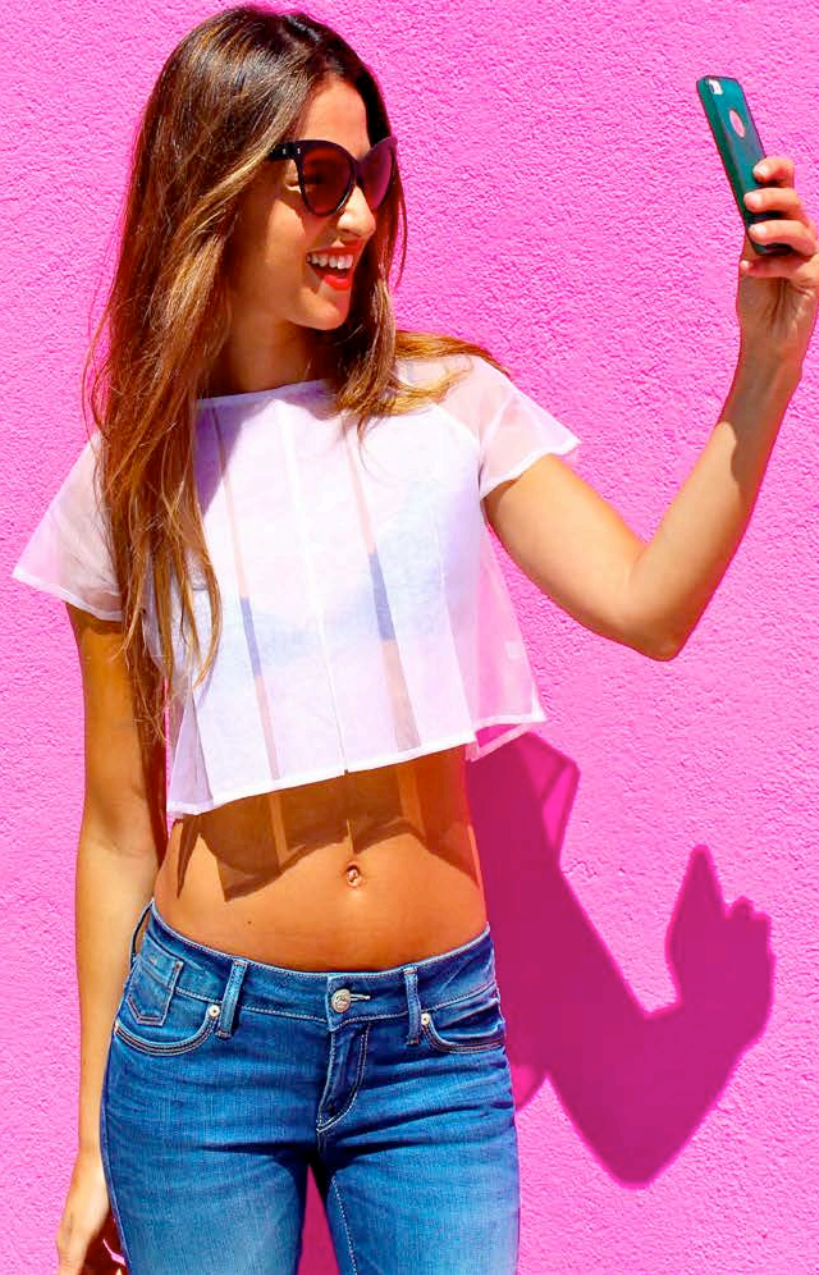
Conceptual Model of the Selfie as Earned Media



Research Aim

To examine the way in which earned media can, influence

- consumer attitudes towards brands;
- the appeal brands



Pilot Study

Screening question:

Do you post selfies of yourself wearing particular fashion brands you have either

- a) just bought (post purchase);
- b) when deciding whether to make a purchase e.g. whilst in a changing room (pre-purchase)

Sample:

11 females

aged 16 and 24 years old



Research Themes

- **Brand choice:** is it only particular fashion brands interviewees select to post?;
- **Brand attention:** what comments do posters make about the brand? i.e. what attention do they bring to the brand;
- **Brand influence:** what influence do the posters perceive they have on others when they post a selfie? e.g. reinforce someone else's experience of the brand; influence someone to change their mind about the brand posted;
- **Brand awareness:** When posting a selfie, do posters perceive they are making others awareness of the brand they are wearing; increase others' familiarity with the brand?



