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**Me and my brands: drivers and outcomes of ‘brand
selfies’**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy
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April 2021

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at Birkbeck, University of London or any other institution.

Laurence Borel

Abstract

With millions of selfies posted daily, including with brands, the selfie phenomenon has unsurprisingly gained considerable academic and practitioner attention in recent years. Despite a plethora of studies on selfies stemming from several fields of scholarly inquiry, research on brand selfies has in contrast remained scant, and presents several shortcomings. This study aims to address a research gap by establishing what motivates individuals to post brand selfies.

Based on the Uses & Gratifications theory, three studies were conducted. Firstly, an exploratory content analysis (study 1) of 2,000 brand selfies was developed to establish their visual and textual characteristics. A conceptual model of drivers and outcomes of brand selfies was subsequently developed using a two-step approach of 20 semi-structured interviews (study 2), and an online survey of n=511 participants recruited from an online panel (study 3).

Study 1 revealed that brand selfies' characteristics are not homogeneous, and helped identify 8 categories of consumer-generated hashtags. Study 2 helped uncover four consumer motives for posting brand selfies, (1) attention seeking, (2) status seeking, (3) social interaction, (4) archiving, and two brand-led drivers, (5) actual and (6) ideal self-congruence. Brand attachment and narcissism were inferred as moderators, while solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM were inferred as outcomes of posting intent. In study 3 the conceptual model was tested using SEM, with the results largely supporting the hypotheses. The data show that status seeking, social interaction, archiving, and actual self-congruence positively influence posting intent. Brand attachment and narcissism were found to weaken posting intent when selfies were posted as a result of actual self-congruence, to archive the self, or to seek status. Lastly, the data indicate that solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM are mediated through posting intent.

Overall, the thesis contributes to the burgeoning literature on the brand selfie phenomenon and offers additional contributions to the brand UGC, hashtag, psychology, and WoM literature. The findings provide important strategic implications for social media marketers involved in the development of brand selfies campaigns.

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List of abbreviations

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CMV	Common Method Variance (CMV)
CR	Coefficients of Reliability
eWoM	Electronic Word-of-Mouth
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximate
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SNS	Social Networking Site
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index
U&G Theory	Uses and Gratifications Theory
UGC	User-generated content
UGM	User-generated media
WoM	Word-of-Mouth

Chapter 1: Introduction

“The tool of every self-portrait is the mirror. You see yourself in it. Turn it the other way and you see the world.”

Agnès Varda, Film Director, Photographer and Artist

1.1 Focus of the study

The focus of this thesis is to advance understanding of the brand selfie phenomenon as a sub-genre of selfies, arguably one of the most common forms of brand user-generated content (thereafter UGC/brand UGC) to emerge in recent years. Selfies have become one of the most popular means through which individuals digitally self-present and narrate the self to friends and strangers alike (e.g. Belk 2014; Georgakopoulou 2016; Murray 2015). As of 2020, it is estimated that 317,000 status updates and 147,000 photos are uploaded every sixty seconds on Facebook alone (Aslam, 2020), with selfies believed to be the most common type of photographs uploaded to Social Networking Sites (thereafter SNSs) (Cohen 2016; Kulwin 2014). Far from being just a fad, selfies are thought to have played a “transformational influence on contemporary culture” (Iqani and Schroeder, 2015, p. 1).

As selfies and brand selfies have proliferated, they have attracted increased attention from academics from the fields of communication (e.g. Page 2019; Senft 2013; Zappavigna and Zhao 2020), marketing (e.g. Eagar and Dann 2016; Fox et al. 2018), sociology (e.g. Faimau 2020; Kozinets, Gretzel and Dinhopl 2017) and psychology (e.g. Etgar and Amichai-Hamburger 2017; Shane-Simpson et al. 2019; Sung, Kim and Choi 2018). Proponents of the selfie phenomenon suggest that selfies “consist of far more than stereotypical young girls making duck faces in their bathrooms” (Senft and Baym, 2015, p. 1590) and are not solely narcissistic as suggested by psychology scholars (e.g. Murray 2020; Piancatelli, Massi and Vocino 2020; Senft and Baym 2015). Selfies are posted in different situations and contexts to self-express (e.g. Faimau 2020; Piancatelli, Massi and Vocino 2020; Senft and Baym 2015). They may be sports-related, fan-related, political (Senft and Baym, 2015), location-based (e.g. museum-related, travel related) (e.g. Kozinets, Gretzel and Dinhopl 2017; Lyu 2016; Piancatelli, Massi and Vocino 2020) or posted an act of activism for self-empowerment (Barker and Rodriguez 2019; Murray 2020). However, selfies are also commonly posted alongside focal brands (e.g. Hartmann et al. 2019;

Hofstetter, Kunath and John 2020; Sandhya 2016; Sung, Kim and Choi 2018; Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Pappasolomou 2020), which is the focus of this research.

Brand UGC is of utmost importance to marketers as it has been found to influence brand perceptions, consumers' decision-making process (Goh, Heng, and Lin 2013; Yadav et al. 2013), and it tends to be more effective than firm generated content at informing or persuading the brand UGC viewers/consumers (Colicev, Kumar and O'Connor, 2019). Brand UGC tends to be trusted as is it typically transmitted by an individual within someone's personal network (Chu and Kim, 2011). As a popular form of brand UGC, brand selfies pertain to a specific type of selfies that feature the self alongside a focal brand, showing an everyday consumption activity involving a brand (Presi et al., 2016). Compared to other forms of brand UGC, brand selfies are unique in that they enable individuals to present the self and a focal brand, thus explicitly showcasing brand associations (Schau and Gilly, 2003). Consciously or unconsciously, the choice of brands included in brand selfies will be driven by the self-concept (Belk, 1988). Through the posting brand selfies, individuals are expected to benefit from such brand associations (Iqani and Schroeder 2015; Sung, Kim and Choi, 2018) while constructing their identity (Belk, 2013). In sum, brand selfies offer powerful visual cues that link consumers and brands (Sung, Kim and Choi, 2018).

1.2 Research gap and research objectives

Despite their importance to scholars and practitioners alike and a call for papers from a special issue of the *European Journal of Marketing* (Kedzior, Allen, and Schroeder, 2016), the literature on the brand selfie phenomenon has remained scant and highlights several shortcomings which the present research sets out to address.

Millions of brand selfies are posted on a daily basis, yet no research has examined why individuals post them and their implications for brands. Scrutiny of extant research on digital photo-sharing has examined the motivations for sharing images on Facebook brand pages (Colicev, Kumar and O'Connor 2019; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2008), Instagram (Sheldon and Bryant, 2016) as well as selfies (Sung et al., 2016), but not brand selfies. Brand selfies, as previously noted, are unique in that they contain a direct representation of the self alongside a brand with a view to self-present, arguably becoming one of the most popular forms of brand UGC in recent years. Thus

consumers' motives for posting them will likely differ from the motives for posting non-branded selfies or other generic types of photographs.

Furthermore, most research on selfies and to a lesser extent brand selfies has stemmed from the psychology corpus as highlighted through the review of the literature (Chapter 2) and lack robust empirical conceptualization from a marketing lens. To date, this body of research has been primarily conceptual or qualitative in nature (e.g. Gannon and Prothero 2016; Marwick 2015), only yielding limited empirical insights. One of the most significant papers on the brand selfie phenomenon is arguably that of Sung, Kim and Choi (2018) who identified two personality traits, narcissism and materialism, as factors influencing brand selfie posting intent. In their research, the authors found that brand selfie posters exhibit higher levels of narcissism and materialism than non-selfies posters. Acknowledging the shortcomings of their work, the authors call for further research into consumers' motivations for posting brand selfies. To respond to this call for further research, and address a research gap on consumers' motivations for posting brand selfies, this thesis proposes **to develop and empirically test a conceptual model of drivers, moderators and outcomes of brand selfies, which will also look at the role of narcissism**. Thus, overall, this research offers a foundation for understanding consumers' motivations for posting this popular form brand UGC and their consequences for brands.

This research is expected to enhance theoretical understanding of brand selfies as a means for self-presentation through the extension of consumers' self-concepts (Belk 1988; Sirgy 1982). This will be achieved by identifying and empirically validating of a set of motives for posting brand selfies, moderators, and their outcomes, namely solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM. The moderators of brand selfies posting identified from the literature, narcissism and brand attachment also provide a contribution respectively on the influence of personality traits on brand selfie posting intent and the nature of consumer-brand relationships enacted through brand selfies.

Besides their theoretical value, the results of this study provide meaningful implications for social media managers involved in the development of brand selfie campaigns. Notably, there have been several instances of brand UGC campaigns that have backfired on social media (e.g. Arli and Dietrich, 2017) in recent years. This

study helps marketers understand consumers' motives for posting brand selfies, to successfully develop such campaigns and drive brand selfies posting at scale. Furthermore, the exploratory content analysis also helps highlight the characteristics marketers should expect to see in different types of brand selfies.

As the brand selfie phenomenon has not been fully understood yet, this research will include both exploratory and descriptive research designs. In order to provide a holistic overview of brand selfies, the first research question put forth proposes to identify their characteristics. Extant research highlights that the characteristics of selfies have typically been uncovered through content analyses across the fields of psychology (e.g. Bell, Cassarly and Dunbar 2018; Döring, Reif and Poeschl 2015; Qiu et al. 2016), sociology (e.g. Cortese et al. 2018; Eagar and Dann 2016; Woodruffe, Santarossa and Lacasse 2018) and marketing (Roma and Aloini 2019; Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012; Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Papasolomou 2020). Review of these studies indicates that content analyses on the brand selfie phenomenon are scarce, and provide an opportunity for further empirical research: **RQ1: What are the characteristics of brand selfies?**

Within the psychology corpus, content analyses have scrutinized the personality traits of selfie users (Qiu et al., 2016), as well as self-objectification practices (Döring, Reif and Poeschl 2015; Bell, Cassarly and Dunbar 2018). Qiu et al. (2016) examined the association between selfies and personality by measuring participants' Big Five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness) through self-reports, and subsequently coding the participants' selfies posted on SNSs. The resulting findings revealed that several personality cues found in photographs were associated with each different personality traits. Emotional positivity in selfies predicted agreeableness and openness, the 'duckface' facial expression (a form of pouting often found in posed photographs) indicated neuroticism, and private location in the background indicated less conscientiousness. In summary, Qiu et al.'s (2016) conclude that selfies reflect the selfie taker's personality. Elsewhere, other content analyses have established the characteristics of self-objectification practices (Bell, Cassarly and Dunbar, 2018) and gender-stereotyping (Döring, Reif and Poeschl, 2015) through selfies. These studies reveal that just under 30% of female selfies are self-objectified through posing provocatively

to get more likes (Bell, Cassarly and Dunbar, 2018) and that selfie images also tend to reproduce and even enhance gender-stereotyping found in traditional advertising images (Döring, Reif and Poeschl, 2015).

Thirdly, content analyses that have stemmed from the sociology corpus have researched both self-presentational behaviors and hashtag use. For instance, Cortese et al. (2018) explored the self-presentational characteristics of ‘smoking selfies’ through a descriptive quantitative content analysis, analyzing differences among men and women taking selfies with traditional cigarettes and e-cigarettes. Elsewhere, Eagar and Dann (2016) qualitatively content analyzed selfies to develop a classification of human narrative uncovering six types of self-presentation strategies: (1) the autobiography selfie, (2) the parody selfie, (3) the propaganda selfie, (4) the romance selfie, (5) the travel diary selfie, and (6) the coffee-table book selfie. Lastly, Woodruffe, Santarossa and Lacasse (2018) content-analyzed the consumer-generated hashtags in selfies, as well as post/follower/following ratio of the posters. Based on those consumer-generated hashtags, the authors suggest that attention seeking, and status seeking are two key motives for posting selfies online. Building on the work of Woodruffe, Santarossa and Lacasse (2018), the content analysis that will be conducted in this thesis, also proposes to analyze consumer-generated incorporated in brand selfies to establish how and if they differ from hashtags in standard selfies.

Lastly, within the marketing corpus, content analyses of brand UGC have been conducted to identify the characteristics and dimensions of brand UGC on different SNSs such on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter (Roma and Aloini 2019; Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012). Smith, Fischer and Yongjian (2012) identified six characteristics specific of brand UGC: (1) promotional self-presentation, (2) brand centrality, (3) marketer-directed communication, (4) response to online marketer action, (5) factually verifiable information and (6) brand sentiment. Building on these findings, Roma and Aloini (2019) identified an additional six dimensions common to brand UGC: (1) response to advertising campaigns, (2) location sharing, (3) connection with personal experience (daily posting of experiences and everyday e.g. birthdays or holidays), (4) real-time sharing of purchase experience, (5) sharing of consumption experience (post-purchase sharing), (6) brand recommendations (online reviews).

Only one study at time of writing, has scrutinized brand selfies, albeit using a netnographic approach using both visual and textual analysis (Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Papasolomou, 2020) to understand the interactivity between brands and target audiences that could be used as a marketing tool by companies. The authors suggest that selfies enable users to associate themselves with brands and extend their brand experiences through Instagram. Furthermore, brand selfies enable users to engage with others, while sharing and exchanging their experiences about brands turning them into WoM marketers. While Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Papasolomou's (2020) research provides interesting insights into how consumers use brand selfies and enact consumer-brand relationships, the authors' research does not identify the characteristics of brand selfies.

To summarize, while these studies provide useful insights into the characteristics of selfies and selfies practices, the content analysis aims to address a research gap by identifying and analyzing the characteristics of brand selfies, a form of brand UGC largely under-researched. Unlike Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Papasolomou's research (2020), the content analysis in this thesis will be quantitative in nature. This preliminary study is expected to contribute to the literature by gaining a better understanding of how the self is constructed through selfies (Lim, 2015), through a concurrent visual and textual analysis of the photographs themselves, consumer-generated hashtags, as well as an analysis of geo-tagging practices.

The second research question, central to the development of a testable conceptual model of brand selfies aims to identify what drives consumers to post brand selfies. This research question will be addressed through qualitative semi-structured interviews to identify a set of motives and drivers: **RQ2: What are the main motives and drivers for posting brand selfies?**

As will be detailed in Chapter 2, the motives for creating brand UGC yield a solid body of literature spanning over a decade (e.g. Berthon, Pitt and Campbell 2008; Daugherty, Eastin and Bright 2008; Heinonen 2011; Halliday 2015; Krishnamurthy and Dou 2008; Lin et al. 2017; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011; Shao 2009; Smith et al. 2012; Sung et al. 2016; Sung, Kim and Choi 2018; Toubia and Stephen 2013). Scrutiny of this body of literature also highlights significant differences for posting different UGC types (e.g. consumers ads, status updates, photo uploads) as well as differences across SNSs (blogs, forums, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube). While recent UGC studies closely related to brand selfies have scrutinized digital photo-sharing on Facebook (Malik, Dhir and Nieminen, 2016), selfies (Sung et al., 2015) and Instagram use (Sheldon and Bryant, 2016), the motives for brand selfie will likely differ due to (1) the centrality of the self and (2) due to the fact other studies scrutinized (brand) UGC in a more generic manner. Because of the dyadic nature of the brand and the self, it is expected that brand selfies motives will likely to differ from those previously identified.

Two recent studies stemming from the psychology literature closely related to this research have however attempted to identify the motives for posting selfies (Sung et al., 2016) and brand selfies (Sung, Kim and Choi, 2018). Firstly, using the Uses & Gratifications theory (thereafter U&G), Sung et al. (2016) identified and empirically tested four motives for posting selfies online: communication, attention seeking, entertainment and archiving. While this study advances the understanding of why consumers post selfies, it is likely that brand selfies motives will differ due to the presence and centrality of the brand. Building on their initial findings, Sung, Kim and Choi (2018) conducted a second study to establish the factors predicting brand selfie posting. The authors identified narcissism, materialism and beliefs that SNSs are sources of brand of information (a construct which measures whether the brand/product information posted is credible and useful), as predictors for posting brand selfies. While an interesting contribution to the brand selfie literature, this research however presents several shortcomings. Firstly, the authors used personality traits predictors as drivers of brand selfie posting intent omitting the U&G framework, which aims to establish what drives people actively choose to use certain media (Katz 1959; Katz et al. 1973) to satisfy their needs or wants (Papacharissi, 2008). Sung, Kim and Choi (2018) therefore inferred that brand selfie posting intent is largely

personality-based. In doing so, the authors omitted to address what drives (i.e. the motives) people to actively choose to use certain media (Katz 1959; Katz et al. 1973). Secondly, while the authors mention self-concept theories in their paper, they nevertheless failed to incorporate these theories in the development of their conceptual model. Lastly, the measurement of SNSs are sources of brand of information is not an established scale in the literature and it is unclear how these items were developed. Acknowledging the shortcomings of their work, Sung, Kim and Choi (2018) call for further research to provide greater insights into consumers' motivations to post brand selfies. Thus, to build on these findings and address another research gap, the present research proposes to identify consumers' motives for posting brand selfies in line with the U&G framework. The application of this framework will help examine media effects from the point of view of the individual user (Aitken, Gray, and Lawson, 2008), with the aim of understanding how and why people actively choose to use certain media (Katz 1959; Katz et al. 1973).

Third, the selfie literature stemming from the psychology corpus highlights a link between selfie behaviors and narcissism (e.g. Sung et al. 2016; Sung Kim and Choi 2018). Based on this body of literature, the present research aims to establish the role of narcissism on brand selfies posting: **RQ3: What is the role of narcissism on brand selfies posting?**

While proponents of the selfie phenomenon have fiercely criticized scholars linking selfie posting with narcissism (Fallon 2014; Lim 2016; Murray 2015; Murray 2020; Senft and Baym 2015), understanding the role of narcissism on brand selfies posting is nevertheless of importance, as the personality trait has also been found to influence consumer behavior and outcomes such as purchase intent (Sedikies et al., 2007). As noted by Cisek et al. (2014, p. 2) "self-oriented considerations often underlie consumer decision and behavior." Sedikies et al. (2007) have argued that narcissists will purchase certain products to regulate their own self-esteem and elevate their self-positivity. Narcissistic consumers are attracted to products that offer positive distinctiveness (Sedikies, Hart and Cisek, 2018), and may use brand selfies as a means to digitally show off or talk about themselves (Buss and Chiodo, 1991). It has been suggested that personality traits influence overt behavior both online and offline (e.g. Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzki 2010; Pagani, Hofacker and Goldsmith 2011;

Sheldon, Antony and Sykes 2020; Winter et al. 2014), and that SNSs activities even mimic individuals' offline personalities (Eftekhar, Fullwood and Morris, 2014).

Review of the literature on narcissism highlights that the personality trait has been empirically linked to several selfies and brand selfies posting behaviors (e.g. Arpaci 2018; Fox and Rooney 2015; Halpern, Valenzuela and Katz 2016; Kim and Chock 2017; March and McBean 2018; McCain et al. 2016; Moon et al. 2016; Shane-Simpson et al. 2019; Singh, Farley and Donahue 2018; Sorokowski et al. 2015; Wang 2019; Weiser 2015). In these studies, narcissism has been found to enhance specific behaviors such as the time spent on SNSs (Fox and Rooney, 2015), the amount of time spent editing selfies (Fox and Rooney, 2015), selfie-posting frequency (McCain et al. 2016; Moon et al. 2016; Shane-Simpson et al. 2019; Singh, Farley and Donahue 2018; Sung et al. 2016; Weiser 2015) and lastly, selfie posting intent (Lee and Sung 2016; Sung, Kim and Choi 2018). In summary, these studies suggest that an individual's levels of narcissism will influence or enhance the likelihood and frequency of performing certain actions on social media related to (brand) selfies.

As previously noted, only two studies to date have empirically identified and tested the motives for posting selfies (Sung et al., 2016) and brand selfies (Sung, Kim and Choi, 2018). In their conceptual model, Sung et al. (2016) identified four motives driving posting intent: attention seeking, communication, and entertainment. Of these four motives, narcissism was found positively influence attention seeking, communication, and entertainment, in relation to posting frequency and posting intent. In other words, individuals with higher levels of narcissism were found more likely to post selfies and more frequently to achieve their attention seeking, communication, and entertainment goals. Elsewhere, in a recent study of brand selfies, narcissism was in contrast empirically validated as a factor for brand selfie posting (Sung, Kim and Choi, 2018). Based on their findings, Sung et al. (2016) recommend that personality traits should be included in the investigation of SNSs use, and particularly selfies. This corroborates with the U&G framework which states that media use may be influenced by several factors such as individual differences, or specific psychological factors (Conway and Rubin 1991; Katz et al. 1974; Lucas and Sherry 2004; Rubin 2009). Therefore, on the basis of the literature, and in line with the U&G theory and past

recommendations (e.g. Sung et al., 2016), this research proposes to address another gap by examining the moderating role of narcissism on brand selfie posting motives.

Lastly, the fourth research question, aims to establish the link between brand selfie posting and Word-of-Mouth (thereafter WoM): **RQ4: What is the effect of brand selfies posting and consequently the effect of brand selfies posting intent on WoM?**

It has been suggested that brand UGC such as brand selfies enable consumers to communicate about the brands they consume (Christodoulides, Jevons and Bonhomme, 2012). However, the present research adopts the assumption that brand UGC and WoM are two different constructs (Cheong and Morrison, 2008), and thus that brand UGC is not necessarily WoM. Instead, this study proposes that in posting selfies, and due to consumers' pre-existing willingness to communicate about the brands they consume (Christodoulides, Jevons and Bonhomme, 2012), they will be willing to offer both solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM beyond SNSs. Both types of WoM are under-researched and is therefore expected that these findings will also provide an additional theoretical contribution to the WoM literature.

1.3 Expected contributions

The purpose of this research is to identify and empirically validate the motives for posting brand selfies, their moderators and outcomes. The contributions of this study are important to academics and practitioners bringing important empirical insights into this relatively new phenomenon. The contributions this research brings can be broken down into the following points:

1. This research aims to bring important insights into the characteristics of brand selfies including the photographs themselves, the consumer-generated hashtags included in brand selfies and geo-tagging practices. The findings resulting from this study are expected to contribute to both the embryonic selfie literature as well as the hashtag literature offering additional insights into what consumers do with brand selfies.
2. The main gap in the literature which this research sets out to address, is the identification of a set of motives and drivers for posting brand selfies. More

specifically, this research aims to empirically develop and test conceptual model of antecedents, moderators and outcomes of brand selfies posting, to gain a deeper understanding of consumers' motivations, and additional constructs that may moderate posting intent.

3. This research also aims to contribute to the psychology corpus by testing the role of narcissism, which based on the literature, is expected to influence the motives for posting brand selfies.
4. Lastly, this study is expected to contribute to the WoM literature by establishing the relationship between posting intent and offline solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM. This study aims to establish which motives or drivers for posting brand selfies lead to solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM.
5. From a managerial perspective, this research is expected to provide important insights aimed at Social Media Marketers into consumers' motivations for posting selfies, which may be leveraged to develop successful brand selfies campaigns.

1.4 Structure and content

To achieve its intended contributions, this thesis is structured in 9 chapters delineating the steps and methodology employed to achieve the stated research objectives.

Chapter 1 – Introduction: this chapter has introduced the research thesis by presenting the brand selfie phenomenon, the research gap, resulting research objectives and expected contributions.

Chapter 2 – Literature review: this chapter presents the relevant literature to this thesis from the fields of marketing and psychology. The first section of the chapter reviews the literature on the self-concept and discusses how consumers' sense of self has been drastically impacted by SNSs (Belk, 2014) through the creation of brand UGC such as brand selfies. The second part of the chapter offers an expansive overview and discussion of the literature on the selfie and brand selfie phenomenon and its link to narcissism. As brand selfies as a form a brand UGC, the third part of the chapter is dedicated to reviewing the brand UGC literature including their characteristics and consumer motives for use. Lastly, the fourth section of the chapter

presents the relationship between brand UGC and WoM and discusses the various types of WoM including those of interest in this research: solicited WoM and solicited WoM. Based on the review of the literature, the chapter concludes with a summary of the research gap and research questions.

Chapter 3 – Research paradigm & research design: the purpose of Chapter 3 is to present the research paradigm and research framework underpinning this thesis. The chapter presents the Uses & Gratifications theory as the research framework, which informs the methodological development of the conceptual model. The chapter concludes with a presentation of this thesis' overall research design.

Chapter 4 – Preliminary studies: this chapter presents the first two preliminary studies conducted, necessary towards the development the conceptual model. The methodology employed and a discussion of the resulting findings are presented for each study. The first study, a content analysis of brand selfies is firstly developed to address the first research question of identifying the characteristics for posting brand selfies. The second study comprising of semi-structured interviews aims to identify the main motives and drivers of brand selfies. For each study the different steps taken to design the research instruments, data collection, and sampling procedures are discussed.

Chapter 5 – Conceptual model development: this chapter presents the conceptual model resulting from the semi-structured interviews, combined with the literature to infer additional moderators and outcomes. In this chapter, a series of related research hypotheses are developed.

Chapter 6 – Main study methodology: Chapter 6 presents the methodology employed to test and validate the conceptual model, a web-based self-completed survey administered through Qualtrics. The chapter presents the steps followed to the develop the survey such as the selected measures for each construct, piloting procedures and sampling method selected. Concluding the chapter, the sample characteristics are presented.

Chapter 7 – Main study results: the purpose of this chapter is to test the hypotheses presented in Chapter 5, using structural equation modeling techniques, including confirmatory factor analyses, path estimation, moderation and mediation analyses.

Chapter 8 – Discussion: this chapter presents a detailed discussion of the study's findings, elaborating on the results of the previous chapters. The results are presented and discussed in the light of the existing literature.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion: This thesis concludes in Chapter 9, with an account of its key contributions across several strands of literatures in the fields of marketing and psychology. Theoretical and methodological contributions are first presented, followed managerial implications targeted at social media marketers involved in the development of brand selfies campaigns. The limitations of the study are discussed, and suggestions for further research detailed.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The brand selfie phenomenon, a popular form of brand UGC and cultural phenomenon is the core element of this study's conceptual development. This chapter presents a literature review of the concepts relevant to this research, structured in four main sections. The first section reviews several self-concept theories and discusses how the Internet and SNSs have led to drastic changes in how consumers present the self. SNSs and brand UGC such as selfies have enabled individuals to present different facets of the self and enact consumer-brand relationships.

The second part of this chapter presents an extensive literature review of the selfie phenomenon across multiple academic disciplines such as sociology, psychology, communication and marketing. This literature review on the selfie phenomenon defines what selfie are, their characteristics and presents the various sub-genres of selfies such as brand selfies, which are of interest to this research. Concluding the review of the literature on selfies, psychology research on the selfie phenomenon is discussed. This section highlights why SNSs appeal to narcissists and details narcissistic behaviors commonly associated with selfie use.

The third section of this chapter reviews the literature on UGC with a focus on the typologies of UGC the motivations for posting (brand) UGC, and their characteristics with a view of detailing differences across UGC types and SNSs.

Lastly, the fourth and final part of this chapter discusses how WoM has evolved in recent years with the adoption of the Internet and SNSs as a potential outcome of brand selfie posting, which can positively or negatively impact brands. The various types of WoM identified in the literature are presented and discussed. Concluding this chapter, the overall research gap deriving from the extant brand selfies, narcissism, UGC and WoM literature are then presented. This leads to the articulation of several research questions that drive the empirical part of this research.

2.2 The self-concept

The first section of the literature review focuses on defining the self-concept and its related terms, including the various facets of the self-concept, the extended self and self-congruity. It details the characteristics of the self-concept, its applications and the influence of the brand and ‘significant others’ (generalized perceptions of a stereotype user of a brand) on SNSs use and brand selfie posting.

Consumers’ sense of self has been drastically impacted by SNSs (Belk, 2014). Facebook alone “is now a key part of self-presentation for one-sixth of humanity” (Belk, 2014, p. 484). Within SNSs, the self-concept manifests itself through consumers’ profiles (e.g. Facebook profiles, Twitter profiles etc.), the brands consumers digitally associate themselves with (e.g. Schau and Gilly 2003; Smith et al. 2012; Wallace, Buil and de Chernatony 2016), and the brand UGC consumers create. As noted by Kedzior, Allen and Schoeder (2016), the self in selfies is even more prominent than in other forms of brand UGC, as the individual is the focal subject “more directly linking the subject to the image” (p. 1768), thus reinforcing the relevance of self-concept theories in understanding why consumers post selfies with brands.

2.2.1 Conceptualization and dimensionality of the self-concept

Research on the self-concept has been a growing field since the publication of Rosenberg’s seminal book, *Conceiving the Self*, published in 1979. Primarily conceptual in nature, a considerable body of research has attempted to define the dimensionality of the self-concept, and its implications on consumption decisions, often offering different viewpoints (Sirgy, 1982). This section presents the main conceptualizations and definitions of the self-concept and its characteristics that are widely accepted in the literature.

Several definitions of the self-concept have been discussed in the literature over the years resulting in a fragmented corpus (Sirgy, 1982), however “most scholars are in agreement that the self-concept denotes the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object” (Rosenberg 1979, p. 7 cited in Sirgy, 1982, p. 287). The self-concept is the perception of oneself (Sirgy, 1982), which partially determines human behavior (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). It has sometimes

been treated as a single construct, the actual-self (how a person perceives himself/herself) (e.g. Bellenger, Steinberg and Stanton 1978; Birdwell 1968; Grubb and Hupp 1968) but it has also been treated as a multi-dimensional construct comprising of the *actual self* (how a person perceives himself/herself) and the *ideal self* (the image of oneself as he/she would like it to be) (e.g. Belch 1978; Belch and Landon 1977; Delozier 1971). Encompassing both dimensions, Schenk and Holman (1980) argued that the concept of *situational self-image* may offer an integrated approach. Situational self-image is situation-specific and considers the actual self-concept and the ideal self-concept. This conceptualization posits that brands are used by consumers to express self-image in a given situation (Schenk and Holman, 1980).

While the dimensions reviewed thus far depict the self-concept as a relatively stable construct, it has also been suggested that the self-concept is in fact “dynamic and malleable due to its social nature” (Markus and Kunda 1986, p. 858). People behave differently depending on the situation they are in, as a direct response to their social environments (Markus and Kunda 1986, Tetlock and Manstead 1985). According to this viewpoint, the *malleable self* consists of “several self-conceptions such as the good self, the bad self, the hoped-for self, the fear self, the not-me self, the ideal self, the possible self, the ought self” (Markus and Kunda, 1986, p. 858).

2.2.2 The self-concept and consumption

The role of brands is central to self-concept theories. Early research into the self-concept and consumption has primarily focused on establishing consumers’ *motives* and their desired *outcomes*: the maintenance or enhancement of the self-concept. Sirgy (1982) suggests that consumption decisions tend to be swayed by two underlying motives: self-consistency and self-esteem. Self-consistency refers to an individual’s tendency to behave consistently with views of himself/herself. Conversely, self-esteem refers to the tendency to enhance the self-concept (Epstein, 1980), including through product acquisition, a process known as the self-completion theory (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982). Self-enhancement hinges on peers’ reactions (family, friends, colleagues etc.) of the acquired product (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). A positive reaction will further enhance the conception an individual has of himself (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967), while a negative reaction could conversely be detrimental to the sense of self-concept. For instance, in the case of brand selfies, self-enhancement is

solicited by consumers themselves through the process of sharing photos online and may be achieved through photo likes and positive comments. The theory argues that many of the activities that individuals carry out such as acquiring possessions, allow these individuals to define, and clarify their identity (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982). Whenever an individual feel threatened because of discrepancies between his/her actual and ideal self, the self-completion compensation strategy is activated, and may lead to the acquisition of material possessions to soothe this discrepancy (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982).

Another strand of research has conversely explored *how* consumers incorporate brands as part of their identities and choose the brands they buy. One such theory is the self-congruity theory. Underpinning the self-congruity theory is the idea that consumers choose products and brands that match their own self-image, be it their actual-self or ideal-self (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Sirgy 1982). According to the self-congruity theory, the self-concept will be swayed by a brand's symbolic meanings (e.g. Belk 1988; Solomon 1983). When consumers perceive a brand's meanings consistent with their self-image, they transfer the meaning to their own identity (Levy, 1959). Four possible types of interactions between self-image/product image congruity influence purchase motivations either positively or negatively (Sirgy, 1982). For instance, *positive self-congruity*, a comparison between a positive product-image perception and a positive self-image belief (the degree of perception strength associated with a self-image, equivalent to the actual self-concept), is likely to lead to purchase, motivated by the need to maintain a positive self-image (Sirgy, 1982). Another possible scenario influencing purchase motivations posited is *positive incongruity*, which involves a comparison between a positive product-image perception and a negative self-image belief. In this scenario, the likelihood to purchase is high, motivated by the need to enhance the self-concept. Conversely *negative self-congruity* (a comparison between a negative product-image perception and a negative self-image belief), and *negative self-incongruity* (a negative product-image perception and a positive self-image belief) would both likely lead to product rejection to avoid self-abasement. Therefore, it can be inferred that consumers will strive to achieve positive self-congruity, or positive incongruity through likes and comments when posting brand selfies. An example of positive self-congruity could be for instance the sharing of brand selfie with a recently acquired brand to express the acquisition of a

new product. As an example of positive incongruity could be the expression of negative emotions, followed by a positive comment about the brand (e.g. *'I look awful on this picture, but I am so happy about X brand'*).

Second, given that consumers choose brands to construct a desired self-image, whether actual or ideal, the symbolic value of a brand will also significantly influence consumption choices (e.g. Levy, 1959), and by extension brand selfies posting. While a brand's symbolic meaning is inherently recognized through the socialization process, consumers may also "develop individual symbolic interpretations of their own" (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998, p. 133), which may be "varied and diverse" (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998, p. 136). For instance, a businessman, who usually drives a BMW to work, might also acquire a Harley Davidson to ride in his spare time (Wattanasuwan, 2005). While the symbolism of the BMW may be associated with success and social status, the symbolism of the Harley Davidson, on the other hand, conveys a feeling of excitement and freedom. The symbolism of these brands therefore enables the businessman to express different aspects of his identity. Furthermore, the symbolic meanings of brands "operate in two directions" (Elliot, 1997, p. 287). First, the symbolic meaning of a brand is used outward (social symbolism), as a means of participating in social life and cementing social relationships (Elliott, 1997). Second, the symbolic meaning of a brand is also used inward, towards constructing an identity (self-symbolism), and allows others to make inferences about an individual's social status, a phenomenon known as impression formation (Belk, 1974). Thus, self-symbolism and social symbolism have significant implications for marketers. A brand's image strategy will be crucial in ensuring that a brand's meaning and image is desirable, and matches consumers' own self-image (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis, 1986).

Brand concepts have typically been classified in three broad categories: functional, experiential and symbolic (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis, 1986). First, functional brands are those brands that meet consumers' external functional needs and "solve consumption-related problems" (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis, 1986, p.136). Second, experiential brands are defined as brands that are used solely for enjoyment (Cooper-Martin, 1992) such as for instance food and drink brands (Woods, 1960). Finally, symbolic brands are designed to "fulfill internally generated needs for self-

enhancement, role position, group membership, or ego-identification” (Park, Jaworski, MacInnis, 1986, p. 136). However, while some consumers may develop a symbolism of their own, a brand is often associated with a “stereotype of generalized users of a brand, which is similar to the consumer's own self-concept” (Grubb and Stern, 1971, p. 384). These generalized perceptions of a stereotype user of a brand will also influence the self-concept (Grubb and Stern, 1971).

Another school of thought relating to how consumers incorporate brands in their self-concept is that of Mittal (2006), who suggests that the self-concept may be *personality-based*, or *traits-based* (Mittal, 2006). The personality-based self-concept is a personal narrative of how consumers perceive their identities, who they believe to be. In this personality-based self-concept, objects are ‘props’ central to the construction of the personal narrative (Mittal, 2006). This conceptualization adds depth to the self-congruity theory by questioning the depth of a relationship with a self-congruent brand. With the traits-based self-concept, consumers define themselves through a ‘looking glass’, a subjective assessment of their personality and physical traits such as personality traits, and adjectives that consumers may use to describe themselves (Mittal, 2006). However, the self-concept encompasses both the ‘sans possessions’ self, and the extended self. The ‘sans possessions’ self represents individuals’ bodies, values and characters, competence and success, social roles, and subjective personality traits. However, when possessions are seen as a part of the self-concept, they become a bona fide part of the extended self.

Underpinning the extended self, is the idea that ‘consciously or unconsciously’, consumers regards their possessions as an integral part of themselves (Belk, 1988). A succinct way of explaining the extended self is that ‘we’ as consumers, but above all ‘we’ as individuals “incorporate whatever we perceive as ‘ours’ into our selves” (Wattanasuwan, 2005, p. 181). The term extended self can be used to literally mean a physical extension of oneself, where a product/brand allows people to do something that they would not otherwise achieve. The term is however also symbolically used to describe the way in which we convince ourselves and others that we are a different person without our possessions and brands. Thus, the extended self highlights an important link between identity and consumption and more specifically *how*

consumers incorporate products and brands in their personal identity, which eventually become a part of a person's self.

As noted by Mittal (2006), not all products and brands become part of the extended self. Some purchases are commodities therefore functional in nature, while other purchases are regarded possessions (Mittal, 2006). For instance, consumers may purchase and repurchase a specific face cream because the product enhances their body image, or an item of clothing, because this specific item makes them look more extroverted (self-enhancement). These purchases may lead to involvement or attachment, but never truly become part of the extended self as they are purchases but not possessions (Mittal, 2006). A product will only become part of the extended self, *if* the product is deemed to be the best fit for the self-concept. In addition, other factors such as time and resource spent acquiring an item, developing an emotional bond with the product through use, and products that bring back memories will also likely become part of the extended self (Belk 1988; Mittal 2006).

2.2.3 The extended self in a digital world

As noted in the introduction section of this chapter, the emergence of the Internet and SNSs have drastically transformed “the nature of the self and the nature of possessions” (Belk, 2014, p. 477). While traditional conceptualizations of the self-concept still apply to online environments, the extended self in a digital world presents five key changes driven by the rise of SNSs: (1) dematerialization, (2) re-embodiment, (3) sharing, (4) co-construction of the self and (5) distributed memory (Belk, 2014). Amongst these changes, re-embodiment, sharing, co-construction and distributed memory appear to be the most relevant to understanding how brand selfies extend the self.

The first of such changes is the *dematerialization* of possessions, such as photos (Belk, 2014), which are prominent on SNSs through photo albums. In dematerializing photos, individuals are “transforming the ways in which we represent ourselves, get to know other people, and interact” (p. 479).

The second change is *re-embodiment*, the act of being “disembodied and re-embodied as avatars, photos and videos” (Belk, 2014, p. 481). Re-embodiment gives SNSs users complete control their self-presentation, by carefully selecting digital referents (Schau and Gilly, 2003) such as avatars, photos and videos shared online. These digital referents enable consumers to construct their identity online by using brand “symbols and signs to express the self-concept” (Schau and Gilly, 2003, p. 386). Furthermore, the self-concept may also be expressed through a number of different personas to accommodate multiple selves (for e.g. the “home self” vs. the “work self”). Schau and Gilly (2003, p. 390) even suggest that “as one aspect of the self is explored, consumers are motivated to use a medium further to explore their other selves.” Thus, through photos, including brand selfies, consumers construct, define and act out their personality(ies) with others online. Photos and status updates makeup a “life stream which are an indelible part of our extended self” (Sheth and Solomon, 2014, p. 127).

The third key extended-self change posited by Belk (2014) is *sharing*. Online sharing is central to the mechanism of SNSs as it allows consumers to self-present and construct an idealized self-narrative through status updates and photos. Online sharing has gradually led to greater depth of self-disclosure, the sharing of personal information such as “personal preferences, experiences or emotions, which can primarily be classified with regard to the depth of self-revelation” (Winter et al., 2014, p. 195). Through brand selfies, consumers not only self-present, but also enhance their self-concept by showcasing products, brands and/or possessions owned within their network. While sharing a photo of oneself with a product or a possession nowadays may be commonplace, such self-presentational behaviors would have been awkward pre-Internet times (Belk, 2014).

Also central to the mechanism of SNSs is *participation* through comments and likes, which contributes to a co-construction of the extended self (Belk, 2014). Brand selfies are a perfect example of person-thing-person tripartite previously discussed. By posting a brand selfie online (person-thing), users open themselves to feedback from their network (person-things-people) through likes and comments. Similarly to offline consumption settings, positive feedback may enhance the extended self, while negative feedback could conversely be detrimental to the extended self (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). Furthermore, positive feedback in the form of likes and comments

may help boost brand selfies users' self-esteem (Burrow and Rainone 2016; Pounders, Kowalczyk and Stowers 2016), "because they signal acceptance by others" (Burrow and Rainone, 2016, p. 233).

Finally, the fifth and final change to the extended self in a digital world is *distributed memory*, the process of "recording and archiving our memories" digitally online (Belk, 2014, p. 488). Amongst objects that help maintain a sense of the past, photographs "act in part as repositories for memories and meanings in our lives" (Belk, 1990, p. 669). Thus, by taking brand selfies, consumers extend another dimension of the self, the dimension of time (Belk, 1990). A brand selfie may be taken to retain a pleasant or proud moment when acquiring an expensive possession, and thus act as a dematerialized social archive of consumers' possessions that will extend the self through associations of when the product was originally acquired (Belk, 1990).

The body of literature reviewed thus far has been conceptual in nature, which highlights the complexity surrounding the debate around the self-concept, its various facets and the central role of the brand in identity construction. Several empirical studies have however applied self-concept theories to SNSs, reinforcing the role of the brands in digital identity construction. Similarly to offline settings, consumer engagement with brand UGC, whether as a viewer or creator, is directly affected by an individual's tendency to incorporate brands as part of their self-concept (Giakoumaki and Kreppa, 2020). On this basis, several studies have attempted to identify which facets of the self-concept are most prominent on SNSs and expressed through brand UGC. Firstly, through a mixed qualitative approach, Hollenbeck and Kaikati (2012) found that brand linkages on Facebook enable consumers to express both their actual self and their ideal self (Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012), which over time, may lead to self-brand connections and attachment (Panigyrakis, Panopoulos, and Koronaki, 2020). Such brand linkages enable consumers to maintain, enhance and protect self-concept (Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012). Consistently with Hollenbeck and Kaikati (2012), Fox et al. (2018) empirically found that brand selfies enable to present both the actual self and the ideal self through brands, with actual self-presentation being particularly suited to SnapChat, while Instagram appears to be better suited to present the ideal self. This suggests that different SNSs are better suited than others to present different facets of the self. Elsewhere, the findings of two other

studies on the selfie phenomenon help contextualize how the ideal self is projected through selfies. Firstly, through a qualitative study of selfie users, Pounders, Kowalczyk and Stowers (2016) identified selfie posting as a means to project an ideal image of the self, with a view to control one's image. Secondly, in a content analysis of selfies taken by Chinese consumers suggests that brands are used to express the ideal self by showing improvements of their life standards (Ma, Yang and Wilson, 2016). However, it should be noted that consumers have also been found to manipulate their image and present their false selves through SNSs (e.g. Fox and Rooney 2015; Michikyan et al. 2014; Qiu et al. 2015; Seidman 2013), and through UGC such as selfies (Fox and Rooney 2015; Qiu et al. 2015).

In summary, the self-concept theories discussed in this section lead to several implications regarding brand selfies creation. First, consumers have always regarded their possessions as an integral part of themselves, to define and communicate their identity to others (Belk, 1988), be it their actual, ideal or social self (Sirgy, 1982). Through consumption, consumers construct (e.g. Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998; Wattanasuwan 2005) and enhance their possible selves (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Tucker 1957). Thus, consumers strive to purchase brands that match their actual or ideal self. By extension the choice of brand featured in a brand selfie, is likely be predominantly guided by a brand's symbolic meanings. Brand selfies creators are likely to share selfies to cement relationships by building a follower base (social-symbolism) but also to construct their identity (self-symbolism).

Observation of brand selfies highlights that functional and experiential brands are commonly featured, enabling consumers to present and express different aspects of their personalities online (Schau and Gilly 2003; Tucker 1957) through brand personalities (Schembri, Merriless, Kristiansen, 2010). This desire to self-present alongside a brand may be explained by the fact that online sharing (Belk, 2014) leads to greater self-revelation (Winter et al., 2014). While a brand selfie itself will showcase the relationship between a consumer and his/her brand, peers offer their feedback through likes and comments, thus reinforcing the social aspect of consumption. Positive feedback is expected to enhance the extended self, while negative feedback is likely to be detrimental to the extended self (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). While self-concept theories are undeniably central to selfies and brand selfies, few empirical

studies have approached the selfie phenomenon from this viewpoint. The next section of this chapter elaborates on the state of the literature on the selfie phenomenon central to this research.

2.3 The selfie phenomenon

This section of the literature review aims to critically assess the existing and growing body of literature on selfie phenomenon. As a global societal phenomenon, selfies have generated considerable practitioner and academic interest over the past five years. Selfies are defined as “*a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically taken with a smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website*” (The Oxford Dictionary, 2013). They are “typically taken at arm’s length or in a mirror, and as such tend to be relatively close up pictures” (Iqani and Schroeder, 2015, p. 6). Accurately quantifying the scale of the selfie phenomenon is no small feat. The most recent figures date back to 2014 with Google reporting that at least 93 million selfies were taken each day on Android devices alone (Cohen 2016; Kulwin 2014). Elsewhere, recent research by Samsung suggests that “millennials will take an average of 25,000 selfies in their lifetime, the equivalent of one selfie a day during an average lifespan” (Brown, 2019). The propagation and commonality of selfies may be attributed to a technologically led paradigm shift brought by the emergence of smartphones (e.g. Senft and Baym, 2015), which have considerably changed the way we take and consume photographs, but also the purpose of those photographs. As a modern form of self-portraiture (e.g. Fallon 2014; Murray 2015; Senft and Baym 2015), selfies provide an autobiography of the self (Rugg, 2007) that allows the selfie taker to freeze or maintain a moment in time (Carbon, 2017).

Embedded in the advancement of technology (Faimau, 2020), the selfie phenomenon is complex and multi-faceted. Selfies enable in-depth reflections of the contemporary self (Kozinets, Gretzel and Dinhopl, 2017) as “assemblages” connecting the self, places, technology (Hess, 2015) as well as brands. Selfies differ in terms of context (where was a specific selfie taken and for what purpose?) and type (who was the selfie taken with?). Contextually, selfies may be political, meant as a joke, sports-related, fan-related or location-based (e.g. museum-related, travel related) (Senft and Baym, 2015). Thus, selfies “send (and are often intended to send) different messages to different individuals, communities and audiences” (Senft and Baym 2015, p. 1589).

In addition, different types of selfies exist such as own selfies (i.e. selfies of oneself only), selfies with a romantic partner, and group selfies (Sorokowski et al., 2015), also known as *usies*, “because two [in a photograph] is better than one” (Shontell, 2014). As “a new form of visual practice” (Chayka and Averkieva, 2016, p. 2), these images of everyday life play an important part in consumers’ strategic communication (Schroeder, 2013), enabling “social relations among people, mediated by images rather than text” (Chayka and Averkieva, 2016, p. 2).

Yet, selfies are both loved and hated at the same time (Diefenbach and Christoforakos 2017; Murray 2015) generating a fierce academic debate (e.g. Senft and Baym 2015; Murray 2015). On the one hand, proponents of the selfie phenomenon suggest that narcissism has been exacerbated by media panic (Senft and Baym, 2015), and dismiss the influence of narcissism on selfie behaviors. For these scholars, selfies are modern form of self-portraiture (e.g. Fallon 2014; Murray 2015; Murray 2020; Senft and Baym 2015) providing an autobiography of the self (Rugg, 2007) that go beyond a mere act of narcissism. As noted by Lim (2016, p. 1779), “labelling everyone who takes selfies as a narcissist is a sweeping generalization”. On the other hand, empirical evidence overwhelmingly suggests that certain selfie behaviors are driven or enhanced by an individual’s levels of narcissism (e.g. Arpaci 2018; Fox and Rooney 2015; Halpern, Valenzuela and Katz 2016; Kim and Chock 2017; March and McBean 2018; McCain et al. 2016; Moon et al. 2016; Singh, Farley and Donahue 2018; Sorokowski et al. 2015; Wang 2019; Weiser 2015). Both sides of the debate should be considered when researching the selfie phenomenon, and while not all selfies are narcissistic the expansive empirical evidence pertaining to narcissism should not be neglected when researching selfies.

Table 1 provides a comprehensive summary of the literature of the selfie phenomenon across various fields of academic research spanning across communication (e.g. Murray 2015; Senft 2013), marketing (e.g. Eagar and Dann 2016; Fox et al. 2018), sociology (e.g. Faimau 2020; Kozinets, Gretzel and Dinhopl 2017) and psychology (e.g. Etgar and Amichai-Hamburger 2017; Kim 2020; Sung et al. 2016).

Table 1: Overview of studies pertaining to the selfie phenomenon

Author and Journal	Focus of the study	Methodology and sample size	Key Findings
<i>Selfies and identity</i>			
Murray (2015) <i>Consumption, Markets and Culture</i>	Self-imaging strategies of young women	Conceptual	This paper explores the self-imaging strategies of young women and contemplates whether selfies are an act of narcissism or a political form of feminist resistance. The article concludes that selfies are often trivialized, when they should be regarded as a form of female empowerment.
Senft (2013) <i>International Journal of Communication</i>	A paper which brings together from various disciplines to present a nuanced approach to selfies	Conceptual	This paper explores the selfie phenomenon beyond narcissism as objects of control, authenticity and (dis)empowerment.
Buseta and Coladonato (2015) <i>Networking Knowledge</i>	A paper which investigates the purpose of selfies through case studies from the field of visual studies and cultural studies	Case studies	Although selfies share certain common traits, their function diverge to include the need for visual aesthetics in self-portraiture, political communication, self-representation and body image.
Georgakopoulou (2016) <i>Open Linguistics</i>	A small stories approach to selfie practices on Facebook among adolescents	Content analysis of 189 selfies from 3 female posters	Selfies emerge as a means to co-construct the self shaped by media affordances that go beyond the sole presentation of the ideal self.
Eagar and Dann (2016) <i>European Journal of Marketing</i>	The use of selfies to develop a human narrative to support human branding	Qualitative content analysis of n=5,005 selfies retrieved from Instagram	Seven genres of human-brand narratives expressed in selfies on Instagram emerged including autobiography selfies, parody selfies, propaganda selfies, romance selfies, self-help selfies, travel diary selfies and coffee table book selfies.
Diefenbach and Christoforakos (2017) <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>	Habitual self-presentation strategies and self-reflections on own and others' selfie-taking behaviors	Quantitative (n=238 in three countries)	Self-presentation is relevant for the popularity and attractiveness of selfies, but it is often downplayed in self-reports. Taking selfies supports different self-promotion and self-disclosure strategies and most notably self-staging.