Results



Top End

Brand choice

Bargain

If it's a luxurious item like a designer handbag then I would be more likely to post it on Instagram

Liberty x Nike trainers: its a limited edition that means it is very difficult to buy. Want to share my excitement to my friends

... the ones I'm really impressed about like an item from Primark that doesn't look like its from there I will share. These are the ones you usually receive positive feedback from friends who also cant believe its from Primark.

Brand choice as a vehicle to reflect self image

I do see other people I follow that will only post a purchase if its a designer or expensive purchase so I guess it depends on each person and what type of image they are trying to portray.





Brand Attention

"me and my arm
candy"

Tends to be just
listing items and
where they're
from

Love this
ZARA
dress; In
love with
this coat

Style
more
than
fashion
brand,

Unusual,
different,
colourful, fun,
trendy

I don't tend
to post brand
selfies

Brand influence

Perceived opinion leaders

Responses have been "so stylish", "can't go wrong with McQueen"



My friends usually go out and buy the same style clothing as me once I've shared it with them!

Inadvertent opinion leaders

Sometimes someone will ask me where I got someone from, for example where I got my shoes from. It is quite common to ask that. I don't really think I have an influence on others.



Selfie – a vehicle for approval not brand influence

I guess subconsciously you are seeking the approval of others or trying to express a desired image, although I don't ever assume I am having an influence over others on the type of image I am sharing.



... most of the time I feel people look at my photos to get a sense of my personality and what I'm like.



Brand Awareness

I post a jacket from urban outfitters that my friends bought the same as mine by chance. We have discussed about the quality and how we can match the jacket up with our other clothes online.

It isn't my main priority. Sometimes I would make an effort NOT to as if it is a very specific item I would be quite selfish and not want someone to go and buy it. And never actively trying to promote a brand

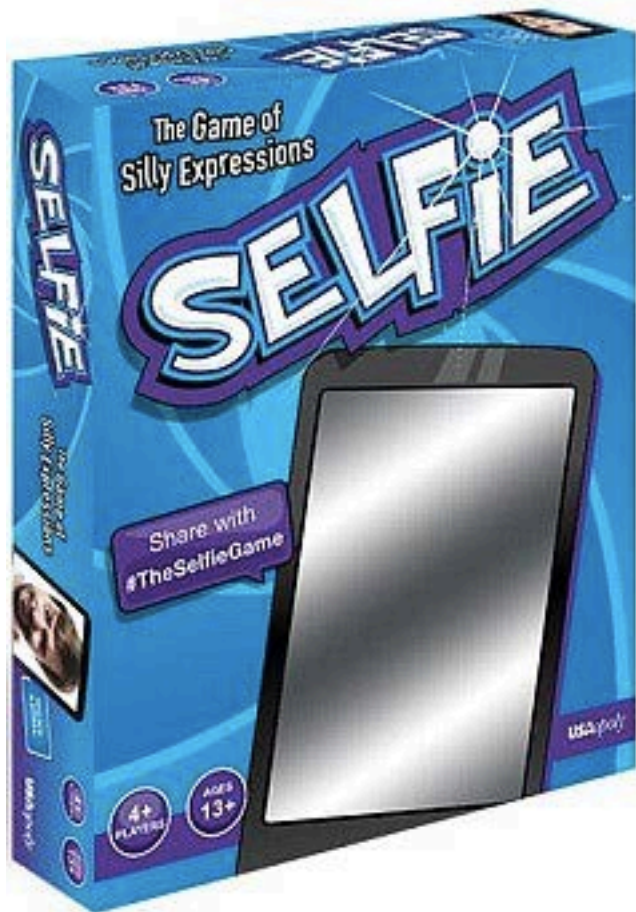
If anything I find myself not posting lots of brand stuff up as I hate having the same things as everybody. Perhaps I'm trying to make people aware that I don't buy a lot from topshop etc.

Key Finding to Date

There is evidence to suggest from the pilot study that selfies can function to support fashion brands in terms of brand awareness and attention hence serving to influence brand attitude and enhance the appeal of the brand. However this is not always the case.



The perfect Xmas gift!





Thank you