Author and Journal	Focus of the study	Methodology and sample size	Key Findings
Kozinets, Gretzel and Dinhopl (2017) <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>	Selfie taking behaviors in museums from a contextualized and cultural perspective	Ethnography and netnography (sample size unspecified)	This paper defines the museum as a stage for identity work that is not only used for superficial performances, but also in the pursuit of self-reflection, connection and identity construction.
Ma, Yang and Wilson (2017) <i>Journal of Business Research</i>	Cultural differences in selfie taking practices across China and the UK	Content analysis n=344 selfies collected from Sina Weibo (n=207) and Twitter (n=107)	Significant differences identified between UK and Chinese selfie-takers in terms of body ratio on display, geo-location tagging, photoshop editing and make-up worn.
Page (2019) <i>Discourse Context and Media</i>	Development of a multimodal framework that can be used to explore the ways in which people are positioned as individuals and groups within using selfies and video-sharing practices	Qualitative multi-modal framework (n=897 featured photo and video Snapchat stories)	The construction of identity is prominent in selfies and quasi-selfies and Snapchat. Images and videos include the strategic use of synthetic collectivization.
Barker and Rodriguez (2019)	Based on the social identity theory, this paper aims to establish the degree to which selfies relate to forms of social identity	Quantitative (n=472 in the US)	Social capital affinity on social media, and racial identity were predictors of selfie intensity. Women were most likely to share selfies, but also reported differences to men in selfie identity motivations and contexts. Among LGBTQ participants, selfies for empowerment correlated with online activism.
Piancatelli, Massi and Vocino (2020) <i>International Journal of Market Research</i>	Art selfies and identity construction	Ethnography and netnography (10 participants observed over a period of one month)	The posting of art selfies occurs as a means to develop narratives and identity projects. The paper overcomes the traditional view of selfies as manifestation of narcissistic self-expression.

Author and Journal	Focus of the study	Methodology and sample size	Key Findings
<i>Brand selfies</i>			
Iqani and Schroeder (2015) <i>Consumption Markets & Culture</i>	A discussion of the influence of selfies on contemporary culture	Conceptual	Selfies are connected to concepts of authenticity, consumption, and self-expression, as well as practices of art history, media forms, and self-portraiture. Selfies shift traditional functions of advertising to provide sources of information, persuasion, and to build social currency.
Marwick (2015) <i>Public Culture</i>	The use of luxury selfies to achieve micro-influencer status	Qualitative textual and visual analysis of 40 public Instagram accounts with 10,000+ followers each	Luxury brands, and notably entry-level luxury brands help aspiring micro-celebrities construct their identities through aspirational consumption to evoke an aura of unattainable. Such status-seeking self-presentation tactics are common to anyone trying to boost an online audience. Social media allow “average people” to reach the broad audiences once available only to those with access to broadcast media.
Gannon and Prothero (2016) <i>European Journal of Marketing</i>	Beauty bloggers’ selfies as a means to convey consumer authenticity	Mixed Qualitative (selfies analyzed from n=21 beauty bloggers)	The research shows that bloggers use selfies as records of product trial, success and failure. These selfies function as authenticating consumer acts, intertwined with key life narratives and as records of communal events, where bloggers identify as a community.
Kedzior, Allen, and Schroeder (2016) <i>European Journal of Marketing</i>	Significance of the selfie-phenomenon on marketing practice and scholarship	Literature review	The prominence of selfies in consumers’ lives is of significance to key marketing areas such as branding, consumer behavior and market research.
Rokka and Canniford (2016) <i>European Journal of Marketing</i>	How selfies destabilize brands as assemblages	Critical visual content analysis of n=300 images of three popular champagne brands	Bands and branded selves intersect through “heterotopian selfie practices” that in turn destabilize spatial, temporal, symbolic and material properties of brand assemblages.
Sandhya (2016) <i>The International Journal of Business and Management</i>	This study explores whether brand selfie campaigns extend brand personality	Exploratory (n=158 respondents in India aged 18-29)	Brand selfie campaigns are seen as brand activities but are not enhancing long-term impact building of brand personality.

Author and Journal	Focus of the study	Methodology and sample size	Key Findings
Fox et al. (2018) <i>Journal of Consumer Marketing</i>	Attitudes towards selfie marketing from a consumer behavior perspective	Mixed methods (n= 17 qualitative interviews with college students; n=152 students for the quantitative phase)	The findings suggest that narcissism positively relates to millennials' intent to participate in selfie-marketing on visual content-sharing apps. Results also demonstrate that millennials seek to use selfies to present their self-concepts (the actual and ideal self) differently in various visual content-sharing environments.
Hartmann et al. (2019) <i>Columbia Business School Research Paper</i>	This study analyzes how different types of brand selfies (consumer and brand, brand and invisible consumer and pack shot) create different levels of viewer engagement.	250,000 images analyzed related to 185 food and beverage and food product brands, which tend to be consumed in public places using transfer learning and convolutional neural networks (CNN)	Consumer selfies with visible faces receive more likes and comments from observers than other brand image types.
Hofstetter, Kunath and John (2020) <i>Harvard Business School Research Paper</i>	Understanding the impact of marketer-led brand selfies on consumer-brand relationships	8 experiments conducted with a dataset of 283,140 reviews from Yelp	Compliance with marketer-led brand selfies sparks a self-inferential process that leads the consumer to feel connected to the brand, thus increasing brand preference.
Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Papolomou (2020) <i>Qualitative Market Research</i>	This study aims to understand how the selfie phenomenon could mobilize the interactivity between brands and target audiences, in a way that could be used as a marketing tool by companies	Netnography (74 brand selfies analyzed)	Users associate themselves with brands with which they share a common interest and express their experiences in public space by posting brand selfies on SNSs and share their experiences with others.

Author and Journal	Focus of the study	Methodology and sample size	Key Findings
Motivations for posting selfies and brand selfies			
Pounders, Kowalczyk and Stowers (2016) <i>European Journal of Marketing</i>	Impression management and self-esteem as motives for posting selfies	Qualitative (n=15 interviews with women aged 19-30)	Textual analysis revealed impression management to be pivotal in understanding the consumer selfie-posting process. Self-esteem was revealed as a motivator and an outcome.
Sung et al. (2016) <i>Personality and Individual Differences</i>	Selfie motivations (attention seeking, communication, entertainment and archiving) in relation to narcissism as predictors for selfie posting	Quantitative (n=319 recruited by a market research firm in South Korea)	The research identified four motives for posting selfies: attention seeking, communication, archiving, and entertainment. The motivations of attention seeking, communication, and archiving as well as narcissism significantly predicted selfie-posting intention. Narcissism was the only significant predictor of selfie-posting frequency.
Carbon (2017) <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>	Commonalities and differences between painted self-portraits and selfies	Conceptual	The article provides an overview of the types of contemporary photographic selfies and compares them with painted self-portraits. The paper identifies 21 types of selfies and identifies the individuals' main aims for sharing such photographs.
Etgar and Amichai-Hamburger (2017) <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>	Selfie motivations and personality characteristics including the Big Five, narcissism and self-esteem	Quantitative (n=117)	Self-approval, belonging and approval identified as selfie motivations. Each motivation was related to the selfie-posting frequency; however, narcissism was not related to any selfie motivation.
Sung, Kim and Choi (2018) <i>European Journal of Advertising</i>	Narcissism, materialism and SNS as sources of brand information as factors predict brand selfies posting	Quantitative (n=305)	Narcissism, materialism, and perceptions of SNSs were found to be significant factors that predict brand-selfie posting behaviors.

Author and Journal	Focus of the study	Methodology and sample size	Key Findings
<i>Selfies and narcissism</i>			
Fox and Rooney (2015) <i>Personality and Individual differences</i>	The Dark Triad and trait self-objectification as predictors for posting selfies	Quantitative (n=1,000 nationally representative US sample recruited through Qualtrics)	Self-objectification and narcissism predicted time spent on SNSs. Narcissism and psychopathy predicted the number of selfies posted, whereas narcissism and self-objectification predicted editing photographs of oneself posted on SNSs.
Sorokowski et al. (2015) <i>Personality and Individual differences</i>	Dimensions of narcissism as predictors for posting selfies across different categories of selfies among men and women	Quantitative (n= 1,296)	<p>Women posted more selfies of all types than did men, however women's selfie-posting behavior was generally unrelated to their narcissism scores.</p> <p>Men's overall narcissism scores positively predicted posting own selfies, selfies with a partner, and group selfies. Men's Vanity, Leadership, and Admiration Demand scores each independently predicted the posting of one or more types of selfies.</p>
Weiser (2015) <i>Personality and Individual differences</i>	To examine association between narcissism, attention seeking and admiration	Quantitative (n=1,204 nationally representative US sample)	Narcissism, as well as the Leadership/Authority and Grandiose Exhibitionism facets exhibited positive and significant associations with selfie-posting frequency. Age did not moderate the predictive effects of narcissism or any of its three dimensions.
Halpern, Valenzuela and Katz (2016) <i>Personality and Individual differences</i>	This study examines how selfie taking influences positive self-views and overall levels of narcissism	Quantitative (two-wave representative panel survey in Chile n=1,255 and n=314)	Narcissistic individuals take selfies more frequently over time. This increase in selfie production raises subsequent levels of narcissism.

Author and Journal	Focus of the study	Methodology and sample size	Key Findings
McCain et al. (2016) <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>	The relationship between narcissism (vulnerable and grandiose), psychopathy, and Machiavellianism on selfie behaviors and self-esteem	Quantitative (Study 1: n=1,348 adults recruited on Amazon Mturk Study 2: n=2,491 graduate students)	<p>Results from both studies indicate that grandiose narcissism is associated with taking and posting more selfies, experiencing more positive affect when taking selfies, and self-reported self-presentation motives.</p> <p>Vulnerable narcissism was associated with negative affect when taking selfie, while self-esteem was unrelated to selfie-taking.</p>
Moon et al. (2016) <i>Personality and Individual Differences</i>	Narcissists vs. non-narcissists self-promoting behaviors on Instagram	Quantitative (n=212 active Instagram users in Korea)	<p>Individuals higher in narcissism tended to post selfies and self-presented photos, update their profile picture more often, and spend more time on Instagram, as compared to their counterparts. They also rated their Instagram profile pictures as more physically attractive.</p> <p>Grandiose Exhibitionism positively predicted the frequency of selfie postings and profile picture updates and as well as profile picture evaluations. Leadership/Authority negatively predicted the frequency of selfie postings and profile picture updates, as well as profile picture evaluations.</p>
Kim and Chock (2017) <i>Telematics and Informatics</i>	The relationship between narcissism, the Big Five personality traits, the need for popularity, the need to belong, and various types of selfie posting behaviors	Quantitative (n=260)	<p>Narcissism significantly predicted the frequency of posting solo selfies and editing selfies. Age moderated the relationship between narcissism and the frequency of posting group selfies.</p> <p>Posting group selfies was predicted by extraversion and agreeableness and the need for popularity. The need for popularity also predicted the frequency of posting solo selfies, but not of selfie editing.</p>

Author and Journal	Focus of the study	Methodology and sample size	Key Findings
Arpaci (2018) <i>Personality and Individual differences</i>	The moderating effect of gender in the relationship between narcissism and selfie posting behavior	Quantitative (n=448 Turkish participants)	Attitudes, intentions, behaviors, and narcissism are significant for men, but not for women. Women spent more time on social media and selfie-posting than men.
March and McBean (2018) <i>Personality and Individual differences</i>	To explore the utility of subtypes of narcissism, individual self-esteem, and interactions between narcissism and self-esteem in predicting posting selfies	Quantitative (n=257 participants recruited from two Australian university campuses)	Higher levels of grandiose-exhibitionism narcissism and lower levels of self-esteem were associated with posting more selfies. Self-esteem was found to moderate the relationship between grandiose-exhibitionism narcissism and posting selfies. Specifically, the relationship between grandiose narcissism and posting selfies on social media was only significant when self-esteem was low or average.
Singh, Farley and Donahue (2018) <i>Personality and Individual differences</i>	The relationship between dimensions of narcissism and selfie posting/sending frequency and other self-promoting behaviors on social media	Quantitative (n=124)	Narcissism was significantly correlated with numerous social media behaviors, including frequency of selfie posting, perceived attractiveness of selfies, tag/comment/like behaviors, as well as variables specific to individual social media platforms. Grandiose Exhibitionism exhibited the most consistent association with social media behaviors, while the Leadership/ Authority dimension demonstrated the weakest correlations with selfie posting/sending frequency and other social media behavior.
Shane-Simpson et al. (2019) <i>Computers in Human Behaviors</i>	To understand which type of narcissism (overt vs. covert) predicts selfie behaviors	Quantitative Midwest US (n=194) Northeast US (n=276) Lebanese Republic (n=260)	Findings suggest that selfie-posting is favored by those narcissistic tendencies and that community norms, including those which shape gendered behavior, likely play a role in the active use of social media sites.

Author and Journal	Focus of the study	Methodology and sample size	Key Findings
Wang (2019) <i>Personality and Individual differences</i>	To examine whether narcissism, extraversion, body-esteem and social comparison orientation as predictors of selfie-editing frequency	Quantitative (n=589 Chinese consumers aged 18-35)	Narcissism, extraversion, body esteem attribution and social comparison orientation (SCO) were positively related to selfie-editing frequency. Body-esteem appearance was negatively related to selfie-editing frequency.
Murray (2020) <i>Consumption Markets & Culture</i>	This paper explores the recent journalistic debate about the selfie – or spontaneous self-portraits taken with smart phones or other consumer-based devices – in terms of its connection to narcissism.	Conceptual	This paper highlights inconsistencies in journalistic, clinical, and ideological understandings of this apparent personality disorder, narcissism, as they relate to our cultural understanding of the selfie.
Taylor (2020) <i>Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing</i>	The study examines the role of narcissism and envy on travel selfies posting intent	Quantitative (n=674)	Results show that narcissism and envy increase the likelihood of travelers posting selfies both directly, and through self-promotion mediation as a mediator.
<i>Selfies and the Big Five</i>			
Qiu et al. (2015) <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>	Zero-acquaintance personality judgment in relation to the Big Five	Quantitative survey and content analysis (n=505 recruited from Sina Weibo)	Specific cues in selfies images identified related to agreeableness (related to emotional positivity), conscientiousness (negatively related to private location), neuroticism (duckface), and openness (related to emotional positivity).
Choi et al. (2017) <i>Personality and Individual differences</i>	The relationship between the Big Five and the use of selfies to maintain online sociability and social connection	Quantitative (n=299)	The Big Five except for extraversion were significantly associated with the degree of concern about other's responses to one's own selfies. Selfie posters with agreeableness and low openness showed a high tendency of observing others' selfies. Tendency to comment or like others' selfies was predicted by extraversion and agreeableness.

Author and Journal	Focus of the study	Methodology and sample size	Key Findings
Richa, Nidhi and Chavvi (2020) <i>Trends in Psychology</i>	This study aims to assess the behavioral attributes or selfie-taking behavior of selfie takers.	Quantitative (n=298 Millennials in India)	Social exhibition and extraversion traits of an individual have a significant impact on the individual's selfie posting behavior. Males display more extraversion and posting more selfies than females.
<i>Selfies, gender and body image</i>			
Döring, Reif and Poeschl (2015) <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>	Gender stereotyping in selfies compared to magazines	Quantitative content analysis (random sample of n=500 selfies uploaded on Instagram)	Male and female Instagram users' selfies not only reflect traditional gender stereotypes of femininity and masculinity but are even more stereotypical than magazine adverts.
Bell, Cassarly and Dunbar (2018) <i>Body Image</i>	Selfies and self-objectification	Self-reports and quantitative content analysis (n=86 women from the UK with n=1,720 images content analyzed)	30% of participants' Instagram images were objectified. Higher frequency of posting objectified self-images was associated with trait self-objectification and receiving more likes on this type of self-image, relative to non-objectified self-image.
Tiggemann et al. (2018) <i>Body Image</i>	The effect of Likes on Instagram images such as selfies and body dissatisfaction	Quantitative (n=220)	The number of likes on an Instagram photo had no effect on body dissatisfaction or appearance comparison but had a positive effect on facial dissatisfaction. Greater investment in Instagram likes was associated with more appearance comparison and facial dissatisfaction.
Wang et al. (2018) <i>Journal of Health Psychology</i>	The study examined whether selfie-posting was positively associated with women's self-esteem and whether this association was mediated by positive feedback and body satisfaction	Quantitative (n=442 young Chinese adult women)	Results indicated that selfie-posting was positively related to women's self-esteem. Positive feedback mediated the relation between selfie-posting and women's self-esteem. Furthermore, the association between selfie-posting and self-esteem was sequentially mediated through positive feedback and body satisfaction.

Author and Journal	Focus of the study	Methodology and sample size	Key Findings
Fardouly and Rapee (2019) <i>Body Image</i>	Impact of make-up vs. no make-up selfies on body image and mood	Quantitative (n=175)	The results suggest that no-makeup selfies have a positive effect on the viewer that may reduce any negative impact of idealized made up images on women's facial concerns.
Lonergan et al. (2019) <i>Body Image</i>	Selfie posting and body dissatisfaction among men and women	Quantitative (n=184 Australian participants)	The findings of this study suggest that suggest that manipulation and concern about selfies posted correlates for body dissatisfaction in men and women.
Tiggerman and Zinoviev (2019) <i>Body Image</i>	The study investigated the effect of enhancement-free (i.e., no makeup, no digital alteration) Instagram images and their accompanying hashtags on women's body image	Experimental (n=204 Australian students aged 17-30)	Enhancement-free images resulted in lower facial dissatisfaction than standard Instagram images. However, enhancement-free images with hashtags (e.g. #nomakeup led to greater facial dissatisfaction than those same images without hashtags.
Kim (2020) <i>Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace</i>	This study analyzes how selfie-posting behaviors affect females self-esteem and body dissatisfaction	Quantitative (n=321 female college students in South Korea)	The study provides evidence that young women's selfie-posting behavior can contribute to enhancing their self-esteem and decreasing their body dissatisfaction. Selfies are regarded as an act of positive self-presentation seems that produce positive illusions of oneself.
<i>Other research on selfies</i>			
Kramer et al. (2017) <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>	Perception of selfies compared to photos taken by others based on the Brunswick lens model	Quantitative (n=297)	The results revealed that selfies are evaluated more negatively than photos taken by others. People featured in selfies were rated as less trustworthy, less socially attractive, less open to new experiences, more narcissistic and more extroverted than the same persons in photos taken by others. Male profile owners were rated as more narcissistic and less trustworthy than female profile owners.

Author and Journal	Focus of the study	Methodology and sample size	Key Findings
Stiglbauer and Weber (2018) <i>Journal of Environmental Psychology</i>	Selfie taking and place identification	Quantitative (n=130 students at a German university)	The results suggest that taking selfies in a place can strengthen the linkage between selfie-takers and places. The effect is reversed for individuals who do not enjoy taking selfies.
Woodruff, Santarossa and Lacasse (2018) <i>The Journal of Social Media in Society</i>	Characteristics of selfie images and their authors	Quantitative content analysis (n=4,500)	The most common words associated with the hashtag #selfie were included to gather more followers and/or likes, followed by image descriptors, feelings, or Instagram-specific hashtags and words.
Faimau (2020) <i>Sociology Compass</i>	The paper provides an overview of the most common theoretical approaches that used the understand the selfie phenomenon.	Conceptual	The papers reviews the use of several frameworks through which the selfie phenomenon has been scrutinized: the dramaturgic lens, sociosemiotic approach and the dialectical framework. The authors suggest that the lens of mediatization theory may also be employed in future research.

This summary of the literature highlights that selfie studies have been conducted across various fields of research spanning communication, marketing, sociology and psychology, and have employed a wide range of research methodologies and theoretical frameworks. This has resulted in a highly fragmented and highly diffused body of research, which may be broadly categorized in six areas of focus: (1) selfies and identity, (2) brand selfies, (3) motivations for posting selfies, (4) selfies and personality including the Big Five and narcissism, (5) selfies and body image, (6) miscellaneous other areas of research.

The first theme or category emerging in this body of research is the role of selfies in the construction of identity. Highly fragmented in terms of context (e.g. museum selfies, luxury selfies), this body of research discusses how selfies are used for the construction of one's identity in various situations. These studies widely dismiss the idea that selfies are solely narcissistic (Kozinets, Gretzel and Dinhopl 2017; Murray 2015; Piancatelli, Massi and Vocino 2020; Senft 2013), and reinforce the role of the selfie as a tool for self-presentation and identity construction (Diefenbach and Christoforakos 2017; Eagar and Dann 2016; Kozinets, Gretzel and Dinhopl 2017; Murray 2015; Senft 2013). Selfies are presented as multi-faceted, enabling the communication of different facets of the self in different contexts (Buseta and Coladonato 2015; Faimau 2020; Murray 2015; Piancatelli, Massi and Vocino 2020; Senft 2013). Selfies also enable the human-branding of the self in several different ways depending on the type of selfie posted (Eagar and Dann, 2016) such as autobiographical selfies, parody selfies, propaganda selfies, romance selfies, self-help selfies, travel diary selfies, and coffee table book selfies, although selfies are also used to brand the self as a micro-celebrity (e.g. Marwick, 2015). Furthermore, selfies enable and empower women to express their sexuality, which may in some cases lead to online activism, particularly in relation to LGBTQT issues (Barker and Rodrigues, 2019).

The second theme commonly scrutinized in the literature, is the brand selfie phenomenon which is of interest to this research. Despite the popularity of selfies, and their implications for brands, the corpus of studies on the brand selfie phenomenon remains scant with little empirical research conducted. This area of the literature is reviewed and discussed in section 2.3.2 in greater depth in this chapter.

The third theme commonly scrutinized within the body of research on selfies, pertains to the motivations for posting selfies and brand selfies, which is also central to the development of this research. Motives for media use have been typically been explored through qualitative and quantitative methodologies primarily using the U&G Theory as a theoretical framework (e.g. Pounders, Kowalczyk and Stowers 2016; Sung et al. 2016) as well as the Theory of Planned Behavior (Kim et al., 2016). In some cases, no clear theoretical framework is put forth (e.g. Carbon 2017; Etgar and Amichai-Hamburger 2017; Sung, Kim and Choi 2018). Three of these studies highlight the role and influence of personality traits such as the Big Five (Etgar and Amichai-Hamburger, 2017), and narcissism (Etgar and Amichai-Hamburger 2017; Sung et al. 2016; Sung, Kim and Choi 2018) on (brand) selfie posting behaviors. This body of literature is discussed in greater depth in the next section of this chapter.

The final two central themes emerging from this summary of the literature review pertain to the dark side of selfie posting, and stem from the psychology corpus. Primarily empirical in nature, this body of research reveals a link between selfie posting, body image, self-esteem and narcissism. The first of those strands of research links selfie posting to various aspects linked to body image to boost one's self-esteem (e.g. Kim 2020; Wang 2018). Firstly, this body of research considers gender stereotyping (Bell, Cassarly and Dunbar 2018; Döring, Reif and Poeschl 2015) and self-objectification in selfies (Dhir et al., 2016) highlighting the manipulation of the self to achieve self-esteem objectives. Often, this manipulation of the self will be achieved through photo-manipulation (e.g. editing images, cropping images, and filter use) (Dhir et al., 2016) in an attempt to improve one self-perception and minimize body dissatisfaction (Kim 2020; Lonergan et al. 2019). The second theme emerging from the psychology literature pertains to narcissism and selfie posting, which arguably offers the most robust body of literature on the brand selfie phenomenon. Several studies quantitative in nature, suggest that narcissism predicts a number of selfies and brand selfies posting behaviors. This body of literature is reviewed in the next section of this chapter.

2.3.1 Selfies and narcissism

Narcissism and selfie posting is arguably the area of research that has generated the most solid body of literature on the phenomenon. While consumers' desire to enhance their self-concept predicts motivations to choose specific products and brands, consumer variables such as personality traits have also been found to influence brand selfie behaviors (e.g. Fox et al. 2018; Sung, Kim and Choi 2018).

The term narcissism takes its origins from the Greek mythology when Narcissus, son of the river god Cephissus and the nymph Liriope, fell in love with his own reflection in the waters of a spring and pined away (Rhodewalt, 2014). The construct was subsequently introduced into psychology literature when Havelock Ellis used the term Narcissus-like to refer to "*a tendency for the sexual emotions to be lost and almost entirely absorbed in self-admiration*" (Ellis, 1898, p. 890). The Oxford English Dictionary (2014) offers two succinct definitions of the construct for clinical narcissism and its subclinical variant. The clinical variant of narcissism is defined as "*the condition of gaining emotional or erotic gratification from self-contemplation, sometimes regarded as a stage in the normal psychological development of children which may be reverted to in adulthood during mental illness*" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014), while the subclinical variant of the term is defined as "*excessive self-love or vanity, self-admiration, self-centeredness*" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014). Narcissism is widely recognized as a personality disorder, and selfies are probably the most common and benign form of subclinical narcissism (Nasralla, 2019). **The present research will therefore focus on the subclinical variant of narcissism as a personality trait**, which shows "an impressive ability to predict a wide range of dependent variables, ranging from emotional reactivity to self-appraisals of performance" (Ames, Rose and Anderson, 2006, p. 441). Subclinical narcissism is typically associated with positive and inflated self-views of agentic traits like intelligence, power, and physical attractiveness (Brown and Zeigler-Hill, 2004; Campbell and Foster 2007; Campbell, Rudich, and Sedikides 2002; Gabriel, Critell and Ee 1994; John and Robins 1994) as well as a pervasive sense of uniqueness (Emmons, 1984) and entitlement (Campbell et al., 2004). Narcissists use social relationships to regulate self-esteem, self-concept positivity, or narcissistic esteem (Campbell 1999; Morf and Rhodewalt 2001).

While the proliferation of SNSs is thought to have exacerbated narcissism in recent years (Halpern, Valenzuela and Katz 2016; Nasralla 2019; Twenge et al. 2008a, 2008b), online manifestations of narcissism are not thought to greatly differ from manifestations of traditional, subclinical narcissism (Buffardi and Campbell, 2008). SNSs offer narcissists a gateway for in-depth and frequent self-disclosure through the sharing of personal information (Winter et al., 2014), self-promotion and vanity (Bergman et al. 2011; Buffardi and Campbell 2008; Winter et al. 2014). Thus, unsurprisingly, narcissists spend greater amounts of time using SNSs (Mehdizadeh 2010; Skues et al. 2012), and more frequently update their profiles compared to less narcissistic individuals (Deters, Mehlb and Eida 2014; Panek et al. 2013; Winter et al. 2014). Narcissists' greater online activity and compulsive sharing of self-promotional content indicate a desire for attention to counteract their low self-esteem (Mezarideh, 2010).

Narcissists meticulously ensure that their profile presents an extremely positive and attractive image, often exaggerating (Zhao et al., 2008) and manipulating their image to achieve their goals (Bergman et al., 2011). One of the ways in which narcissists draw attention to themselves is by displaying sexy photos or using many first-person pronouns in profile descriptions, a form of implicit attention seeking (DeWAll et al., 2011). More specifically, Vazire et al. (2008, p. 1439) suggest that narcissists share photos of themselves "wearing expensive, flashy clothing, have an organized, neat appearance requiring a lot of preparation, and (in females) wear makeup and show cleavage." From a relational perspective, narcissists are usually not interested in forming strong interpersonal relationships, but rather superficial weak tie connections (Buffardi and Campbell 2008; Campbell and Foster 2002), and often fail to establish meaningful friendships (Carlson, 2013). Narcissists place utmost importance of getting to know as many people online as possible and believe that their SNSs friends are interested in what they are doing (Bergman et al., 2011), which subsequently impacts the likelihood of sharing personal information online and self-promoting content. An example of self-promoting content would be their choice of profile photos, which would emphasize their (perceived) attractiveness and personality as opposed to social ties (e.g. group photos) (Kapidzic, 2013). However, despite their increased sharing activity, highly narcissistic individuals tend to receive fewer responses such as likes and comments on their posts than those low in narcissism (Choi et al., 2015).

Over the past five years, a growing number of studies have investigated the selfie phenomenon in relation to narcissism (e.g. Arpacı 2018; Fox and Rooney 2015; Halpern, Valenzuela and Katz 2016; Kim and Chock 2017; McCain et al. 2016; Moon et al. 2016; March and McBean 2018; Taylor 2020; Shane-Simpson et al. 2019; Singh, Farley and Donahue 2018; Sorokowski et al. 2015; Wang 2019; Weiser 2015). At dimension level, selfie posting has been most commonly linked to the grandiose exhibitionism sub-dimension of narcissism (Moon et al. 2016; Singh, Farley and Donahue 2018; Weiser 2015). For instance, Fox and Rooney (2015) found that narcissists and self-objectifying individuals tend to display exhibitionistic tendencies resulting in more time being spent on SNSs editing selfies. Furthermore, grandiose exhibitionism has also been found to predict selfie-posting frequency (Moon et al. 2016; Singh, Farley and Donahue 2018; Weiser 2015), profile picture updates frequency, positive profile picture evaluations (Moon et al. 2016; Singh, Farley and Donahue 2018) and finally tagging, commenting and liking behaviors (Singh, Farley and Donahue, 2018).

Other research linking narcissism to selfie behaviors suggests that narcissism is closely related to men's selfie-posting behaviors who tend to display higher levels of narcissism than women (Sorokowski et al. 2015; Lee and Sung 2016; Arpacı 2018). Furthermore, the levels of narcissism experienced by users also increase over time through selfie posting, thus leading to increased selfie creation and sharing, which in turn helps narcissists maintain their positive inflated self-views (Halpern, Valenzuela and Katz, 2016). Similarly, as far as brand selfies are concerned, the personality trait of narcissism was found to predict selfie posting behaviors (Sung, Kim and Choi, 2018). Thus, narcissism is a relevant concept that needs to be considered when examining the phenomenon of taking and posting (brand) selfies.

2.3.2 Brand selfies

The present section is concerned with the conceptualization of brand selfies as a sub-genre of selfies which have become increasingly popular among consumers and marketers wishing to harness brand selfies to propagate WoM about their products and services (Iqani and Schroeder 2015; Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Pappasolomou, 2020).

This research aims to contribute to this strand of literature.

The literature provides two main definitions of the brand selfie phenomenon. Lim (2016) conceptualizes brand selfies as *“a self-expressive photograph featuring the photographer as the primary individual in relation to any secondary products in the background that is consciously created, modified, and shared with others to varying degrees, conditional on the dynamic interaction between the personal and situational factors present, and facilitated by technology”* (p. 1775). Although useful in differentiating selfies from brand selfies, the definition places the self as the primary focus of the photograph, while the brand is secondary thus assuming that selfies are solely about the self and not the brand. This definition fails to fully account for the role of the brand central to self-concept theories, which has been found to drive consumer behavior such as purchase intent and arguably brand selfie posting (e.g. Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Sirgy 1982; Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). Another definition is that of Presi, Maehle and Kleppe (2016) who conversely suggest that the brand plays a more central role in a brand selfie, depicting an everyday consumption activity with a brand: *“The brand selfie is a particular selfie photograph showing an everyday consumption activity involving a brand. It consists of at least four heterogeneous and interacting elements, including a person, a brand logo or physical product, different types of physical surroundings and technology”* (p. 1814).

The present research adopts the latter definition for several reasons. Presi, Maehle and Kleppe (2016) acknowledge the role of the brand as an active relational partner in acknowledging the interactional nature of the brand. Secondly, the authors’ clearly highlight the various elements that make up the brand selfie: the self, the brand (either a brand logo, or a physical product), the physical surroundings, which could be linked to situational self-image and the technology itself (i.e. the smartphone and SNS) which enable the posting of a brand selfie. One central interacting element missing from this definition however is the brand hashtag. Brand hashtags are commonly used across various SNSs such as Instagram in lieu of traditional text-based captions and may be regarded as the key fifth interactional element making up a brand selfie. On this basis, the following definition is put forth: *the brand selfie is a selfie photograph showing an everyday consumption activity involving a brand. It consists of several heterogeneous and interacting elements, including a person, a brand logo or physical product, different types of physical surroundings (including geo-tagging behaviors), technology, and sometimes a brand hashtag(s), alongside several other consumer-*

generated hashtags. Figure 1 graphically represents this definition by highlighting these elements.

Figure 1: Anatomy of a brand selfie



Brand selfies may be marketer-led (e.g. Fox et al. 2018; Sandhya 2016) or may be spontaneously created by consumers, as a form of brand UGC that is “available through publicly accessible transmission media such as the Internet; reflect some degree of creative effort; and are created for free outside professional routines and practices” (Christodoulides, Jevons and Bonhomme, 2011, p. 54). Taking brand selfies helps individuals achieve their underlying desires to feel self-important, particularly for those individuals who have a strong self-concept (Fox et. al, 2018). However, recent research has shown that consumers who comply with marketer-led brand selfies develop “a self-inferential process that leads the consumer to feel connected to the brand increasing brand preference” (Hofstetter, Kunath and John, 2020, p. 1). The first notable example of marketer-led brand selfie is arguably Ellen DeGeneres’ star-studded 2014 Academy Awards selfie taken with a Samsung smartphone received 3 million retweets within two days (Bulik, 2014) delivering unprecedented exposure for the brand. In recent years, an increasing number of brands have also attempted to harness the brand selfie phenomenon through the creation of brand hashtags to facilitate brand UGC creation. For instance, Calvin Klein’s #mycalvins or Coca-Cola’s recent #ShareACoke selfies campaign are just a few examples of brands encouraging

consumer participation in this form of brand UGC. However, while the aforementioned examples of selfies campaigns are marketer-driven, millions of spontaneous selfies featuring brands and products are on the other hand uploaded to various SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or SnapChat on a daily basis, offering hints about consumers' interests and brand affiliations (Wasserman, 2014). It has been suggested that those who share brand selfies do so only to associated themselves with those brands and extend their experiences (Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Papasolomou, 2020).

While the number of brand selfies is hard to estimate, it has been suggested that 7 out of 10 consumer-generated hashtags are branded (Chen, 2018). These statistics therefore suggests that the sharing of brand UGC is commonplace and will more than likely also include a significant number of brand selfies from cans of Coca-Cola through to expensive items of clothing or luxury cars. As noted by Murray (2020, p. 36), beyond narcissism, (brand) selfies serve the purpose of expressing “the private fantasies and desires of individuals” to validate the self through consumerism. Thus, they have become a commonplace “practice of consumption” (Iqani and Schroeder, 2015), and an important means through which average consumers consciously or unconsciously self-present (Iqani and Schroeder, 2015). This self-presentation is achieved by showcasing *how* consumers incorporate brands in their personal identity (Belk, 1988). Through brand selfies, consumers help promote a variety of brands in an authentic and credible manner (Lim 2016; Schroeder 2013), eliciting greater engagement around the brand and products featured in the mind of the viewer (Lim, 2016). The products and brands consumers buy, and by extension the brand selfies consumers create and share, help them fulfil their inherent desire to tell stories about who they are (Goffman 1959; Marwick 2015; Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Papasolomou 2020; Wattanasuwan, 2005) or who they aspire to be. These stories are told with and through brands, which are used as symbolic resources to construct and enhance the self (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Wattanasuwan 2005). In sum, brand selfies uploaded to SNSs make up a digital life-stream, which is “an indelible part of the extended self” (Sheth and Solomon, 2014, p. 127).

Yet, in spite of a call for papers (Kedzior, Allen and Schroeder, 2015) and suggestions for future research directions (Lim, 2016), empirical research on the selfie phenomenon has remained scant, highly conceptual in nature, and has failed to provide empirical generalizability on the phenomenon. Crucially, in their quest to define self-presentation through brand selfies, marketing scholars have failed to address one key question: **why do consumers post brand selfies?** The next section of this chapter will therefore review the literature on (brand) UGC including the motives for posting (brand) UGC.

2.4 UGC and brand UGC

Having discussed the brand selfie phenomenon and its various facets, the present section is concerned with establishing what motivates consumers to post UGC and brand UGC. With millions of (brand) selfies posted online across various SNSs daily (Cohen 2016; Kulwin 2014), brand selfies are arguably one of the most common and popular forms of brand UGC in contemporary culture.

UGC has received considerable attention due to its “consequences for firms, products and brands” (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011, p. 13). UGC such as forum comments or reviews (e.g. products reviews, hotels/restaurant reviews etc.) guide and direct the decision-making of others (Heinonen, 2011) by positively or negatively influence consumers’ brand evaluations and attitudes (Chiou and Cheng, 2003), brand equity (Christodoulides, Jevons and Bonhomme, 2012) and WoM (e.g. Cheong and Morrison, 2008) ultimately impacting sales (Tang, Fang and Wang, 2014). Notably, brand selfies (Hartmann et al., 2020) receive more engagement than other forms of brand UGC such as for example a pack shot (Hartmann et al., 2020), and are consequently highly beneficial to brands wishing to promote their products. The increasing importance of brand UGC on firm performance has led to a flurry of qualitative and quantitative research being conducted in recent years discussed in the following sections.

2.4.1 Typologies of (brand) UGC

Marketing scholars have been concerned with establishing *how* consumers engage with UGC through the development of typologies of (brand) UGC (e.g. Daugherty et al. 2008; Heinonen 2011; Krishnamurthy and Dou 2008; Shao 2009; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011). These typologies of UGC highlight that consumers experience three different levels of activeness that range from low to high, in turn leading to different UGC behaviors (Heinonen 2011; Li and Bernoff 2008, Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011). These different levels of activeness have been categorized and defined as *consumers of (brand) UGC* (low activeness/engagement), *contributors of (brand) UGC* (medium activeness/engagement) and *creators of (brand) UGC* (high activeness/engagement). Consumers of brand UGC represent the lowest level of online brand-related activeness and “participate without actively contributing to or creating content” (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011, p. 16). Consumers of brand UGC typically engage in behaviors such watching, reading, viewing brand UGC (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011), or following brands (Schivinski, Christodoulides and Dabrowski, 2016) but they never create (brand) UGC (Shao, 2009). Contributors/participants are at the middle level of online brand-related activeness, which involves “user-to-content and user-to-user interactions about brands” (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011, p. 17; Shao 2009). Typical behaviors include participating on a brand’s fan page/video, leaving comments on a blog or a forum (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011), adding content to a playlist, liking or sharing content with others (Shao, 2009). This category however excludes a consumer’s own production of brand UGC, which is linked to participation as opposed to spontaneous production (Schivinski et al. 2016; Shao 2009). Finally, central to this research, the final category, *creators/producers* display the highest level of online activeness. These users contribute to the creation of brand UGC such as writing blog posts, uploading brand-related audio and video reviews (vlogs) or images such as brand selfies online (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011; Schivinski et al. 2016; Shao 2009). Lastly, it should be noted that although these levels of online activeness greatly differ, consumers, contributors/participants and creators/producers of brand UGC may engage in multiple roles at different times (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011).

2.4.2 Consumer motives for posting (brand) UGC

Another strand of UGC research of interest to this study has focused on the highest level of social media activeness, with the aim of establishing *what* drives consumers (i.e. consumers' motives) to create (brand) UGC (e.g. Berthon, Pitt and Campbell 2008; Christodoulides, Jevons and Bonhomme 2012; Daugherty et al. 2008; Halliday 2015; Krishnamurthy and Dou 2008; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011; Schau and Gilly 2003; Shao 2009; Smith et al. 2012; Toubia and Stephen 2013). Motives for creating (brand) UGC have traditionally been explored through the U&G theory, a sub-tradition of media effects research (McQuail, 1994) which "goes back to the beginning of empirical mass communication research" (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch 1973, p. 509).

The U&G theory examines media effects from the point of view of the individual user (Aitken, Gray, and Lawson, 2008), with the aim of understanding *how* and *why* people actively choose to use certain media (Katz 1959; Katz et al. 1973) to satisfy their needs or wants (Papacharissi, 2008). It marks a shift in classical communications studies which traditionally aimed to answer, 'what do the media do to people?' to 'what do people do with the media?' (Katz, 1959). The latter approach assumes that "people's values, their interests, their associations, and their social roles" (Katz, 1959, p. 3) all interact to influence what people do with the media. Underpinning the U&G theory is the idea that consumers' media use is driven by certain goals/outcomes (e.g. Rubin, 1984). Media use is driven by consumers' psychological needs or the gratifications sought from media exposure, specifically chosen by consumers themselves (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1973). Lastly, the resulting gratifications from such media consumption may be linked to "(1) the media content itself, (2) exposure to the media per se, and (3) the social context that typifies the situation of exposure to different media" (Katz et al., 1973, p. 514).

Since its introduction, the theory has been used in academic research from as early as the 1940s to explore the reasons for mass media consumption (i.e. what drives people to consume certain media types) such as radio listening, or TV viewing (Papacharissi, 2008). U&G research has also been applied to specific sub-types of TV and radio programs. For instance, Herzog (1940; 1944) scrutinized the reasons for listening to quiz shows and soap operas on the radio, and the U&G theory has also

been used study various TV formats such as watching news programs, cable TV (Kang and Atkin, 1999), re-runs (Pacharissi, 2008), and reality shows (Papacharissi and Mendelson, 2007).

However, additional gratifications have emerged in recent years driven by the use of New Media technologies (Sundar and Limperos 2013; Ruggiero 2000). The U&G theory has been applied to a wide range of Internet and SNSs uses, resulting in a wide array of motivations emerging, some new, and specific to the Internet only, while others are consistent with other motivations previously identified in the literature (Sundar and Limperos, 2013). Similarly to traditional media studies, the U&G framework has been applied to **generic social media use** (Whiting and Williams 2016) including user-generated media (UGM) (Shao, 2009) and brand UGC (Muntinga et al., 2011), **platform-specific use** such as Facebook (Krause, North and Heritage 2014; Malik, Dhir and Nieminen 2016; Raacke and Bonds-Raacke 2008; Smock et al. 2011), YouTube (Haridakis and Hanson 2009, Khan 2017), Twitter (Liu, Cheung, and Lee, 2010), Pinterest (Mull and Lee, 2014), Instagram (Sheldon and Bryant, 2016), Snapchat (Waddell, 2016), as well as **sub-types of social media use** such as political blogging (Kaye and Johnson, 2002), news sharing in social media (Lee and Ma, 2011), selfies (Sung et al., 2016), and hashtag use (Rauschnabel, Sheldon, and Herzfeldt, 2019).

The motives for creating UGC and brand UGC yield a solid body of literature (e.g. Berthon et al. 2008; Daugherty, Eastin and Bright 2008; Heinonen 2011; Krishnamurthy and Dou 2008; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011; Shao 2009; Smith et al. 2012; Toubia and Stephen 2013; Halliday 2015, Sung et al. 2016; Sung, Kim and Choi 2018), highlighting significant differences in consumer motives across (brand) UGC types (e.g. consumers-ads, status updates, photo uploads) and SNSs (blogs, forums, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube). Table 2 provides a summary of the SNSs studies that have employed the U&G framework to uncover motives for SNSs use over the past decade.

Table 2: SNSs U&G studies (2009-2019)

Author	Motive	Medium	Methodology
<i>Social interaction/socialization motives</i>			
Kaye and Johnson (2002)	Social utility	Political blogging	Empirical quantitative
Haridakis and Hanson (2009)	Social interaction	YouTube viewing	Empirical quantitative
Park, Kee and Valenzuela (2009)	Socialization	Facebook group membership	Empirical quantitative
Shao (2009)	Social interaction	User Generated Media	Conceptual
Lee and Ma (2011)	Socializing	News sharing	Empirical quantitative
Muntinga, Moonman and Smit (2011)	Integration and social interaction	Brand-related social media use	Empirical qualitative
Smock et al. (2011)	Social interaction	Facebook feature use (status updates, wall posts)	Empirical quantitative
Malik, Dhir and Nieminen (2016)	Social influence	Facebook digital photo-sharing	Empirical quantitative
Whiting and Williams (2016)	Social interaction	Generic social media use	Empirical qualitative
Khan (2017)	Social interaction	YouTube engagement	Empirical quantitative
<i>Relational motives</i>			
Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008)	To keep in touch with old and current friends To make new friends To locate old friends	Facebook (generic use)	Empirical quantitative
Shao (2009)	Community development	User Generated Media	Conceptual
Malik, Dhir and Nieminen (2016)	Affection	Facebook digital photo-sharing	Empirical quantitative
Waddell (2016)	Relational gratifications	Ephemeral photograph-based communication on SnapChat	Empirical qualitative
Rauschnabel, Sheldon and Herzfeldt (2019)	Bonding	Hashtags	Mixed methods - empirical

Author	Motive	Medium	Methodology
<i>Communication motives</i>			
Krause, North and Heritage (2014)	Communication	Facebook music listening applications	Empirical quantitative
Sung et al. (2016)	Communication	Selfies	Empirical quantitative
Whiting and Williams (2016)	Communicatory utility	Generic social media use	Empirical qualitative
Rauschnabel, Sheldon and Herzfeldt (2019)	Reaching	Hashtag use	Mixed methods – empirical
<i>Information seeking and sharing (about a brand or others) motives</i>			
Kaye and Johnson (2002)	Information seeking/surveillance	Political blogging	Empirical quantitative
Haridakis and Hanson (2009)	Information seeking	YouTube viewing	Empirical quantitative
Park, Kee and Valenzuela (2009)	Information	Facebook group membership	Empirical quantitative
Shao (2009)	Information seeking	User Generated Media	Conceptual
Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011)	Information	Brand-related social media use	Empirical qualitative
Smock et al. (2011)	Expressive information sharing	Facebook features use (status updates, wall posts)	Empirical quantitative
Malik, Dhir and Nieminen (2016)	Information sharing	Facebook digital photo-sharing	Empirical quantitative
Sheldon and Bryant (2016)	Surveillance/ knowledge about others	Instagram	Mixed methods - empirical
Whiting and Williams (2016)	Information seeking	Generic social media use	Empirical qualitative
Khan (2017)	Information giving	YouTube engagement: active engagement and passive content consumption	Empirical quantitative
<i>Entertainment-related motives</i>			
Kaye and Johnson (2002)	Entertainment	Political blogging	Empirical quantitative
Haridakis and Hanson (2009)	Entertainment	YouTube viewing	Empirical quantitative
Shao (2009)	Entertainment	User Generated Media	Conceptual
Park, Kee and Valenzuela (2009)	Entertainment	Facebook group membership	Empirical quantitative
Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011)	Entertainment	Brand-related social media use	Empirical qualitative
Krause, North and Heritage (2014)	Entertainment	Facebook music listening applications	Empirical quantitative
Mull and Lee (2014)	Entertainment	Pinterest use	Mixed methods - empirical

Author	Motive	Medium	Methodology
Sung et al. (2016)	Entertainment	Selfies	Empirical quantitative
Whiting and Williams (2016)	Entertainment	Generic social media use	Empirical qualitative
Khan (2017)	Relaxing entertainment	YouTube engagement: active engagement and passive content consumption	Empirical quantitative
Rauschnabel, Sheldon and Herzfeldt (2019)	Amusing	Hashtags use	Mixed methods - empirical
<i>Relaxation and escapism motives</i>			
Shao (2009)	Self-expression	User Generated Media	Conceptual
Krause, North and Heritage (2014)	Habitual diversion	Facebook music listening applications	Empirical quantitative
Malik, Dhir and Nieminen (2016)	Habit	Facebook digital photo-sharing	Empirical quantitative
Whiting and Williams (2016)	Relaxation Pastime	Generic social media use	Empirical qualitative
<i>Identity-related motives</i>			
Shao (2009)	Self-actualization	User Generated Media	Conceptual
Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011)	Personal identity	Brand-related social media use	Empirical qualitative
Waddell (2016)	Self-expression	Ephemeral photograph-based communication on SnapChat	Empirical qualitative
Malik, Dhir and Nieminen (2016)	Disclosure	Facebook digital photo-sharing	Empirical quantitative
Sheldon and Bryant (2016)	Documentation	Instagram use	Mixed methods - empirical
<i>Status-related motives</i>			
Park, Kee and Valenzuela (2009)	Self-status seeking	Facebook group membership	Empirical quantitative
Lee and Ma (2011)	Status seeking	News sharing	Empirical quantitative

Author	Motive	Medium	Methodology
<i>Attention seeking motives</i>			
Malik, Dhir and Nieminen (2016)	Attention seeking	Facebook digital photo-sharing	Empirical quantitative
Sung et al. (2016)	Attention seeking	Selfies	Empirical quantitative
<i>Organizing and archiving motives</i>			
Mull and Lee (2014)	Organization	Pinterest use	Mixed methods - empirical
Sung et al. (2016)	Archiving	Selfies	Empirical quantitative
Rauschnabel, Sheldon and Herzfeldt (2019)	Organizing	Hashtag use	Mixed methods - empirical
<i>Miscellaneous other motives</i>			
Kaye and Johnson (2002)	Guidance	Political blogging	Empirical quantitative
Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008)	To post/look at pictures	Facebook (generic use)	Empirical quantitative
Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011)	Remuneration Empowerment	Brand-related social media use	Empirical qualitative
Smock et al. (2011)	Professional advancement	Facebook feature use (status updates, wall posts)	Empirical quantitative
Mull and Lee (2014)	Creative projects Fashion Virtual exploration	Pinterest use	Mixed methods - empirical
Sheldon and Bryant (2016)	Coolness Creativity	Instagram use	Mixed methods - empirical
Whiting and Williams (2016)	Convenience utility	Generic social media use	Empirical qualitative

Several observations emerge from this review of the U&G literature on (brand) UGC. Firstly, motives for sharing different types of (brand) UGC broadly fall under 11 different categories: (1) social interactions/socialization motives, (2) relational motives, (3) communication motives, (4) information seeking and sharing motives, (5) entertainment-related motives, (6) relaxation and escapism motives, (7) identity-related motives, (8) status-related motives, (9) attention seeking motives, (10) organizing and archiving motives, and (11) miscellaneous other motives. While each SNSs behavior discussed in these studies has a unique set of motives, consumers also have multiple simultaneous motivations for creating UGC (Berthon, Pitt and Campbell 2008; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011). These motivations may differ from one SNS to another (Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012; Toubia and Stephen 2013), and motivations to create (brand) UGC may change over time as consumers explore and display different aspects of the self (Schau and Gilly, 2003). Lastly, while these UGC studies have focused on different SNSs activities and behaviors, only one study from Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011) has specifically scrutinized brand UGC motives. Thus, while motives for posting UGC offer a diverse body of literature, research on brand UGC motives on SNSs remains scant.

Brand selfies differ from other types of brand UGC such as videos or photos, as they prominently feature both a person and a brand (Kedzior, Allen, and Schroeder, 2016), while earlier types of UGC typically only featured photos of brands such as photos uploaded to an individual's Facebook profile and Facebook brand pages (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011). Motives for posting brand UGC identified in past research included social interaction, information, personal identity, entertainment, and remuneration/empowerment (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011). While useful in demonstrating that consumers have different motivations for posting brand UGC online, these motives nevertheless failed to account for the influence of the self-concept on brand UGC posting intent. Thus, due to the centrality of the self, consumers' motives for posting brand selfies, it is anticipated that new motives are likely to emerge from this research. Complementing the discussion on motives for sharing UGC discussed in this section thus far, Table 3 presents the motivations specifically related to digital photo-sharing. It should be noted that the motivations presented in the below table have not all emerged from the U&G framework

Table 3: Motives for digital photo-sharing

Author	Motives	Motive description/manifestations	Type of brand UGC
<i>Generic photo sharing motives (photo-type unspecified)</i>			
Shao (2009)	Self-expression	Refers to the expression of one’s own identity, and especially one’s individuality.	Videos, pictures, blogs and personal homepages
Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011)	Self-presentation	Refers to people contributing to brand-related content in order to provide others with an image of their personality.	Photo upload to Facebook brand page
Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011)	Self-assurance	Recognition/acknowledgement from others in the community.	Facebook (photo upload to brand page)
Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011)	Enjoyment and pastime	The entertainment motive covers the sub-motivations of enjoyment and pastime. Enjoyment as a motivation denotes consuming brand related content and often interacts with other motivations. Pastime refers to uploading brand-related content to alleviate boredom.	Photo-upload to brand page (SNS unspecified)
Leung (2013)			
Malik, Dhir, and Nieminen (2016)	Disclosure	“Refers to sharing personal information about oneself or closely related people.” (p. 132)	Facebook photo-sharing
Malik, Dhir, and Nieminen (2016)	Information sharing	“Sharing information with others to express one’s desires, feelings, interests or situation.”	Facebook photo-sharing
Malik, Dhir, and Nieminen (2016)	Affection seeking	“The need for getting (as well as expressing) appreciation or feelings by appreciating, encouraging or showing care.” (p. 132)	Facebook photo sharing
Malik, Dhir, and Nieminen (2016)	Attention seeking	“Attention seeking can be described as the sentiments of getting attention and importance from others.” (p. 132)	Facebook photo-sharing
Malik, Dhir, and Nieminen (2016)	Habitual pastime	“Refers to unintentional and regularly performed behavioral pattern or activity.” (p.132)	Facebook photo-sharing
Malik, Dhir, and Nieminen (2016)	Social influence	‘The combination of various feelings, including ‘following a trend’, ‘being stylish’, ‘appearing cool’ with the intention of being part of a group of society.’” (p. 132)	Facebook photo-sharing
Sheldon and Bryant (2016)	Coolness/Popularity	Instagram contains many features that many would consider cool such as photo filters, tags and the ability to follow celebrities. (p. 94)	Photo-sharing on Instagram

Author	Motives	Motive description/manifestations	Type of brand UGC
<i>Selfie and brand selfies sharing motives</i>			
Pounders, Kowalczyk and Stowers (2016)	Impression management	Individuals take and post ‘genuine and non-genuine’ selfies for impression management purposes. This allows these individuals to manage their desired impression, which in turns enhances their self-esteem through the number of likes received.	Selfie posting
Pounders, Kowalczyk and Stowers (2016)	Self-esteem	Self-esteem is defined as one’s global perception of the self (Rosenberg, 1965) and is considered both a judgment and an attitude of oneself.” (p. 1,888)	Selfie posting
Sung et al. (2016)	Archiving memories	Individuals take and post selfies to “document special events and occasions in their lives.” (p. 263)	Selfie posting
Sung et al. (2016)	Attention seeking	“Posting self-information on SNSs such as personal profiles, status updates, and wall posts, selfies in particular emphasize key features of oneself by displaying optimized, desirable self-image with the intention of seeking admiration from others.” (p. 263).	Selfie posting
Sung et al. (2016)	Communication	“Selfies as they are highly personal in content make it easy and convenient for individuals to build and maintain relationships with their social networks, both directly through comments on the selfies, or indirectly through others’ reactions to the selfies.” (p. 263).	Selfie posting
Sung et al. (2016)	Entertainment	“Individuals take and post selfies to escape boredom.” (p. 263)	Selfie posting
Etgar and Amichai-Hamburger (2017)	Self-approval	“Self-approval is the need to validate one’s confidence or significance by taking selfies.” (p. 7)	Selfie posting
Etgar and Amichai-Hamburger (2017)	Belonging	“Belonging is the tendency to take and upload selfies and obeying the social norms, in order to feel part of one’s environment.” (p. 7)	Selfie posting
Etgar and Amichai-Hamburger (2017)	Documentation	“Documentation is the intention to preserve one’s memory and experience by taking a selfie.” (p. 7)	Selfie posting
Sung, Kim and Choi (2018)	Narcissism and materialism	“Posters with more narcissism, materialism, and stronger beliefs in SNSs as sources of brand information are relatively more likely to post brand-selfies.” (p. 23)	Brand selfie posting

2.4.3 Characteristics of brand UGC

While the motives for posting (brand) UGC differ across different SNSs, similarly brand UGC has been found to exhibit different characteristics across different platforms (Roma and Aloini 2019; Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012). While research on the motives for posting (brand) UGC has generated a plethora of studies, research on the characteristics of brand UGC remains embryonic in comparison, with two key papers driving the discourse (Roma and Aloini 2019; Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012). Through a content analysis of brand UGC across Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, the Smith, Fischer and Yongjian (2012) and later Roma and Aloini (2019) identified consistencies and differences across brand UGC on each platform. While these studies are useful in understanding the different dimensions and characteristics of brand UGC, they nevertheless present limitations in terms of sampling method due to their limited sample size and the breadth of brands under scrutiny. Furthermore, it is unclear how the authors developed their coding frame, bringing into question the validity dimensions identified. Notwithstanding, Smith, Fischer and Yongjian (2012) propose six dimensions and characteristics of brand UGC:

- 1) Promotional self-presentation, which may be associated with the use of products and brands (e.g. Belk 1988; Schau and Gilly 2003; Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012)
- 2) Brand centrality, which refers to whether the brand is central to the UGC or simply a prop (Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012)
- 3) Marketer-directed communication, which refers to the ease through which consumers interact with brands through tweets or replies to Facebook posts (Smith, Fischer and Yongjian, 2012)
- 4) Response to online marketer action, which “captures whether social media users are more or less likely to produce UGC as a response to marketing actions carried by marketers on the given social media” (Roma and Aloini, 2019, p. 325)
- 5) Factually verifiable information about the brand whether UGC reports objectively verifiable information about the brand (e.g., physical product features, price, store location) rather than personal opinions (Smith, Fischer and Yongjian, 2012)
- 6) Brand sentiment, which defines if the brand UGC is positive, negative, neutral or unclear (Smith, Fischer and Yongjian, 2012)

Three of these dimensions are particularly relevant to this research: self-presentation, brand centrality and brand sentiment. Firstly, the authors found that YouTube featured more self-promotional UGC than on Facebook, and Facebook was more self-promotional than Twitter. Brand centrality was least observed on Facebook and YouTube and was more common on Twitter. Lastly, the authors found that brand sentiment could be positive or negative across all SNSs, however these findings were also skewed by sentiment of the brands under scrutiny with one brand being more popular than the other.

Building on Smith, Fischer and Yongjian's findings (2012), and using a similar methodological approach, Roma and Aloini (2019) introduced six new dimensions and characteristics pertaining to brand UGC, brought by technological changes in SNSs. The authors posit technological changes in SNSs have been exacerbated by the use of smartphone technologies, which in recent years have offered real-time access to SNSs through a mobile device, and introduced new features such as geo-tagging. On this basis, the authors introduce 6 additional dimensions and characteristics of brand UGC:

- 1) Response to advertising campaign to capture the tendency to comment about advertising campaigns in social media
- 2) Location sharing pertains to the surge of location based SNSs, which allows users to share their location with a piece of brand UGC
- 3) Connection with personal experience which refers to ubiquitous daily posting of experiences and everyday life such as birthdays or holidays
- 4) Real-time sharing of purchase experience which focusses on the use of social media to share real time shopping experiences
- 5) Real-time sharing of consumption experience which focuses on the consumption experience with the brand post-purchase
- 6) Brand recommendations, which refer to reviews about brands posted online

Similarly, to Smith, Fischer and Yongjian's findings (2012), Roma and Aloini (2019) identified several differences across brand UGC posted on different SNSs. Firstly, the authors found that Facebook, Twitter and YouTube can all equally foster a response to advertising. Unsurprisingly, location sharing was more prominent on Facebook and Twitter compared to YouTube, as this feature is not central to YouTube use. Real-time sharing of purchase experience was also unsurprisingly less common

on YouTube compared to Twitter or Facebook, which facilitates the diffusion of real-time content (Roma and Aloini, 2019). Lastly, brand recommendation was highest on YouTube compared to Facebook or Twitter.

In summary, both study highlight that different user behaviors are associated with different social media environments (Roma and Aloini 2019; Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012). In turn, this raises several questions pertaining to brand selfies due to the centrality of the self in this form of UGC, which may be regarded as highly self-promotional and perhaps narcissistic. In turn, this raises questions about the role of brands (brand centrality/peripherality) in this form of brand UGC.

2.5 Brand UGC and WoM

The last section of this literature review discusses WoM and its relationship with brand UGC. The extant literature suggests that brand selfies can be a powerful vehicle for WoM, with consumers demonstrating their loyalty towards their favorite brands through images (Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Pappasolomou, 2020). Within the literature accumulated on brand related UGC, several studies have focused on the effects WoM such as online reviews or brand UGC on consumers' purchase decisions and market performance across several product categories (e.g. Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006; Forman, Ghose, and Wiesenfeld 2008; Li and Hitt 2008). Although multiple definitions of WoM are identified in the literature, one of the most commonly cited is that of Arndt (1967) who defines WoM as “person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver concerning a brand, a product, or a service offered for sale” (p. 190). SNSs represent an ideal vehicle for WoM, as consumers freely create and disseminate brand-related information in their social networks composed of real-life friends, acquaintances and followers (Vollmer and Precourt 2008). Notably, brand selfies are a powerful vehicle for WoM, enabling individuals to share and exchange their experiences about brands (Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Pappasolomou, 2020). This display of consumption activities enable self-expression for the poster, while receivers tend to see high pertinence and trust in the WoM (Taylor, Strutton, and Thompson 2012). WoM from ‘posters’ can therefore be highly influential (Dichter, 1966) and may play a major role in buying decisions (Richins and Root-Shaffer, 1988). The extent of the strength of WoM is such that it

may influence decisions such as “the adoption of new products categories and the choice of brands in mature categories” (East, Hammond and Lomax, 2008, p. 215). Furthermore, WoM can take place at any stage of a consumer’s decision-making process (de Bruyn and Lilien, 2008) although post-consumption WoM is regarded as the most influential form of WoM (Dichter, 1966).

2.5.1 WoM conceptualizations and characteristics

Brought by the advent of the Internet and social media, several new conceptualizations of WoM have emerged in recent years including electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM) (e.g. Hennig-Thureau et al., 2004), sWoM i.e. WoM taking place in social networks (e.g. Eisingerich et al. 2015) and visual eWoM (Serrano and Ramjun 2018; Lin, Lu and Wu 2012). The primary difference between these Internet-based WoM and traditional WoM is the platform through which WoM is being propagated. WoM and eWoM have often been used interchangeably in the literature when UGC is brand-related (e.g. Tham, Croy and Mair, 2013), often resulting in a confusing body of research. For instance, Sung, Kim and Choi (2018), among other scholars, suggest that brand selfies are in fact a form of eWoM. However, Cheong and Morrison (2008), have argued that eWoM and brand UGC are two different constructs. As noted by Krishnamurthy and Dou (2008, p. 3) “eWoM frequently pertains to product recommendations, UGC generally focuses on pure entertainment.” The present study adopts this school of thought and proposes brand UGC is not necessarily posted to propagate eWoM or WoM.

Among these conceptualizations, the most commonly referenced type of Internet-based WoM, is electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM), “which enables potential, actual or former customers of a brand to share positive or negative opinions and are “made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (Hennig-Thureau et al., 2004, p. 39). These opinions are typically written on review platforms (e.g. TripAdvisor), blogs, forums or news groups (Hennig-Thureau et al., 2004), however brand UGC also functions as a form of eWoM (Kim and Jonhson, 2016). Less commonly referenced in the literature, is sWoM, in other words, word-of-mouth that specifically takes place in SNSs (Eisingerich et al. 2015; Lin et al. 2017). Lin et al. (2017, p. 383), define sWoM as “positive or negative statements made by strangers, friends, and family within personal existing social networks about a product, service,

or company. These statements are made available to a multitude of people and institutions via social media.” sWoM is however less likely to occur than WoM due to perceived social risk (Eisingerich et al. 2015). Finally, the third type of WoM identified in the literature is visual eWoM, directly linked to the growth of photo based SNSs such as Instagram or Pinterest (Serrano and Ramjun 2018; Lin, Lu and Wu 2012). This type of WoM tends to be brand-related with the visual appeal of the brand being key to posting UGC (Serrano and Ramjun, 2018), while visual information acts as a key driver of consumer attitude and purchase intent (Lin et al., 2012). In terms of its characteristics, word-of-mouth may be positive (PWoM) or negative in nature (NWoM) (Richins, 1983). During a negative word-of-mouth situation, consumers denigrate the object of communication resulting in several negative consequences for the brand such as complaints or even brand switching (e.g. Richins, 1983).

WoM may also be solicited or unsolicited, both types being of interest in this research. Solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM have been scarcely researched compared to other forms of WoM only yielding an embryonic body of literature. Solicited WoM is based on the premise that WoM does not always occur as a result of positive or negative experiences with a brand or product (De Matos and Rossi, 2008). Questions by colleagues, friends or family may be a triggering factor for WoM to occur (De Matos and Rossi, 2008; Mazzarol, Sweeney and Soutar, 2007), and it has been suggested that up to 50% of WoM is prompted by a request for information (East et al., 2005).

Solicited WoM is largely regarded as a reactive behavior while unsolicited WoM is regarded as a pro-active behavior (Kiecker and Cowles 2002; Wien and Olsen 2014). When it comes to solicited WoM, Lampel and Bhalla (2007) suggest that the primary motive to provide solicited information is to obtain status. However, when solicited for information individuals have fewer opportunities to self-enhance, as the information seeker sets the agenda for the conversation which typically concerns his or her needs (Mangold, Miller and Brockway, 1999). This in turn limits the WoM transmitter’s opportunities to get the conversation to a point where self-promotion seems natural (Mangold, Miller and Brockway, 1999). Conversely, Godfrey, Jones, and Lord (1986) suggest that pro-active, unsolicited WoM is used by people who wish to promote themselves, and this type of WoM is essential for individuals wishing to

use a conversation strategically. By being proactive, individuals can steer the conversation to express their competence, while avoid areas where the conversation partner is more likely to be an expert (Godfrey, Jones, and Lord, 1986). It is believed that solicited WoM has more impact than unsought WoM in terms of consumer pertinence and trust (East et al., 2005).

2.6 Summary of the literature and research gaps

Drawing from multiple fields of academic research, this chapter has reviewed the literature on the self-concept, the selfie phenomenon, the motives for UGC and brand UGC, and the WoM literature relevant to this thesis. The aim of this chapter was to uncover the research gaps within several fields of literature to justify the development of a conceptual model of drivers and outcomes for posting brand selfies. This literature review chapter was split in four sections.

Firstly, the literature of the self-concept was reviewed highlighting how the emergence of the Internet and SNSs have drastically transformed the self and the nature of relationships with brands (Belk, 2014). SNSs enable consumers to build online profiles, and share (brand) UGC as a means to present various facets of the self and construct their identities (e.g. Belk 2014; Eagar and Dann 2016).

The second section of this chapter reviewed the literature pertaining to the selfie phenomenon. Selfies have emerged one of the most popular forms of UGC in recent years (Cohen 2016; Kulwin 2014), driving strong academic interest from various disciplines. This in turn has resulted in a highly diffused body of research. The majority of selfie studies stem from the psychology corpus, highlighting a link between selfies and narcissism (e.g. Arpaci 2018; Fox and Rooney 2015; Halpern, Valenzuela and Katz 2016; Kim and Chock 2017; McCain et al. 2016; Moon et al. 2016; March and McBean 2018; Shane-Simpson et al. 2019; Singh, Farley and Donahue 2018; Sorokowski et al. 2015; Wang 2019; Weiser 2015). Despite brand selfies' importance on consumer culture, research on the brand selfie phenomenon has remained scant, highly conceptual in nature, and has failed to provide empirical generalizability. The embryonic body of research on brand selfies suggest that brand selfie posting may be regarded as a new form of consumer behavior that empowers individuals to co-create brands (Iqani and Schroeder 2015; Urista, Dong and Day 2009). In posting brand

selfies consumers commodify themselves (Iqani and Schroeder, 2015), and construct their identities with and through brands (e.g. Marwick, 2015; Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Papasolomou 2020).

The third section of the literature explored UGC and brand UGC in more detail. Having discussed the brand selfie phenomenon and its various facets, this section was concerned with establishing what motivates consumers to post UGC and brand UGC online such as brand selfies. Brand selfies users are considered to be creators/producers of brand UGC displaying the highest level of online activeness. The literature reveals that motives for using media been uncovered through the U&G theory, with the aim of understanding *how* and *why* people actively choose to use certain media (Katz 1959; Katz et al. 1973) to satisfy their needs or wants (Papacharissi, 2008). Scholarly interest in why people use different media, in turn has led to the empirical identification of motives for using SNSs (e.g. (Krause, North and Heritage 2014; Liu, Cheung, and Lee 2010; Mull and Lee 2014; Sheldon and Bryant 2016; Whiting and Williams 2016) including motives for digital photo-sharing (e.g. Malik, Dhir, and Nieminen (2016); Sheldon and Bryant 2016; Sung et al. 2016). The review of consumers' motives for digital-photo sharing highlights that the motives for posting brand selfies are yet to be explored. Next, the embryonic literature pertaining to the characteristics of brand UGC was reviewed. Smith, Fischer and Yongjian (2012) and Roma and Aloini (2019) Smith, Fischer and Yongjian (2012) identified consistencies and differences in brand UGC across Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Yet, review of this body of literature highlight another research gap pertaining to the identification of the characteristics of brand selfies.

Lastly, the fourth and final section of this chapter, reviewed the link between brand UGC and WoM, and its various conceptualizations. While brand selfies have been regarded as a form of visual WoM (e.g. Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Papasolomou, 2020), the present research assumes that brand UGC and WoM are two different constructs (Cheong and Morrison, 2008). It is proposed that in posting selfies, consumers will be willing to offer both solicited WoM or unsolicited WoM beyond SNSs, types of WoM which are largely under-researched.

This review of the literature has led to the identification of a research gap pertaining to the way brand selfies have been researched. As previously noted, this research is expected to enhance theoretical understanding of brand selfies as a means for self-presentation through the extension of consumers' self-concepts (Belk 1988; Sirgy 1982). To summarize, this thesis proposes to address several research gaps in the literature:

1. To identify the characteristics of brand selfies
2. To identify a set of motives and drivers for posting brand selfies
3. To understand the role of narcissism on the motives and drivers for posting brand selfies
4. To understand the effect of brand selfies posting and consequently the effect of brand selfies posting intent on outcomes such as WoM, including its solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM dimensions, which are both largely under-researched

To conclude the review of the literature and for clarity, Table 4 below highlights the differences between past research on brand selfies and the proposed research.

Table 4: Summary of brand selfies studies

Study	Main topic	Keywords	Research design
Iqani and Schroeder (2015)	The influence of brand selfies on contemporary culture	Brand selfies, commodity, marketplace	Conceptual
Marwick (2015)	The use of luxury brand selfies to achieve micro-influencer status	Luxury brand selfies, influencers, status seeking	Qualitative
Gannon and Prothero (2016)	Beauty bloggers' brand selfies	Influencer brand selfies, consumer authenticity	Mixed qualitative
Kedzior, Allen, and Schroeder (2016)	Significance of the brand selfie-phenomenon on marketing practice and scholarship	Marketer-led brand selfies, marketing scholarship	Literature review
Rokka and Canniford (2016)	Selfies and brand assemblages	Brand assemblages, heterotopian selfies	Visual content analysis

Sandhya (2016)	Brand selfies and brand personality	Marketer-led brand selfies, brand personality	Exploratory
Fox et al. (2018)	Attitudes towards marketer-led brand selfies	Marketer-led brand selfies, consumer attitudes	Mixed methods
Hartmann et al. (2019)	Brand selfies and consumer engagement	Brand selfies types, Consumer engagement	Transfer learning and convolutional neural networks analysis (CNN)
Hofstetter, Kunath and John (2020)	Marketer-led brand selfies and consumer-brand relationships	Marketer-led brand selfies, brand preferences	Experiments
Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Papasolomou (2020)	Interactivity between brand selfies posters and their audiences	Consumer relationships, selfies as a marketing tool	Netnography
This study	Characteristics of brands selfies and consumers' motives for posting them	Characteristics of brand selfies consumer motivations, narcissism, brand attachment	Mixed methods

As highlighted in Table 4, the present study differs from past studies by firstly identifying the characteristics of brand selfies, as well as developing a conceptual model of drivers, moderators and outcomes of brand selfies posting. Having reviewed the literature relevant to this thesis, the next chapter will present the research paradigm and research design of this thesis to achieve the stated research objectives.

Chapter 3: Research paradigm & research design

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, a literature review outlining the key constructs central to this research were presented. The chapter has highlighted that research on the selfie and brand selfie phenomenon is highly fragmented, and stems from various academic disciplines across sociology, psychology, communication and marketing. The review of the literature highlighted several research gaps leading to the formulation of the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of brand selfies?

RQ2: What are the main motives and drivers for posting brand selfies?

RQ3: What is the role of narcissism on brand selfies posting?

RQ4: What is the effect of brand selfies posting and consequently the effect of brand selfies posting intent on WoM?

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the rationale and key methodological choices driving the empirical research design to develop a testable conceptual model of brand selfies, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Firstly, in line with the study's aims and objectives, a paradigmatic stance is chosen to frame the research. Secondly, this study's research design is presented based on the U&G theory and argued for. Lastly, the overall research process underpinning this study is outlined.

3.2 Research paradigm

This section presents the research paradigm underpinning this thesis. The *research paradigm* is fundamental in any research, acting as organizing principles and frameworks that provide a set of criteria to select appropriate research tools and methods (Filstead, 1979). A paradigm provides a set of linked assumptions about the "world", in other words the research itself, and is shared by other researchers investigating that world (Kuhn, 1962). These philosophical assumptions are "basic beliefs that guide action" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 97) that underpin each research paradigm, and include ontology, epistemology, and the methodology itself. *Ontology* addresses the question 'what is the nature of reality, and the nature of the human being in the world?', while *epistemology* addresses the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2007).

The *paradigmatic stance* driving this research is post-positivism, which advocates methodological pluralism. The post-positivist paradigm is often associated with quantitative research and favors hypothesis testing for theory verification (Creswell and Clark, 2008). Post-positivists assume a learning role rather than a testing one in their initial approach (Ryan, 2006). Rather than an interviewee providing “prepared/manufactured responses to standard questions designed to be unbiased and neutral” (Ryan, 2006, p. 8), “post-positivists engage in social construction of a narrative with research participants by learning with them, rather than conducting research on them” (Wolcott, 1990, p. 19). Thus, although post-positivists acknowledge a degree of subjectivity stemming from qualitative research, they nevertheless aim to pursue objectivity.

Furthermore, based this study’s objectives, this research adopts a *positivist ontology* and a *modified objectivist epistemology*. First, in terms of ontology, the understanding of the nature of reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), the present research assumes that there is an objective reality in the world, independent of what we think about it. Indeed, the purpose of this study is to identify an accurate representation of the reality through the development and testing of a conceptual model of brand selfies, and to identify clear and objective relationships between the motives, moderators and outcomes for posting brand selfies. In sum, the overall research is guided by a positivist agenda, with the aim of seeking objectivity in causality. This research however adopts a modified objectivist epistemology in that qualitative research is required to develop the conceptual model, and as such that objectivity remains a regulatory ideal which may difficult to maintain (Healy and Perry, 2000). While this research aims to apprehend reality as closely as possible, it should be acknowledged that this may not be done perfectly due to the fallibility of observations.

3.3 Research design

This section presents the proposed research design to address this thesis’ objectives based a post-positivist approach. The present study will utilize the U&G theory, which as discussed in Chapter 2, has been used extensively across various media types to understand what people, as active members (Haridakis, 2002), do with the media (Katz 1959) including SNS use (e.g. Kaye and Johnson 2002; Malik Dhir and Nieminien 2016; Rauschnabel, Sheldon and Herzfeld 2019). The theory also posits that the media

choice is selective and motivated by an individual's self-awareness of their needs, and an expectation that those needs will be satisfied by the choice of media (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1973). It has also been suggested that media users make a conscious and motivated choice among media channels and content (McQuail, 1994).

While the U&G theory has been credited with being a “cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stages of new mass-communication medium” (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 27), the theory has been frequently criticized for offering little methodological consistency (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch 1973; Ruggiero 2000). The theory has been likened to a research strategy or an orientation rather than a proper theory by its critics (e.g. Elliott 1974, Weiss 1976). Indeed, scrutiny of U&G studies reveals a wide array of methods employed using empirical exploratory qualitative research techniques only (e.g. Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011; Whiting and Williams 2016), positivist approaches (e.g. Khan 2017; Lee and Ma 2017; Sung, Kim and Choi 2016) or post-positivist approaches (Rauschnabel, Sheldon and Herzfeldt, 2019). As little research has been conducted on brand UGC motives (see Tables 2 and 3) and given that brand selfies are a novel and unique form of self-presentational brand UGC, the present research employ a post-positivist approach combining qualitative and quantitative research methods to develop the conceptual model.

However, in order to address RQ1, an additional study is required. Firstly, to identify the characteristics of brand selfies, a content analysis will be conducted. While content analyses have rarely been used in U&G, Papacharissi (2008) argues that they **may provide a valuable tool to inform research and yield additional insights that may not emerge through primary research methods**, by expanding the methodological scope of U&G. The purpose of the content analysis will be to identify the visual characteristics (number of people in a brand selfie i.e. selfies vs. usies, brand centrality/peripherality), textual characteristics (consumer-generated hashtags), as well as geo-tagging behaviors found in brand selfies. In content-analyzing three different types of characteristics, this study is expected to yield rich insights on how consumers construct their identities through brand selfies. Thus, the content analysis aims to scrutinize **actual behavior with brand selfies** while subsequent studies will explore and test **what brand selfie users say they do**.

The second study, qualitative in nature will be designed to address RQ2 with a view of identifying consumers' main motives and drivers for posting brand selfies with Qualitative interviews are particularly appropriate for examining people's use of new types of media and content (Ruggiero 2000). Indeed, a typical U&G study tends to yield its own schemes and terms for classifying motivations (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch 1973), and the list of media motivations and U&G categories carries on expanding (Barton 2009). Theoretical matching (Goldkhul and Cronholm, 2010) will be employed to avoid the creation of new and not fully specified labels which may be similar to established motives (Sundar and Limperos, 2013).

The third study will be designed to address RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4. Quantitative in nature, the final study will empirically test the motives, moderators and outcomes (WoM) for posting brand selfies emerging through the qualitative interviews (Katz 1959; Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch 1973; Sundar and Limperos 2013). The model will aim to address the recommendation that U&G models require attention to antecedents of media use, moderating variables, mediating variables, and consequences (Rubin 1994; Ruggiero 2000). The conceptual model developed will draw on Palmgreen's (1984) approach that U&G researchers should investigate one or more independent variables and more than one dependent variable. In doing so, this study aims to tap into the flexibility of U&G research permitting to analyze individuals' activity in a plethora of psychological and social contexts (Lin 1996; Palmgreen 1984; Ruggiero 2000). Thus, extending past research on the U&G theory, this study proposes to develop a hypothesized model that examines the motives for posting brand selfies, moderators such as individual differences (Conway and Rubin 1991; Katz et al. 1974; Lucas and Sherry 2004; Rubin 2009), and the outcomes for posting brand selfies. In doing so, the present research aims to address past criticism from Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1973) by acknowledging the role of interactional factors on media use.

To summarize this chapter, this research will employ methodological pluralism, using both qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve the stated research objectives, with a view of ultimately developing a conceptual model of antecedents and outcomes of consumer behavior towards brand selfies. Figure 2 below provides an overview of this thesis' research design, while Table 5 summarizes how each study and associated methodology will help achieve the stated research objectives.

Figure 2: Research design

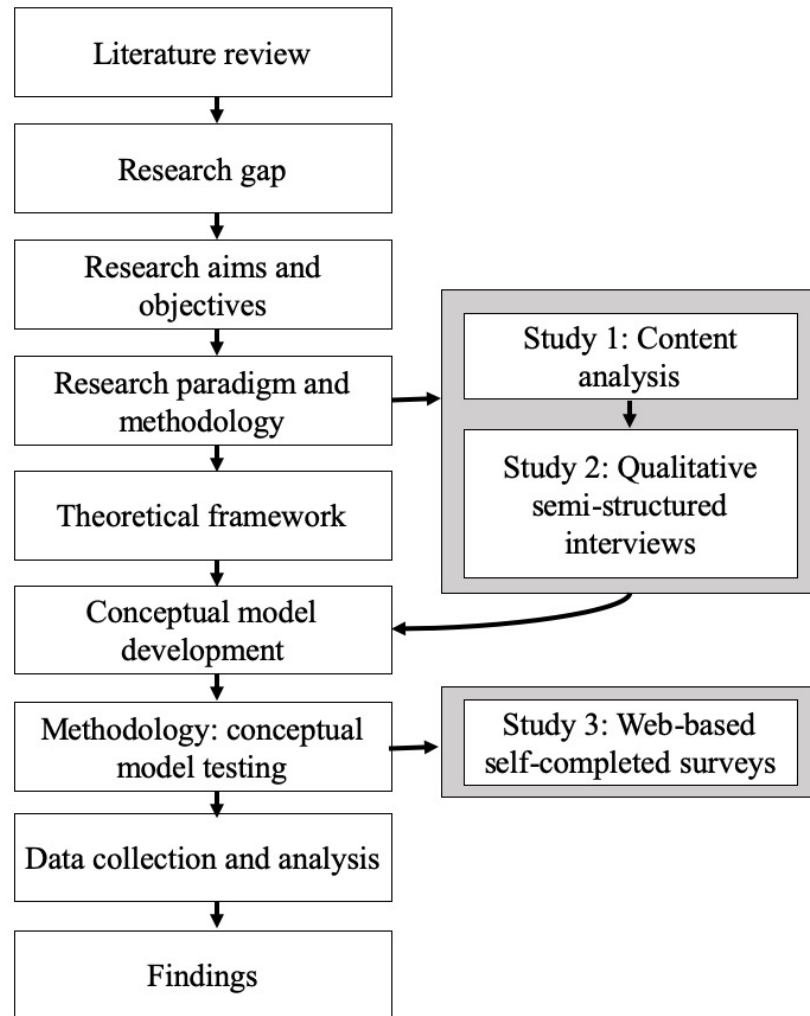


Table 5: Summary of the research objectives and associated methodology

Research question	Methodology
RQ1: What are the characteristics of brand selfies?	Visual and textural characteristics identified through a content analysis of brand selfies
RQ2: What are the main motives and drivers for posting brand selfies?	Consumers' motives and drivers firstly identified through semi-structured interviews and subsequently validated through online surveys
RQ3: What is the role of narcissism on brand selfies posting?	Moderators and outcomes identified through the literature and subsequently validated through web-based surveys
RQ4: What is the effect of brand selfies posting and consequently the effect of brand selfies posting intent on WoM?	

3.4 Summary

Following the identification of the research gap and research questions, this chapter has presented the research paradigm and the research design underpinning this thesis. The research paradigm selected, post-positivism, was presented and argued for in detail in the context of the Uses and Gratifications Theory. The post-positivist approach is believed to be the most suitable research method to develop a testable conceptual model of brand selfies.

Three studies are presented to achieve the stated research objectives. Firstly, a content analysis of brand selfies was also argued for in that it may yield additional insights in relation to the characteristics and behaviors found in brand selfies. Following the post-positivist tradition in U&G research, semi-structured interviews will be conducted to identify the motives and outcomes for posting brand selfies with the model. Lastly, the quantitative phase of the research will be used to test and understand interrelationships between the constructs within the model. The chapter concluded with a graphical representation of the research design guiding the structure of this thesis. The next chapter presents the first two studies, the content analysis and the semi-structured interviews, with the resulting findings that will inform the development of the conceptual model.

Chapter 4: Preliminary studies

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 has presented the research paradigm and research design underpinning this thesis. The purpose of this chapter is to present the first two studies of this thesis, a content analysis of brand selfies (study 1) to identify their characteristics (RQ1) and semi-structured interviews (study 2) with brand selfies users to identify consumers' motives for posting brand selfies (RQ2) with a view to inform the development of the conceptual model. For each study, the chapter firstly presents the methodology employed to achieve the stated research objectives followed by the resulting findings.

4.2 Study 1: Content analysis of brand selfies

Content analyses are not commonly used in U&G research. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that they offer a valuable tool to inform research and help understand media use in a different light (Papacharissi, 2008), yielding insights that might not emerge through qualitative interviewing techniques, in this instance the visual and characteristics of brand selfies. Thus, the content analysis aims to scrutinize **actual behavior with brand selfies** while subsequent studies will **explore (study 2) and test (study 3) what brand selfies users say they do**.

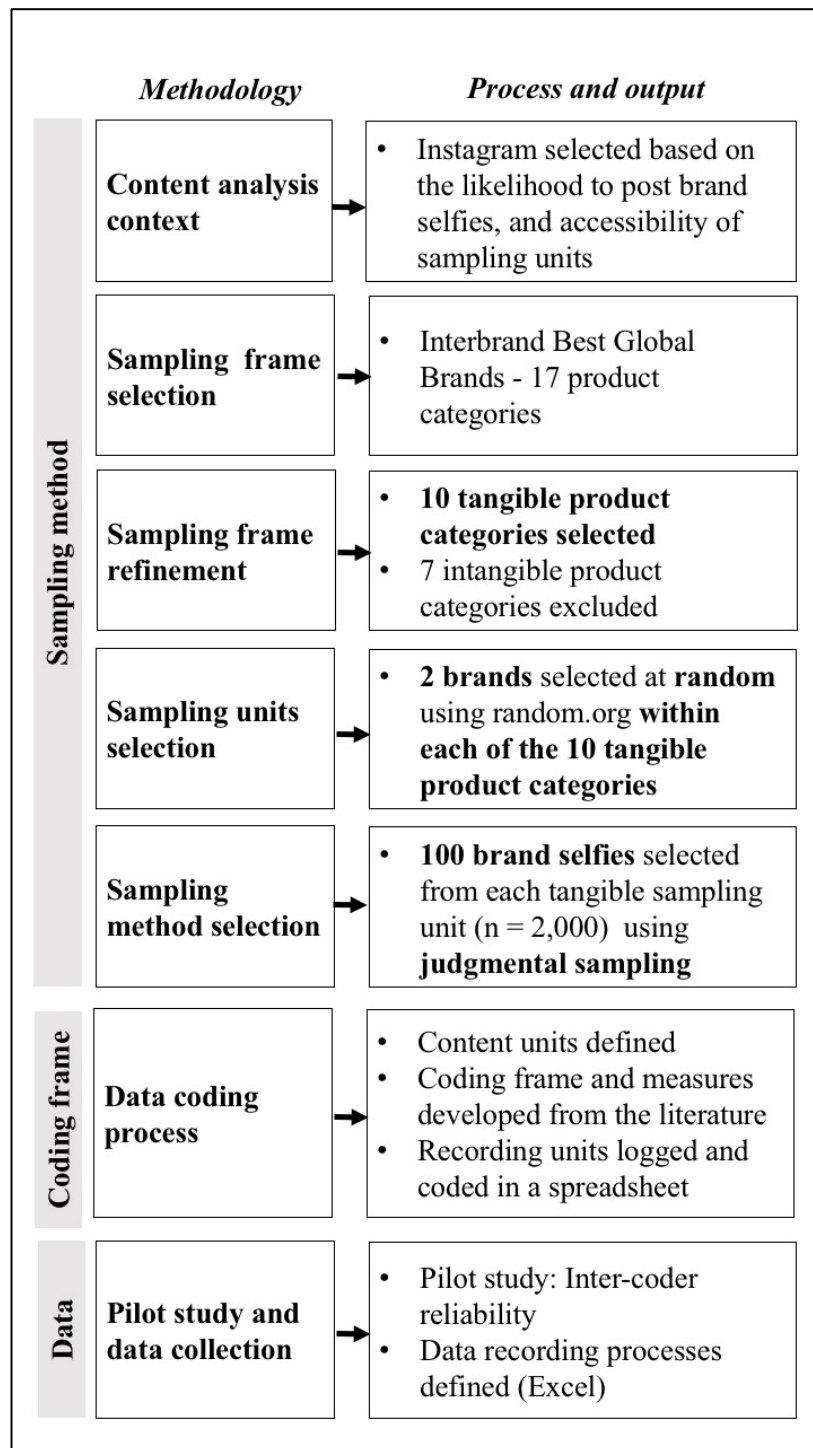
Several studies have conducted content analyses of selfies (e.g. Bell, Cassarly and Dunbar 2018; Döring, Reif and Poeschl 2016; Qiu et al. 2016) focusing on various types of sampling frames and sampling units. Among these studies, only one content analysis was conducted within the U&G framework (Woodruffe, Santarossa and Lacasse, 2018). The purpose of the present study is to address a research gap by understanding the characteristics of brand selfies to understand how consumers construct their identities through this form of brand UGC. Unlike prior content analyses conducted, the present study aims to analyze **all characteristics** that make up a brand selfie including the photos themselves (number of people in a brand selfie i.e. selfies vs. usies, brand centrality/peripherality), the geo-location tagging behaviors, and consumer-generated hashtags utilized, thus offering an in-depth overview of brand selfie-behaviors.

The section is structured as follows. Firstly, the overall content analysis process is discussed (see Figure 3). Secondly, while brand selfies are posted on a variety of SNSs, the context of the study, Instagram is discussed and argued for. Third, the methodology of the content analysis is discussed including the sampling method including sampling frame selection, sampling units and coding frame development. This section concludes with a discussion of the findings.

4.3 Content analysis methodology

Content analyses have a long history in research, dating back to the 18th century (Rosengren, 1981), and may be either qualitative or quantitative in nature, the latter being described as a form of quantitative exploration of qualitative data (Morgan, 1993) in that the frequency of specific words or content is counted (Kondracki and Wellman, 2002). The present study is quantitative in nature with a view of providing “a systematic and replicable examination of the content [brand selfies], which has been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules” (Riffe, Lacy and Fico, 1998, p. 20). Through the analysis of 2,000 brand selfies, the present content analysis aims to explore the characteristics of brand selfies through a visual analysis of brand selfies as per a defined coding frame, an analysis of geo-tagging method, and a textual analysis of hashtags. Figure 3 summarizes the methodological and analytical steps employed to conduct the content analysis.

Figure 3: Content analysis process



4.2.1 Content analysis context

Instagram was deemed to be the most suitable SNS to conduct the content analysis for several reasons. First, Instagram is the second largest SNS after Facebook. As previously noted, it is estimated that 95 million photos and videos are shared on the platform every day (Smith, 2019), and as of October 2020, 435 million photos are tagged with the hashtag #selfie. Secondly, according to a study by social media management tool Sproutsocial (Chen, 2018), 7 out of 10 consumer-generated hashtags are branded, and up to 80% of users follow at least one business on the platform, making the Instagram the perfect place to post brand UGC and interact with brands. Lastly, another advantage of collecting brand selfies from Instagram pertains to the availability of data. Unlike other SNSs whereby UGC is posted privately (i.e. through a private or locked profile), photographs on Instagram tend to be publicly uploaded (i.e. through a profile not locked/protected), and thus do not require informed consent when analyzing these data (Eysenbach and Till, 2001) as these fall in the public domain.

4.2.2 Sampling frame and sampling method

As noted by Riffe, Lacy and Fico (1998, p. 101), “the Internet creates unique sampling problems”, in terms of *the sampling frame* and *the sampling method*. Given the quantity and variety of brand selfies posted online, Interbrand Best Global Brands, an annual ranking of the top brands in the world based on their brand value (Interbrand, 2015) was deemed to be the most suitable sampling frame. While “getting a complete list for a sampling frame is practically impossible” (Riffe, Lacy and Fico, 1998, p. 101), the Interbrand Best Global Brands ranking provides a diverse set of brands across several sub-product categories. The Interbrand Best Global Brands ranking is also frequently used as a sampling frame by marketing and branding scholars (e.g. Hankinson 1999; Kim, Spiller and Hettche 2015; Truong, McColl and Kitchen 2010), thus suggesting its robustness. Furthermore, over the past 20 years, this ranking has attracted a strong following in the marketing and academic communities, providing an authoritative measure of brand performance (Chu and Keh, 2006).

Table 6 presents the sampling frame for the content analysis, which comprises of 100 brands across 17 Interbrand categories¹. The brands in each category have been classified in descending order based on the number of Instagram photos tagged with the brand's most commonly utilized hashtag².

Table 6: Interbrand Best Global Brands sampling frame

Category	Interbrand ranking	Brand	Hashtag	# of Instagram photos (Jan. 2016)
Apparel	30	Zara	#zara	11,689,776
	21	H&M	#HM	3,659,590
	96	Hugo Boss	#hugoboss	600,315
Sporting goods	17	Nike	#nike	34,865,327
	62	Adidas	#adidas	12,778,709
Luxury	69	Prada	#prada	24,597,661
	50	Gucci	#gucci	24,126,724
	41	Hermes	#hermes	21,642,216
	73	Burberry	#burberry	17,712,890
	57	Cartier	#cartier	17,491,528
	20	Louis Vuitton	#louisvuitton	16,875,482
	66	Tiffany & Co	#tiffany	9,306,728
	91	Ralph Lauren	#ralphlauren	4,094,499
Automotive	11	BMW	#bmw	13,026,916
	19	Honda	#honda	10,205,819
	38	Ford	#ford	8,122,654
	49	Nissan	#nissan	5,418,819
	44	Audi	#audi	5,352,935
	12	Mercedes-Benz	#mercedes	5,318,827
	6	Toyota	#toyota	4,995,769
	56	Porsche	#porsche	4,104,652
	35	Volkswagen	#volkswagen	3,299,568
	85	Chevrolet	#chevrolet	2,487,771
	79	Harley Davidson	#harleydavidson	2,466,293
	98	Mini	#minicooper	800,685

¹ The Interbrand categories are apparel, sporting goods, luxury, automotive alcoholic beverages, beverages, restaurants, FMGC, technology, electronics, business services, financial services, diversified, retail, media, transportation, energy.

² Certain brands have multiple hashtags associated with them (e.g. #zara; #zarasale; #zarawoman etc.). The most commonly utilized hashtags (based on the number of photos associated with the hashtag) associated with a specific brand are referenced in the table above.

	39	Hyundai	#hyundai	799,105
	87	Land Rover	#landrover	786,119
	74	Kia	#kia	747,825
Alcoholic beverages	93	Corona Extra	#corona	2,422,894
	84	Jack Daniels	#jackdaniels	1,687,822
	89	Heineken	#heineken	1,607,426
	31	Budweiser	#budweiser	1,081,481
	99	Moet & Chandon	#moet	713,242
	94	Smirnoff	#smirnoff	695,709
	92	Johnnie Walker	#JohnnieWalker	218,251
	3	Coca-Cola	#cocacola	4,205,628
	24	Pepsi	#pepsi	1,163,920
	81	Sprite	#sprite	588,263
	36	Nescafé	#nescafe	44,098
Restaurants	67	Starbucks	#starbucks	22,060,109
	9	McDonald's	#mcdonalds	4,299,049
	75	KFC	#KFC	1,866,300
FMGC	43	L'Oréal	#loreal	1,140,628
	82	Lego	#lego	572,268
	52	Nestle	#nestle	443,349
	55	Colgate	#colgate	180,841
	51	Danone	#danone	113,199
	22	Gillette	#gillette	104,639
	28	Pampers	#pampers	91,472
	95	Kleenex	#kleenex	56,823
	34	Kellogg's	#kelloggs	44,441
	77	J&J	#johnsonandjohnson	16,486
Technology	1	Apple	#iphone	33,777,764
	40	Canon	#canon	15,589,198
	23	Facebook	#facebook	7,825,932
	7	Samsung	#samsung	4,734,821
	18	HP	#HP	2,098,858
	2	Google	#google	1,992,902
	4	Microsoft	#microsoft	918,893
	68	Adobe	#adobe	856,206
	16	Oracle	#technology	215,298
	14	Intel	#intel	176,142
	26	SAP	#SAP	175,378
	15	Cisco	#cisco	128,830
	100	Lenovo	#lenovo	343,302

	88	Huawei	#huawei	240,934
Electronics	58	Sony	#sony	3,869,828
	65	Panasonic	#panasonic	328,134
	47	Philips	#philips	155,798
Service brands				
Business services	5	IBM	#IBM	106,761
	71	Xerox	#xerox	38669
	42	Accenture	#accenture	35,596
Financial services	97	PayPal	#paypal	1,022,311
	70	Santander	#santander	569544
	61	Visa	#visa	321,948
	37	HSBC	#hsbc	94711
	54	Allianz	#allianz	80,836
	45	Citi	#citi	75,595
	25	American Express	#americanexpress	45,018
	48	Axa	#axa	44,642
	33	J.P. Morgan	#jpmorgan	22,045
	46	Goldman Sachs	#goldmansachs	12,056
	76	Mastercard	#mastercard	11,289
Diversified	83	John Deere	#johndeere	836,734
	72	Caterpillar	#caterpillar	735506
	59	3M	#3M	504,622
	53	Siemens	#siemens	62,410
	8	GE	N/A	N/A
Retail	27	Ikea	#ikea	3,426,748
	10	Amazon	#amazon	1,581,489
	32	eBay	#ebay	994,994
Media	13	Disney	#disney	28,829,540
	90	MTV	#mtv	2,012,285
	64	Discovery	#discoverychannel	97,070
	63	Thomson Reuters	#thomsonreuters	8,109
Transportation	29	UPS	#ups	631,868
	86	FedEx	#fedex	204,783
	80	DHL	#dhl	135,228
Energy	78	Shell	#shell	1,00,8915

The next step was to refine the sampling frame and sampling units to draw brand selfies from. *Sampling units* are “units that are distinguished for selective inclusion in an analysis” (Krippendorff, 1981, p. 98). In the context of this study, sampling units

are the various brands included within each Interbrand category. The Interbrand Best Global Brands ranking features both *tangible product brands*³, as well as *intangible service brands*⁴. Tangibility is “the degree to which a product or service can provide a clear, concrete image” (McDougall and Snetsinger, 1990), and has a physical and a mental component. Tangible and intangible products and services lie along a Goods-Services continuum, “with pure goods at one extreme and pure services at the other, but with most of them falling between these two extremes” (Rathmell, 1966, p. 33). Tangible products, in other words, pure goods that can be seen and touched (McDougall and Snetsinger, 1990), are commonly included in brand selfies. Conversely, highly intangible brands such as pure services brands provide minimum physical evidence (e.g. McDougall and Snetsinger 1990; Rathmell 1966), and thus are less likely to be included in a brand selfie, if at all. On this basis, it was decided that intangible service brands would be excluded from the content analysis. The only service brand included within the refined sampling frame were restaurants, which fall in the middle of the continuum. Restaurants, unlike other service brands in the Interbrand ranking, provide both physical evidence and a tangible setting. This is because both the physical surroundings, and the product element of such services can be depicted in a brand selfie. In sum, intangible brands except for restaurants were excluded from the final sampling frame. To summarize, **7 intangible Interbrand categories were excluded** from the sampling frame, resulting in **10 product categories to select sampling units from**. Within each of the remaining Interbrand product categories, **2 brands were selected randomly** using random.org. The resulting sampling frame and sampling units are shown in Table 7. While the data was initially collected in January 2016, figures have been updated to reflect the total number of selfies posted towards the end of the thesis. These figures indicate significant brand selfies posting growth across each brand.

³ Tangible product brands include: apparel, sporting goods, luxury, automotive, alcoholic beverages, beverages, FMGC, technology, and electronics

⁴ Intangible service brands include: business services, diversified, retail, media and transportation

Table 7: Refined sampling frame and sampling units

Category	Interbrand ranking	Brand	Hashtag	Number of Instagram photos (Jan. 2016)	Number of Instagram photos (Oct. 2020)
Apparel	21	H&M	#HM	3,659,590	11,200,000
	96	Hugo Boss	#hugoboss	600,315	2,000,000
Sporting goods	17	Nike	#nike	34,865,327	107,000,000
	62	Adidas	#adidas	12,778,709	69,100,000
Luxury	50	Gucci	#gucci	24,126,724	66,500,000
	73	Burberry	#burberry	17,712,890	28,600,000
Automotive	11	BMW	#bmw	13,026,916	52,100,000
	12	Mercedes-Benz	#mercedes	5,300,344	25,500,000
Alcoholic beverages	93	Corona Extra	#corona	2,422,894	25,300,000
	89	Heineken	#heineken	1,607,426	3,500,000
Beverages	3	Coca-Cola	#cocacola	4,205,628	7,500,000
	36	Nescafé	#nescafe	44,098	894,000
Restaurants	67	Starbucks	#starbucks	22,060,109	36,500,000
	9	MacDonald's	#mcdonalds	4,299,049	6,337,000
FMGC	43	L'Oréal	#loreal	1,140,628	7,800,000
	22	Gillette	#gillette	105,837	243,000
Technology	7	Samsung	#samsung	4,734,821	21,500,000
	40	Canon	#canon	15,589,198	106,000,000
Electronics	58	Sony	#sony	3,869,828	27,200,000
	65	Panasonic	#panasonic	328,134	2,500,000

Having defined the sampling frame and sampling units, the next step was to select the most appropriate *sampling method*. Brand selfies were selected from Instagram using *judgmental sampling*, “a form of convenience sampling in which the elements are based on the judgement and expertise of the researcher” (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2007, p. 503). To be considered for inclusion in the sample, brand selfies had to adhere to the Oxford Dictionary (2013) and academic definitions (e.g. Iqani and Schroeder 2015; Presi, Maehle and Kleppe 2016) of the construct. On this basis, selected brand selfies met the following criteria:

- 1) Brand selfies were taken at arm’s length, or in a mirror (Iqani and Schroeder 2015; Oxford Dictionary 2013)
- 2) Showed an everyday consumption activity involving a brand (Presi, Maehle and Kleppe, 2016)
- 3) Brand selfies included several interacting elements: person, a brand logo or physical product, different types of physical surroundings and technology (Presi, Maehle and Kleppe, 2016)

The final sample of brand selfies thus consisted of **100 photos** drawn from each of the **10 sampling units** resulting in a total of **2,000 brand selfies** being content analyzed.

4.2.3 Coding frame development

Following the development of the sampling methodology, a coding frame and associated data collections methods were developed. Consideration was given to the selection of *content units* and associated *measures*, as well as the *pilot study* and *data collection procedures*. *Content units* are specific segments of content of interest (Krippendorff, 1981). Content analyses have typically analyzed several types of content units such as the photos themselves (Bell, Cassarly and Dunbar 2018; Cortese et al. 2018; Döring, Reif and Poeschl 2015; Eagar and Dann 2006; Qiu et al. 2016; Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Pappasolomou 2020) as well as captions and hashtags (Uzunboylu, Melanthiou, and Pappasolomou 2020; Woodruffe, Santarossa and Lacasse 2018). Within the present study, the **photos** themselves, **consumer-generated hashtags**, and **geo-location tagging information** were selected as content units. Once content units were identified, the *coding frame* was developed with numerical values assigned to each content unit of interest to enable statistical analysis.

The coding frame was developed to analyze the *characteristics* of the photos themselves as well as the *textual analysis of consumer-generated hashtags* included in brand selfies. Three key characteristics of brand selfies were recorded in the photos: (1) brand selfies creators' gender, (2) the number of people featured in brand selfies (i.e. one person vs. usies which include 2 people or more) as well as (3) the total number of consumer-generated hashtags included in brand selfies. Hashtags originated on Twitter and are typically used as keywords or assigned by an individual user to reference the topic of the message/tweet (Zappavigna, 2012). They have become an integral element of modern communication on social media (Rauschnabel, Sheldon and Herzfeldt, 2019). Hashtags have been found to enable three main communicative functions including marking experiential topics, enacting interpersonal relationships, and organizing text (Zappavigna, 2015). Another feature of hashtags is that through the hashtagging of brand selfies, users become active group members of a variety of hashtag-based communities. These communities are very wide in scope (Dessart and Duclou, 2019) in that hashtags can identify brands (Stathopoulou et al., 2017), product categories (Zappavigna, 2014) and emotions (Zappavigna and Martin, 2018). Each hashtag-based community has its own norms and rituals, which consumers adhere to (Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann, 2005), which in turn results in specific consumer-generated hashtags used in specific communities. The analysis of consumer-generated hashtags was conducted *post-hoc* through a manual analysis, with codes assigned to each hashtag as concepts became apparent, by cross-checking the hashtag literature to ensure appropriate codes were developed.

Secondly, *measures pertaining to the self-concept* were recorded. These included (1) geo-tagging practices as well as (2) the inclusion of self-centered hashtags. Firstly, the practice of geo-tagging a brand selfie may indicate that a specific place is regarded as a meaningful location (Lewicka, 2011). The self-linkage to a place, accomplishes expressive or regulative function, and in turn reinforces cognitive and conative self-identification with the place (Stiglbauer and Weber, 2018). Furthermore, location tagging enables the real time sharing of purchase or consumption experiences with the brand (Roma and Aloini, 2019). Thus, the geo-tagging of selfies reinforces the self-concept through the brand featured by proxy of location tagging. Secondly, the use of hashtags pertaining to the self, such as #me, #selfienation or #selfie was also recorded. The psychology literature suggests that narcissists use of the first-person narrative as

an implicit attention seeking strategy (Subramanian et al., 2014). Therefore, hashtags including #me (432,000,000 posts), #selfienation (8,900,000 posts) or #selfie (435,000, posts) could be regarded as an attempt to draw attention to and reinforce the self-concept through brand associations, which could also indicate higher levels of narcissism.

Lastly, *brand centrality*, the role of the brand in brand related UGC (Smith et al., 2012) was measured in two ways by analyzing (1) the number of brand hashtags included in a brand selfie and (2) the photographs themselves by analyzing the person/brand ratio in a photograph. These measures were developed on the basis that SNSs and types of brand UGC provide different levels of brand centrality (Roma and Aloini 2019; Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012). Brand hashtagging centrality/peripherality was measured by recoding brand hashtagging (e.g. #nike) and brand @profile tagging practices (e.g. @nike), which are thought to be an expression of the self-concept (Schau and Gilly, 2003). If a brand selfie contained a single brand hashtag and/or brand @tagging, it was regarded as *brand central* on the basis that a single brand was mentioned, therefore indicating a stronger consumer-brand bond. Conversely, if a brand selfie contained multiple brand hashtags and/or brand @tagging, it was considered brand peripheral. As a second measure, the brand centrality/peripherality in the photograph itself was coded by assessing whether the focus of the brand selfie was on the creator or the brand. If the focus of the image was on the creator, the brand UGC considered *brand peripheral*. Conversely, if the focus of the image was on the creator and the brand equally, the brand UGC was deemed brand central. In summary and based on the literature, it may be inferred that those who only reference one brand through hashtags or are featured equally alongside a brand (i.e. brand centrality) place high priority on expressing the self (Phau and Lau 2000; Schau and Gilly 2003). Conversely, those who tag multiple brands in a brand selfie or showcase mostly the self with the brand being used as a prop in the background (i.e. brand peripherality) place lower emphasis on expressing the self through brand selfies and place more importance in self-promoting through brands (Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012). Table 8 presents the coding-frame and measures developed.

Table 8: Coding-frame and measures

Variables	Coding procedure description
Brand selfies characteristics	
User demographics (gender)	The gender of the person featured in brand selfies was coded as “1” for females and “2” for males
Number of people showcased in brand selfies	The number of people featured in brand selfies was coded as “1” when a single person was featured and “2” for groups brand selfies/usies when two or more people were featured
Number of hashtags	The number of consumers-generated hashtag in each brand selfie was recorded (e.g. 1 = 1 consumer-generated hashtag, 2 = 2 consumer-generated hashtags etc.) <i>Each consumer-generated hashtag was subsequently coded with measures and codes developed post-hoc</i>
Self-concept measures	
Geo-location tagging (Roma and Aloini 2019; Stiglbauer and Weber 2018)	In terms of geo-tagging information, brand selfies was coded as “1” when no geo-tagging information was identified, and “2” when a form of geo-tagging was identified including in-store geo-tagging (e.g. brand store, restaurant etc.), public place geo-tagging (e.g. city), or geo-tagging through a hashtag (e.g. #London, #NewYork)
Self-centered hashtags (Subramanian et al., 2014)	Brand selfies that contained hashtags deemed to be self-centered such as #me, #selfienation, #selfie were coded as “1 - no” if the brand selfies did not contain such hashtags and “2 – yes” if the brand selfie contained such hashtags
Brand centrality/peripherality measures	
Brand centrality/peripherality tagging (Roma and Aloini 2019; Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012).	A brand selfie was deemed brand central if a single brand was clearly referenced through a single brand hashtag (e.g. #nike) or if the brand was tagged using a single @handle (e.g. @nike) (coded as “2”) If multiple brands were hashtagged (e.g. #nike #zara #hugoboss) or tagged through their @handle (e.g. @nike @zara @hugoboss) the brand was deemed peripheral in that multiple brands were shown alongside the self (coded as “1”)
Photo centrality/peripherality (person/brand ratio) (Roma and Aloini 2019; Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012).	Brand centrality/peripherality was also assessed in the brand selfie itself by assessing the person/brand ratio in the photograph. A brand selfie was deemed brand central when the brand selfie featured the user and the brand equally (coded as “2”), but a brand selfie was deemed brand peripheral when it featured mostly the user (coded as “1”)

4.2.4 Pilot study and data collection procedures

To improve reliability and objectivity of the study, Kolbe and Burnett's (1991) guidelines were consulted. These guidelines include *objectivity* (rules and procedures, judge training, measures pre-testing, judge/coder independence), *sampling methods*, and *inter-coder reliability*. First, to ensure objectivity, 2 experienced academics reviewed the rules and procedures for coding prior to data collection (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991) derived from the literature. A pilot study was conducted on a sample of 100 brand selfies across 5 sampling units that were not selected for inclusion in the final study. Following the pilot study, both researchers were in full agreement regarding the coding-frame and sampling method. Once the pilot was completed, a second, independent researcher, external to this research check-coded the sample. The second researcher was familiar with Instagram, trained in qualitative analysis, and had the freedom to make autonomous judgements, without any input from the main researcher (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991). The rules and procedures for check-coding were clearly explained to the coder.

The second researcher examined 10 selfies across each of the 5 pilot sampling units selected, resulting in a sample of 50 brand selfies (50% of the total sample) being check-coded. Check-coding was performed to ensure that no discrepancies were found, and thus to ensure coding reliability (Kolbe and Burnett 1991; Miles and Huberman 1994). Following this procedure, inter-coder reliability was estimated at 100% thus confirming the reliability of codes assigned across each category. Following the pilot study, *data collection* took place between 27th February 2016 and 1st May 2016. Brand selfies were identified using the search function on Instagram across each of the 10 Interbrand sampling units. Once a suitable brand selfie was identified through judgmental sampling, its URL was recorded in a spreadsheet, and each content unit was coded.

4.3 Content analysis findings

The content analysis of brand selfies was conducted using both descriptive statistics, and independent sample t-test analyses performed in IBM SPSS v. 23. T-tests analyses were conducted to identify differences across groups within the sample across genders and selfies vs. usies (i.e. containing 2 people or more).

4.3.1 Sample characteristics

To understand the basic characteristics of brand selfies and their frequency, descriptive analyses were firstly performed to identify common Instagram behaviors. The sample characteristics for all variables under scrutiny are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Sample characteristics

Variables	Codes	Frequency within sample	Percentage within sample (%)
<i>Brand selfie characteristics</i>			
Gender	Female	1,054	52.7
	Male	946	47.3
# people (selfies vs. usies)	1 person (selfie)	1,616	80.8
	2 people+ (usies)	384	19.2
# consumer-generated hashtags included in brand selfies	1-10	1,067	53.4
	11-20	525	26.3
	21-30	381	19.1
	31+	27	1.4
<i>Self-concept measures</i>			
Location tagging	No location tagging	1,416	70.8
	Geo-tagging	584	29.2
Self-centered hashtags	Not self-centered (no self-centered hashtags identified)	1,691	84.6
	Self-centered	309	15.5
<i>Brand centrality/peripherality measures</i>			
Brand tagging centrality/peripherality	Multiple brands tagged (brand peripherality)	352	17.6
	Single brand tagged (brand centrality)	1,648	82.4
Photo centrality/peripherality (person/brand ratio)	Mostly user featured (brand peripherality)	1,035	51.8
	Brand and user equally featured (brand centrality)	965	48.3

The sample of brand selfies consisted of n=1,054 (52.7%) females and n=946 males (47.3%). Brand selfies were predominantly own selfies whereby a single person was featured (n=1,616; 80.8%), while n=384 brand usies typically containing 2 people or more were identified (19.2%). Consumer-generated hashtag use greatly varied both in terms of their contents and number, which ranged from 1-51 (Mean=12, SD=8.769).

Given the prominence of the self in brand selfies, measures pertaining to the expression and reinforcement of the self-concept through brand selfies were analyzed. More specifically, two variables measured self-concept related cues in brand selfies: (1) location geo-tagging (and location hashtagging) to establish a user's cognitive and conative self-identification with a place (Stiglbauer and Weber, 2018), and (2) self-centered hashtags such as #me, #selfie or #selfienation. In terms of geo-tagging, only n=584 (29.2%) brand selfies were geo-tagged, while the majority were not geo-tagged at all (n=1,416; 70.8%). As for self-centered hashtags, only 15.5% of the sample (n=309) used self-centered hashtags.

The second variable of interest was brand centrality which aimed to measure the prominence of the brand in brand UGC (Roma and Aloini 2019; Smith, Fischer and Yongjian 2012; Sung, Kim and Choi 2018). First, from a **photo person/brand ratio perspective most brand selfies were found to be brand peripheral** with the image featuring the person primarily and the brand (logo) unrecognizable or in the background (n=1,035, 51.8%), as opposed to brand central, with the brand and user featuring equally in the brand UGC (n=965, 48.3%). In contrast, from a **brand tagging point of view, most brand selfies were found to be brand central** with a single brand referenced in brand selfies (n=1,648; 82.4%), while only a small number of brand selfies contained multiple brands hashtagged denoting peripherality (n=352, 17.6%).

These differences in brand centrality between the centrality of the photograph itself compared to the number of brands hashtagged in a brand selfie could be explained due to the fact that some brands are inherently less brand central than others. For instance, some brands and products do not contain a prominent logo, and the brand featured would be unidentifiable without the presence of a brand hashtag. Figure 4 aims to illustrate this point by showcasing two brand central images drawn from the content analysis sample. In the image on the right hand-side, the brand is equally featured

alongside the self, highlighting that the user wants to talk about the brand during a consumption situation. This brand selfie is brand central with the brand logo clearly prominent. Conversely, in the brand selfie on the left, the selfie is mostly about the user rather than the brand, as the image contains no visible brand logo at first glance. However, the inclusion of a **single brand hashtag in the caption** highlights that the user wants to showcase and talk about the brand of clothes she is wearing, thus demoting brand centrality.

Figure 4: Brand centrality tagging vs. person/brand ratio centrality



4.3.2 Consumer-generated hashtag analysis

One of the objectives of this content analysis was to textually analyze the types of consumer-generated hashtags included in brand selfies. The analysis of consumer-generated hashtags was performed following a directed data analysis approach (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), with theories and constructs being used as guidance to develop the codes. Following this analysis, 8 codes emerged: situational self-image, positive affective and negative affective states, actual and ideal self-congruence, social identity, attention/status-seeking (increasing one's follower base), and archiving. The frequency, percentage and example hashtags identified for code are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Consumer-generated hashtags frequency

Code	Example hashtag	Frequency within sample	Percentage within sample (%)
Situational self-image	#todayiamwearing, #lookoftheday #ootd, #ootn, #motd	711	35.6
Positive affective states	<i>Positive affective states pertaining to the self:</i> #happy, #smile, #fun <i>Positive affective states pertaining to the brand:</i> #love, #brandlove, #loveadidas, #bmwlove	542	27.1
Actual self	#blackhair, #brunette, #greeneyes, #blonde, #piercings, #tattoos	382	19.1
Social Identity	#fashionblogger, #fitfam #instagrammer #photographer #lesbian #gayman, #polishboy, #frenchgirl	195	9.8
Attention/status seeking (increasing follower base)	#followme, #likeforlike, #follow4follow	150	7.5
Ideal self	#stylish, #cute, #cool, #inspiration	112	5.6
Negative affective states	#bored, #fail	56	2.8
Archiving	#ThrowBackThursday, #TBT, #memories, #latergram, #FlashbackFriday, #lastfriday	31	1.6

Among these codes, 4 of the 8 types of consumer-generated hashtags commonly used in brand selfies appeared to be driven by the self-concept, with the brand being used as a prop to draw attention to the self and explicitly express one's brand associations. These hashtags included situational self-image hashtags, actual and ideal self hashtags, and finally social identity hashtags.

Among the most commonly used type of consumer-generated hashtags seemingly by the self-concept, *situational self-image hashtags* (n=711, 35.6%) were used to define an individual's specific repertoire of self-image with a view of influencing the perception of others in a specific situation (Schenk and Holman, 1980). The inclusion of *both* a brand hashtag and situational self-image hashtags (e.g. #todayiamwearing, #lookoftheday #ootd, #chillout, #cruising, #driving) could indicate that selfie posting was driven by specific characteristics in a given situation such as trying on new clothes, driving etc. (Schenk and Holman, 1980).

Furthermore, *actual self* hashtags (n=382, 19.1%), and to a lesser extent *ideal self* hashtag (n=112; 5.6%) were identified across the sample. Actual-self consumer-generated hashtags serve the purpose of defining and reinforcing how consumers see themselves (Mittal 2006; Sirgy 1982) and included primarily physical attributes (e.g. #blackhair, #brunette, #greeneyes, #blonde etc.). Conversely, *ideal self* hashtags serve the purpose to define how consumers would like to see themselves, and featured self-enhancing adjectives such #stylish, #cute, #cool, #inspiration with a view of protecting and enhancing the self-concept (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967).

Finally, *social identity* hashtags (n=195, 9.8%) were also commonly found. Extant research shows that hashtags allow consumers to express a range of social identities in different contexts (e.g. Merle, Reese and Drews 2019; Reyes-Menendrez, Saura and Thomas 2020). Indeed, social identity is a known motive for creating brand UGC (Muntinga et al., 2011), enabling consumers to express and reinforce their status and identities emerging from group memberships (Terry, Hogg and White, 1999), through hashtag-based communities on Instagram (Dessart and Duclou, 2019). These group memberships included being a #blogger, #fashionblogger, #instagrammer, or being a member of the #fitfam community (a hashtag commonly used within the sports/exercise Instagram community). The hashtags utilized are believed to be used

with the aim of influencing purchase decisions (Kulmala, Mesiranta, Tuominen, 2013). However, social identity hashtags also included sexuality (e.g. #lesbian, #gayman) and nationality-based attributes (e.g. #polishboy, #frenchgirl) to express one's nationality or sexual identity (Barker and Rodriguez 2019; Oyserman 2009). Such hashtags “perform paradoxical functions in constructing a national or sexual identity within an affirming community as well as reinforcing the power relations that compel individuals to name and account for their sexual selves” (Herrera, 2018, p. 313).

The other 4 categories of hashtags most commonly identified in brand selfies pertained to positive and negative affective states, archiving and attention/status seeking. *Positive affective states* were the second commonly identified type of consumer-generated hashtags (n=498, 24.9%), and were expressed through adjectives as such as #happy, #smile, #fun. However, declarations of love towards a focal brand were also identified through positive affective state hashtags such as #love or #brandlove #loveadidas #bmwlove. This corroborates with findings from De Paola, Hakoköngäs and Hakanen (2020) who found that Instagram users express happiness about social relationships, physical appearance, having free time, nature, success, pets as well as objects. Conversely *negative affective states* (e.g. #bored, #fail) were only identified in a small number of brand selfies, (n=56, 2.8%).

Another motive identified, was *archiving*, empirically identified as a motive for posting selfies (Sung et al., 2016), which enables self-expression. The archiving of memories was expressed through hashtags such as #ThrowBackThursday, #TBT; #memories; #latergram; #FlashbackFriday and #lastfriday. In turn, the use of such hashtags extends the self through associations of when the product was originally acquired (Belk 2014; Belk 1990). It should however be noted that positive and negative affective states, may also be driven by the need or the desire to archive through brand selfies a positive (or in some cases) negative memory.

Finally, Instagram-specific hashtags (Woodruff, Santarossa and Lacasse 2018; Zappavigna and Zhao 2020) aimed at increasing one's follower-base such as #followme, #likeforlike, #follow4follow, were commonly found within the sample (n=150, 7.5%). These hashtags are highly prevalent on Instagram and could indicate a

need to *seek attention or status* (Woodruff, Santarossa and Lacasse, 2018).

4.3.3 Variables analysis

To test for differences across gender and selfies vs. usies across the variables under scrutiny within the sample, independent sample t-tests were conducted to identify differences across the variables between gender and selfies vs. usies. Table 11 below highlights the group statistics for gender. The independent sample t-test results for males vs. females can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Table 11: Independent sample t-test group statistics: males vs. females

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Geo-location tagging	Female	1,054	1.26	.440	.014
	Male	946	1.32	.468	.015
Self-centered hashtags	Female	1,054	1.17	.376	.012
	Male	946	1.14	.343	.011
Brand tagging centrality/peripherality	Female	1,054	1.80	.401	.012
	Male	946	1.85	.355	.012
Photo centrality/peripherality	Female	1,054	1.47	.499	.015
	Male	946	1.49	.500	.016
Situational self-image hashtag	Female	1,054	1.38	.485	.015
	Male	946	1.33	.470	.015
Positive affective states	Female	1,054	1.25	.433	.013
	Male	946	1.25	.432	.014
Actual self	Female	1,054	1.20	.402	.012
	Male	946	1.18	.383	.012
Social identity	Female	1,054	1.10	.302	.009
	Male	946	1.09	.291	.009
Attention seeking/status seeking	Female	1,054	1.07	.254	.008
	Male	946	1.08	.274	.009
Ideal self	Female	1,054	1.06	.232	.007
	Male	946	1.05	.228	.007
Negative affective states	Female	1,054	1.03	.161	.005
	Male	946	1.03	.170	.006
Archiving	Female	1,054	1.02	.133	.004
	Male	946	1.01	.112	.004

Several differences emerged between males and females. The independent sample t-tests revealed that males were more likely to geo-tag their selfies (Mean=1.32, $F=36.147$, $t=-3.036$, $df=1998$, $p<.001$) than females. Interestingly, the brand selfies of males tended to be more brand central than females' selfies in terms of brand tagging (Mean=1.85, $F=39.854$, $t=-3.122$, $df=1998$, $p<.001$). These results suggest that males were more likely to include a single brand hashtag in their brand selfies, while females were more likely to tag multiple brands. However, males were also more likely to include attention/status seeking hashtags in their selfies to increase their follower-base (e.g. #followme, #likeforlike, #follow4follow) (Mean=1.08, $F=4.233$, $t=-1.028$, $df=1998$, $p=.040$) compared to females. On the other hand, females were more likely to include several different types of hashtags in their selfies, including self-centered hashtags (e.g. #me, #selfienation, #selfie) (Mean=1.17, $F=18.322$, $t=2.127$, $df=1998$, $p<.001$), situational self-image hashtags (e.g. #todayiamwearing, #lookoftheday #ootd, #ootn, #motd) (Mean=1.38, $F=22.455$, $t=2.370$, $df=1998$, $p<.001$), as well as hashtags to express the actual self (e.g. #blackhair, #brunette, #greeneyes, #blonde, #piercings, #tattoos) (Mean=1.20, $F=7.134$, $t=1.331$, $df=1998$, $p=.008$) and ideal self (e.g. #stylish, #cute, #cool, #inspiration) (Mean=1.06; $F=.144$, $t=.190$, $df=1998$, $p<.001$).

No differences between males and females were identified in terms of brand centrality/peripherality ($F=2.456$, $t=-.946$, $df=1974.242$, $p=.117$), the inclusion of positive ($F=.104$, $t=.161$, $df=1976.586$, $p=.748$) and negative affective states hashtags ($F=.673$, $t=-.409$, $df=1947.832$, $p=.412$, social identity hashtags ($F= 1.637$, $t= .640$, $df=1988.458$, $p=.201$), ideal self hashtags ($F=.144$, $t= .190$, $df=1981.297$, $p=.704$), and archiving hashtags ($F=3.736$, $t=.974$, $df=1989.754$, $p=.053$) across genders.

Several differences were also identified across selfies which featured a single person alongside a brand, and usies, which contained two people or more in the photograph alongside a brand. The mean scores are presented in Table 12, while independent sample t-test results may be found in **Appendix 2**. Firstly, brand centrality tagging whereby the brand UGC contained a single brand hashtag was more common among usies (Mean=1.92, $F=143.432$, $t=-5.122$, $df=1902$, $p<.001$). Conversely, the user and brand were more commonly featured equally in brand selfies (Mean=1.52, $F=146.741$, $t=5.416$, $df=1902$, $p<.001$). Brand selfies were more likely to contain self-

centered hashtags (Mean=1.17, $F=39.111$, $t=2.903$, $df=1902$, $p<.001$), social identity hashtags (e.g. #fashionblogger, #fitfam #instagrammer #photographer #lesbian #gayman, #polishboy, #frenchgirl) (Mean=1.10, $F=19.070$, $t=2.102$, $df=1902$, $p<.001$), actual self-hashtags (Mean=1.20, $F=31.916$, $t=2.615$, $df=1902$, $p<.001$), and ideal self hashtags (e.g. #stylish, #cute, #cool, #inspiration) (Mean= 1.06, $F=19.214$, $t=2.128$, $df=1902$). Usies were more likely to be geo-tagged (Mean=1.43, $F=70.691$, $t=-5.888$, $df=1902$, $p<.001$), and contain positive affective states hashtags (e.g. #happy, #smile, #fun, #love, #brandlove, #loveadidas, #bmwlove) (Mean=1.28, $F=8.484$, $t=-1.548$, $df=1902$, $p=.004$), as well as archiving hashtags (e.g. #ThrowBackThursday, #TBT, #memories, #latergram, #FlashbackFriday, #lastfriday) (Mean=1.03, $F=22.908$, $t=-2.412$, $df=1902$, $p<.001$).

No differences were identified between selfies and usies across situational self-image hashtag use ($F=.088$, $t=.147$, $df=396.516$, $p=.088$), the use of attention seeking/status seeking hashtags ($F=3.748$, $t=-.918$, $df=376.521$, $p=.0.53$) and the use of negative affective states hashtags ($F=.321$, $t=-2.94$, $df=409.367$, $p=.571$).

Table 12: Independent sample t-test group statistics: selfies vs. usies

	# people in selfie	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Geo-location tagging	1	1616	1.26	.438	.011
	2+	288	1.43	.496	.029
Self-centered hashtags	1	1616	1.17	.374	.009
	2+	288	1.10	.301	.018
Brand centrality/peripherality tagging	1	1616	1.80	.402	.010
	2+	288	1.92	.266	.016
Photo centrality/peripherality	1	1616	1.52	.500	.012
	2+	288	1.35	.477	.028
Situational self-image hashtag	1	1616	1.36	.479	.012
	2+	288	1.35	.478	.028
Positive affective states	1	1616	1.24	.428	.011
	2+	288	1.28	.452	.027
Actual self	1	1616	1.20	.401	.010
	2+	288	1.14	.343	.020
Social identity	1	1616	1.10	.303	.008
	2+	288	1.06	.242	.014
Attention seeking/status seeking	1	1616	1.07	.261	.006
	2+	288	1.09	.287	.017
Ideal self	1	1616	1.06	.243	.006
	2+	288	1.03	.174	.010
Negative affective states	1	1616	1.03	.163	.004
	2+	288	1.02	.154	.009
Archiving	1	1616	1.01	.111	.003
	2+	288	1.03	.174	.010

4.4 Content analysis summary and findings

This chapter has presented the methodology and findings for the first study of this research, a content analysis of brand selfies. Although rarely conducted in U&G research, this content analysis of 2,000 brand selfies has yielded important insights in relation to (1) the stereotypical characteristics or behaviors associated with brand selfies (2) strategies for communication and self-presentation in brand selfie behaviors through hashtags. The content units concurrently analyzed included the photos themselves, geo-tagging behaviors and hashtagging behaviors based on a coding frame developed from the literature.

Firstly, the frequency of several characteristics found in selfies such geo-location tagging, brand centrality/peripherality (both through the analysis of the user/brand ratio in the photograph itself and the number of brand hashtags included in a brand selfie) and hashtagging behaviors were highlighted through descriptive statistics. These descriptive statistics have shown that brand selfie behaviors greatly vary in terms of the number of people featured in brand selfies, geo-location tagging behaviors, and the number and types of hashtags included in brand selfies.

Secondly, this study offers an important contribution to the hashtag literature, though the identification and coding of consumer-generated commonly identified in brand selfies. In total, **8 types** of consumer-generated hashtags were identified through textual analysis: (1) situational self-image hashtags, (2) positive affective and (3) negative states hashtags, (4) actual and (5) ideal self hashtags, (6) social identity hashtags, (7) attention/status seeking hashtags and (8) archiving hashtags. These hashtags not only enable users to partake in various hashtag-based (brand) communities (Dessart and Duclou 2019; Stathopoulou et al. 2017), but also to express the self (De Paola, Hakoköngäs and Hakanen 2020; Merle, Reese and Drews 2019; Reyes-Menendrez, Saura and Thomas 2020; Zappavigna and Martin 2018). For instance, positive and affective states hashtags enable the expression one's emotional states. However, hashtags were found to **enable the presentation of different facets of the self**, including the social self, the actual and ideal self, the attention/status seeking self, or the self from the past. The inclusion of such hashtags arguably occurs as a result of an **identity-based motivation**, a "theoretical model that focusses on the motivational pull towards identity-congruent cognitive procedures" (Oyserman, 2009, p. 252). By hashtagging their selfies consumers express their social identities (e.g. #fashionblogger, #fitfam #instagrammer #photographer #lesbian, #gayman #frenchgirls) as well as their personal identities (e.g. #blackhair, #brunette, #greeneyes, #blonde, #piercings #tattoos, #stylish, #cute etc.). Social identities are contextualized in that they are typically linked to group memberships (Herrera 2018; Oyserman 2009) such as for instance photography communities (#photographer) or fashion communities (#fashionblogger). Conversely, personal identities are decontextualized and tend to focus on personal traits and characteristics (e.g. #brunette, #greeneyes) (Oyserman, 2009). In sum, consumer-generated hashtags enable users to articulate both their personal identifies and social identities through

hashtag-based communities. Brand selfies not only enable consumers to enact consumer-brand relationships and self-enhance, but also partake in the creation and maintenance of various hashtag-based communities with the brand acting as a relational partner.

The second key contribution of this study pertains to how the various variables identified differed across genders and types of selfies (i.e. selfies vs. usies). While other content analyses have analyzed the textual and visual characteristics of brand selfies (e.g. Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Pappasolomou, 2020), the present analysis also analyzed geo-tagging practices to provide a concurrent analysis of brand selfies' characteristics. In turn, this content analysis provides a holistic overview of what brand selfies users do when posting brand selfies in terms of photographic composition (brand centrality/peripherality), consumer-generated hashtags use and geo-location tagging practices. Females were more likely to tag multiple brands in their brand selfies but also include situational self-image hashtags (e.g. #todayiamwearing, #lookoftheday #ootd, #ootn, #motd) or hashtags to express the actual self (e.g. #blackhair, #brunette, #greeneyes, #blonde, #piercings, #tattoos). The tagging of multiple brand is arguably similar to that found on YouTube whereby a user presents different brands in a single video. In this instance, the brand has a supporting role rather than a central one as the brand selfie may become devoid of brand information, while the focus becomes on presenting the self (Smith, Fischer and Yonglin, 2012), through both situational self-image hashtags and actual self hashtags. This corroborates with prior research that suggests that females seek to satisfy self-presentational needs more than males (Woodruff, Santarossa and Lacasse, 2018), and will strategically post what to post and at what time of the day (Sales, 2016). Conversely males' selfies were more likely to brand central though hashtagging and were more likely to be geo-tagged suggesting a strong self-identification with both a place and the brand (Stiglbauer and Weber, 2018) through real-time sharing (Roma and Aloini 2019), in turn reinforcing the self-concept. However, males were also more likely to include attention/status seeking hashtags in their brand selfies to increase their follower-base, arguably using the brand as a tool to achieve their objectives.

Independent sample t-tests also highlighted several differences in the variables typically included in selfies and usies. Brand selfies with a single user typically contained several hashtags such as self-centered hashtags, social identity hashtags and ideal self hashtags thus suggesting that these photographs, compared to usies, are posted to present the self alongside a brand. Conversely usies were more commonly geo-tagged than selfies and served the purpose of expressing positive emotions as well as archiving the self in specific situations and locations with others and a brand. In sum, based on the various hashtags identified and the literature, it may be inferred that usies enable the reinforcement of the self-concept through self-identification with places (Stiglbauer and Weber, 2018) and the brand itself (Schau and Gilly, 2003).

Exploratory in nature, the first study has yielded important insights about the characteristics of brand selfies and hashtagging practices that may not have emerged through qualitative interviews (Papacharissi, 2008). An important finding stemming from this exploratory study is the different types of consumer-generated hashtags used in brand selfies and their use, which will be further discussed and explored through the semi-structured interviews in the second study.

4.5 Study 2: Semi-structured interviews

The purpose of the first study was to identify and analyze the characteristics of brand selfies through a content analysis. This initial study aimed to scrutinize **actual behavior with brand selfies**, with a view of identifying their visual and textual characteristics. The purpose of the second study qualitative in nature, is to **explore what brand selfies users say they do**, and what consumers' motives are, central to the development of a conceptual model of brand selfies. This qualitative study constitutes the first step towards the development of a U&G model.

RQ2: What are the main motives and drivers for posting brand selfies

This section presents the methodological considerations underpinning the second study including the sampling method, interview modalities and data analysis modalities. The section concludes with discussion of the motives for posting brand selfies emerging from these interviews.

4.6 Methodology

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were deemed to be the most appropriate research method to gain an in-depth understanding of the brand selfie phenomenon, uncover the motives for posting brand selfies online, and finally to guide the development of the survey questionnaire (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2007). Semi-structured interviews were selected over focus groups as they can help uncover greater depth of insights than in group environments (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2007). While selfies are not a sensitive topic, focus groups participants could have felt intimidated or shy, and may not have revealed anything of significance (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2007) in a group environment.

4.6.1 Sampling method

A total of 20 selfies and brand selfies users were interviewed. To be selected for the interviews, informants had to exhibit moderate to high levels of (brand) selfie posting. This was assessed by identifying the number of (brand) selfies posted across the informants' publicly accessible SNSs such as Twitter and Instagram. Informants were recruited until theoretical saturation was reached in the analysis, when the researcher could not find new information related to the codes, themes or theory (Creswell, 2007). Unlike the first study, which sampled brand selfies posted to Instagram only to bypass data collection and ethical issues (Eysenbach and Till, 2001), informants interviewed could post brand selfies on any SNS.

Potential informants were identified from Twitter and Instagram using Brandwatch (<https://www.brandwatch.com/>), a commercial social media monitoring tool commonly used in the marketing industry. Search queries were built by "specifying the appropriate search words or combination of them" (Rokka and Canniford, 2016, p. 1793) in conjunction with a geo-location filter to identify brand selfie users based in London, United Kingdom, where the research took place. The query created in Brandwatch was specified to retrieve the hashtag #selfie used in conjunction with at least one of the brand hashtags from the Interbrand Global Brands ranking. The list of brands included in the query was broadened to encompass *all* brands featured across the Interbrand tangible and intangible product categories, in order to facilitate the identification of a *maximum number* of brand selfie users. The resulting query was constructed as follows:

#selfie AND #zara OR #HM OR #hugoboss OR #nike OR #adidas OR #prada OR #gucci OR #hermes OR #burberry OR #louisvuitton OR #tiffany OR #ralphlauren OR #bmw OR #honda OR #honda OR #nissan OR #audi OR #mercedes OR #toyota OR #porsche OR #volkswagen OR #chevrolet OR #harleydavidson OR #minicooper OR #hyundai OR #landrover OR #kia OR #corona OR #jackdaniels OR #heineken OR #budweiser OR #moet OR #smirnoff OR #JohnnieWalker OR #cocacola OR #pepsi OR #sprite OR #nescafe OR #starbucks OR #mcdonalds OR #KFC OR #loreal OR #lego OR #nestle OR #colgate OR #danone OR #gillette OR #pampers OR #kleenex OR #kelloggs OR #johnsonandjohnson OR # #iphone OR #canon OR #facebook OR #samsung OR #HP OR #google OR #microsoft OR #adobe OR #technology OR #intel OR #SAP OR #cisco OR #lenovo OR #huawei OR #sony OR #panasonic OR #philips

Once a query is built, the social media monitoring tool then “crawls” SNSs and identifies relevant Tweets and Instagram posts, which contains elements pertaining to the query. These may then be downloaded in a Microsoft Excel document. The query returned 108 brand selfies posted on Instagram and Twitter during the month of September 2016, posted by 55 unique brand selfie users. Each informant was subsequently invited via email or through SNSs, using the email cover letter outlined in **Appendix 3** to take part in the interview. Of the 55 potential informants approached, 9 agreed to take part in a face to face interview. Additional informants were recruited using the snowballing sampling technique, through the recommendations of informants. A £15 voucher (e.g. Amazon, Asos) was offered to each informant in appreciation for their time. The practice of monetary or non-monetary incentivization, offers the benefit of increasing response rate at recruitment stage (e.g. Malhotra, Birks and Wills 2007; Head 2008).

4.6.2 Interview modalities

The interviews were conducted between 6th November 2016 and 23rd December 2016 and took place in London, United Kingdom. Each interview lasted between 47-65 minutes and was audio-recorded for analysis purposes with the informants’ consent. The information sheet detailing the interview modalities shown to the informants can be found in **Appendix 4**.

At the beginning of each interview, informants were asked to self-complete the short version of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory or NPI-16 (Ames et al., 2006) to measure their levels of narcissism. The purpose of this short self-completed questionnaire was to establish selfie users' levels of narcissism, a personality trait empirically linked to selfie posting behaviors (e.g. Fox and Rooney 2015; Halpen, Valenzuela and Katz 2016; Sorokowski et al. 2015; Sung et al. 2016; Weiser 2015). The NPI-16 scale was used in lieu of the longer NPI-40 scale (Raskin and Terry, 1988) to ensure that the duration of the semi-structured interviews would not exceed an unreasonable length, which may have led to fatigue, and poor quality of research experience (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2007). The shorter NPI-16 scale is commonly used in psychology research and has also been employed in SNSs research settings (e.g. Mezarideh 2010; Panek, Nardis, and Konrath 2013; Utz, Tanis, and Vermeulen 2012). The self-completion questionnaire can be found in **Appendix 5**, and the interview guide in **Appendix 6**.

Semi-structured interviews were developed in accordance with Kvale's (1996) approach, advocating the use of a series of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions, but leaving room for unexpected topics. By means of introduction to the interview, and to build rapport and intimacy (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2007), generic questions were firstly asked on the topic of selfies to establish consumers' views on this form of UGC. Following this brief warm up, the focus of the interview shifted to uncovering the motives, goals/outcomes (e.g. Rubin, 1984) for posting brand selfies online. Informants were presented with examples of *stereotypical brand selfies* randomly selected from the sampling frame used for the content analysis. The stimuli used during the interviews can be found in **Appendix 7**. Stereotypical behaviors included 'mirror selfies', a type of selfie where the creator takes a photo of himself/herself in front of a mirror in the fashion, sports apparel and luxury brand categories. Car or automotive selfies were typically taken inside the car while traveling/going to work, while drinks brands typically featured a head shot of the person holding a drink. Finally, technology and electronics brands were typically taken at arm's length or in front of a mirror. In sum, these third-party brand selfies were used as stimulus materials to stimulate conversations around perceived motives of brand selfie posting across a wide range of brands and situations. Additionally, imagery projective techniques ('*how does this person feel about brand x?*'; '*how does this selfie*

feel about product x?’; *‘how does this person feel about the person sharing the selfie?’*) were used to establish the perceived brand selfie users’ relationships with brands featured in the stimulus.

The second section of the discussion guide conversely aimed to uncover informants’ *own brand selfies behaviors* by establishing what types of brands would take a central role or a peripheral role in a brand selfie. This was followed by a series of questions designed to uncover informants’ motives and relationships with brands through their *own selfies*. Photo elicitation, “the simple idea of inserting a photo in a research interview” (Harper, 2002, p. 13) was used to generate rich insights by “contextualizing images” (Croghan et al., 2008, p. 353), as well as “emotional statements” (Harper, 2002, p. 14) about the day a specific brand selfie was taken. Projective techniques including imagery association (*‘how do you feel about the brand featured in selfie A/B/C?’*), and sentence completion techniques (*‘this brand makes me think that I am...’*; *‘How do you feel about the brand featured in selfie x?’*) were additionally used to tap into informants’ subconscious feelings. These projective techniques helped uncover the emotional drivers surrounding the relationships consumers have with the brands featured in their own brand selfies that may otherwise have been rationalized (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2007).

4.6.3 Data analysis procedures

The semi-structured interviews were transcribed by the researcher, resulting in an edited document comprising of 95 single-spaced pages of text. The cleaned document incorporated the informants’ quotes but excluded the interviewer’s commentary and questions. A manual line-by-line content analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994) was performed, whereby extracts of data such as sentences, words, expressions or paragraphs were highlighted, grouped and coded to identify the theoretical themes pertaining to each research question. Consistently with Berthon, Pitt and Campbell (2008) and Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011), statements pertaining to brand selfies motivations were found to frequently contain multiple motives. A code was therefore allocated to each statement until each motive was captured (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011).

Coding was performed using a directed data analysis approach (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), and theoretical matching (Goldkhul and Cronholm, 2010) with theories and constructs being used as guidance for the initial codes. Codes were first created based on the theoretical themes identified from the literature (Goldkhul and Cronholm, 2010), and keywords were subsequently identified based on the data. A constant iteration between data and theory also underpinned the analysis, as codes progressively emerged from the data, in line with the literature. This coding technique helped establish how the each verbatim was related to the constructs, but also validate and extend the constructs conceptually (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Finally, check-coding was performed on the entire transcript by a second, independent coder, to ensure that no discrepancies were found, thus ensuring coding reliability (Kolbe and Burnett 1991; Miles and Huberman 1994). This independent coder was familiar with the constructs under scrutiny and trained in qualitative research. Following this procedure, inter-coder reliability was established at 90%, and discrepancies were discussed until full agreement on the accuracy of the codes was reached.

4.7 Semi-structured interviews findings

4.7.1 Sample characteristics

The purpose of the semi-structured interview was to identify the motives and drivers for posting brand selfies online and gain a better understanding of the nature of the relationship consumers have with brands featured in brand selfies. Table 13 presents the sample's characteristics including the informants' gender and age, the interview date and length, narcissism scores, and spontaneous associations with brand selfies. It should be noted that aliases are used throughout this chapter to preserve the informants' anonymity.

The sample consisted of 13 females and 7 males belonging to the Millennials generation⁵. The youngest informant was 24 years-old, and the oldest 35 years-old (Med = 28). Narcissism levels were estimated by counting the number of narcissistic answers within the NPI-16 scale. To measure the central tendency within the sample, the median was computed using IBM SPSS Amos 20 (Med = 5.5). Those who scored 1-5 were deemed to have low levels of narcissism, while those who scored 6-16 were

⁵ Millennials are those born between 1981 and 1996 (e.g. Dimock, 2019) and are aged 24-39 in 2020.

considered to have high levels of narcissism. Within the sample 9 informants exhibited lower levels of narcissism, while 11 informants exhibited higher levels of narcissism. Lastly, the informants' spontaneous associations with selfies (*'When you think of selfies, what comes to mind?'*) are also included in Table 13. These associations reveal that while selfies enable to presentation of the self in a controlled manner, there is also almost unanimous acknowledgement that selfies users can be vain and narcissistic.

Table 13: Informants' profiles

Name (alias)	Interview date	Interview length	Gender	Age	Narcissism levels	Attitude towards selfies
Sylvia	06/11/2016	55 minutes	Female	35	Low (5)	<i>"Images of my face and people taking photos of their faces."</i>
Marion	07/11/2016	60 minutes	Female	28	Low (5)	<i>"Social media, Instagram... people showing off."</i>
Laura	09/11/2016	57 minutes	Female	28	Low (4)	<i>"Selfies are a way to show yourself and most of the time in a good light."</i>
Giselle	13/11/2016	50 minutes	Female	33	High (6)	<i>"Capturing a moment or capturing a moment of your own self."</i>
George	13/11/2016	55 minutes	Male	32	Low (4)	<i>"Taking a picture of yourself with a mobile phone."</i>
Jamila	16/11/2016	59 minutes	Female	25	High (9)	<i>"A picture of yourself that you are taking... quite posed."</i>
Helen	16/11/2016	54 minutes	Female	27	High (12)	<i>"Enhanced picture of yourself or somebody else."</i>
Olga	16/11/2016	61 minutes	Female	27	High (9)	<i>"The first thing that comes to mind, is a girl in a lift, taking a picture in front of a mirror."</i>
Lauren	18/11/2016	59 minutes	Female	34	High (7)	<i>"There is an element of vanity in some cases; especially when selfies are quite posed."</i>
Matt	18/11/2016	55 minutes	Male	24	High (8)	<i>"Pictures of oneself posted on Instagram or social media; I also think selfies are narcissistic."</i>
Adam	22/11/2016	65 minutes	Male	26	High (6)	<i>"Feeling wanted, narcissism."</i>
Ben	04/12/2016	65 minutes	Male	27	Low (4)	<i>"Showing off, body image, display, social interaction, vanity, pouting, confidence."</i>
Debbie	06/12/2016	52 minutes	Female	29	High (7)	<i>"Teenagers who like taking self-centered pictures of themselves; vanity."</i>
Martine	07/12/2016	59 minutes	Female	28	High (8)	<i>"If I think of myself taking selfies, it's mainly in a quiet environment."</i>

Name (alias)	Interview date	Interview length	Gender	Age	Narcissism levels	Attitude towards selfies
Danielle	08/12/2016	49 minutes	Female	27	Low (5)	<i>"Vain people, self-obsessed."</i>
Richard	12/12/2016	53 minutes	Male	30	High (6)	<i>"Narcissism; showing yourself off."</i>
Zara	19/12/2016	60 minutes	Female	31	Low (5)	<i>"A photo of your face taken with a phone done by yourself."</i>
Dylan	20/12/2016	55 minutes	Male	27	High (9)	<i>"I refuse to use the word selfie; I use the word self-portrait."</i>
Sara	20/12/2016	50 minutes	Female	28	Low (3)	<i>"Selfie is an invented word; a selfie is fundamentally a self-portrait."</i>
James	23/12/2016	47 minutes	Male	33	Low (2)	<i>"A photograph that someone takes of themselves."</i>

Consistently with prior U&G studies, multiple motives for posting brand selfies emerged. In total, six motives and drivers were identified as shown in Table 14 using the literature as a basis to identify the theoretical themes. For discussion purposes, these motives have been classified as *consumer motives* and *brand-led drivers*.

Table 14: Motives and drivers for posting brand selfies

Consumer motives	Brand-led drivers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention seeking • Status seeking • Social interaction • Archiving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actual self-congruence • Ideal self-congruence

4.7.2 Consumer motives

The first category of motives for posting brand selfies identified are consumer motives, which reflect a goal-oriented use of brand selfies to satisfy attention seeking, status seeking, social interaction, or digital archiving needs. Each motive is presented in this chapter by interlacing qualitative findings with the relevant literature to identify and extend each construct in the context of brand selfies (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The qualitative code book with additional verbatim is shown in **Appendix 8**.

Attention seeking

As demonstrated through the spontaneous associations with brand selfies presented alongside the informants’ profiles, selfies are often linked to negative behaviors such as vanity and narcissism. Another negative behavior emerging from the transcripts as a motive for posting brand selfies was attention seeking, defined as “the sentiments of getting attention and importance from others” (Malik, Dhir and Nieminen, 2016, p. 132). Photographs such as selfies and brand selfies, provide an ideal avenue to seek attention from others, as they allow the expression of emotions (Malik, Dhir and Nieminen 2016; Sung et al. 2016) in ways that text alone cannot. Attention seeking behaviors in brand selfies emerged in three different ways: through the sexiness or provocativeness of the brand selfie, through hashtag use and by attempting to seek the attention of brands towards the self. Each of these behaviors is further discussed in this section in greater depth.

Firstly, and consistently with prior research, attention seekers were found to post sexy or provocative photos of themselves (e.g. DeWall et al. 2011; Malik, Dhir and Nieminen 2016) with a view of getting attention and approval from others:

*“She’s in front of the mirror, trying to look sexy, all ready to go out and she’s taken a selfie of herself in front of the mirror, and hashtagged it #me #selfie **to get people’s attention.**” [Martine, Luxury]*

*“She looks very sexy and quite provocative; she wants **some approval**... she wants to show what she’s been able to do with the different brands, and the creativity and the skill with which she’s managed to apply the make-up.” [Helen, FMGC]*

Another means through which attention seekers attempt to attract to the self, was using specific hashtags. Hashtags serve numerous purposes and can help construct complex communicative meanings inherent to specific SNSs (Zappavigna, 2015). Extant SNSs research on Facebook suggests that attention seekers are prone to using a high number of first-person pronouns in social media, or any form of language to draw attention to themselves (DeWall et al. 2015) (such as for instance inappropriate language). As highlighted through the content analysis, consumer-generated hashtags such as #me, #selfie #selfienation were commonly used on Instagram to draw attention to the self. Hashtags such as #followme, #likeforlike, #follow4follow were also commonly used to increase one’s follower base. As demonstrated in the verbatim below, both these types of consumer-generated hashtags are associated with attention seeking behaviors. The use of such hashtags ultimately serves the purpose of increasing one’s online popularity (Woodruffe, Santarossa and Lacasse, 2018).

*“He wants verification/reassurance of his choices because he’s using the hashtag #followme and #instagood, so he wants approval that he’s being cool. They use these sorts of hashtags [#followme and #instagood] **to get more attention.**” [Helen, Alcoholic beverages]*

*“She’s included lots of hashtags and people can find her on Instagram. She wants likes, she wants **approval, fame and recognition.**” [Olga, Apparel]*

Lastly, brand selfies were regarded as a form of brand UGC leveraged to gain the attention of brands. In these brand selfies, the brand was used as a peripheral relational partner to seek the attention of brand managers. This type of attention seeking behavior was often associated with the desire to achieve influencer or micro-celebrity status, or to gain recognition from brands:

*“The more likes you have, **the better it is for brands** and stuff, but yeah, not necessarily to influence them. Just to be vain really! And also, just to show the brand that I work with their stuff...” [Jamila, own brand selfies]*

*“She’s clearly part of the make-up community and is perhaps **trying to gain micro-celebrity status**. It’s quite a posed photo; but I reckon that she likes the brands and is **trying to get their attention**.” [Lauren, FMGC]*

*“Personally, I share selfies to get a **brand’s attention**. Now when I take a picture with iPhone, I share it with the hashtag #shotwithiphone.” [George, own brand selfies]*

Status seeking

The second motive emerging from the qualitative interviews was status seeking, a known motive for SNSs use identified in Facebook group membership (Park, Kee and Valenzuela, 2009), and news sharing in social media (Lee and Ma, 2011). According to sociologists, status seeking is a basic human need that manifests itself in various aspects of human life (Maslow, 1954). Status helps satisfy the need to create one’s identity, which in turn leads to a sense of achievement and identification (O’Cass and McEwen 2004). Status seeking activities are diverse and involve anything that leads a person to enhance his/her standing within a specific group (Lampel and Bhalla, 2007). Often, status enhancement may be achieved through the consumption of brands (e.g. Packard, 1959).

Brand selfies were found to offer the perfect opportunity to showcase one’s brands and possessions to seek status online. This was particularly the case of those users sharing brand selfies with premium brands, arguably reinforcing their sense of self-identification (O’Cass and McEwen, 2004). In this instance, brand-selfie users construct and reinforce their status within their in-group (i.e. friends and followers) as well as the out-group (i.e. other brand selfie users who may have hashtagged a brand,

or maybe fans or consumers of a brand). Arguably, brands are seen as key partners in achieving status elevation, resulting in their inclusion in a brand selfie. However, the perceived strength of the relationship with these brands greatly varied:

*“I think **they’re posting these selfies for status** with expensive clothes. This is how much I earn, look at me now! I want to be seen by other Burberry and Gucci fans wearing the brand.” [Danielle, Luxury]*

*“Gucci is something that you aspire to; this is a vintage belt, so I bring it out every now and then... and it’s also a **status symbol**.” [Jamila, Luxury]*

Additionally, it was felt that the desire to elevate or enhance one’s status and social class through brands was also a driver for posting brand selfies online.

*“I think they are trying to **shift their social class** into a higher level by consuming luxury products and showing off.” [George, Luxury]*

*“They are both showing wealth, that they have nice things and showing their friends and followers that they have those things [...] they’re probably middle-class and they are **aspiring to be upper-class**” [Adam, Luxury]*

Social interaction

The third consumer motive identified through the semi-structured interviews was social interaction, a construct also commonly identified in several other studies as a motive for SNSs use such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest (e.g. Haridakis and Hanson 2009; Khan 2017; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011; Mull and Lee 2014; Smock et al. 2011). Social interaction lies at the heart of SNSs and encompasses a broad range of behaviors including creating (brand) UGC, commenting on others’ (brand) UGC, liking and sharing. The construct encompasses numerous sub-motives and behaviors that pertain to gratifications obtained with interactions with other people (McQuail 1983; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011). These sub-motives include “gaining a sense of belonging; connecting with friends, family and society; seeking support/emotional support; and substituting real-life companionship” (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011, p. 19). Social interaction

through selfies emerged first and foremost as a desire to update real-life friends, the in-group, about one's whereabouts and activities.

*“My friend sent me a surprise dress from Zara for my birthday [...] so, I put the dress on and took a picture **which I uploaded to Instagram to say thank you for sending me that.**” [Marion, own brand selfies]*

*“I think he's **updating his friends** that he's shaved and is ready to go out!” [Sara, FMGC]*

In addition, the social interaction motive also emerged as a form of affiliation with like-minded others (Kaye, 2007), fans and customers of a specific brand who search for or share brand UGC by hashtagging the brand. In sharing brand UGC, users seek social interactions and feedback through Likes and comments, by reaching out to a broader audience, the out-group:

*“I would primarily share them on Instagram simply because of the hashtag; I want people who love similar brands to mine **to interact with my pictures and connect with me.**” [Lauren, own brand selfies]*

*“She's trying to engage with the L'Oréal community so that **people follow her, like her, make comments, gain followers.**” [George, FMGC]*

Archiving

As discussed in Chapter 2, selfies enable the development of a human narrative (Eagar and Dann, 2016) by maintaining a diary of the self through the archiving of special moments. In Sung et al.'s (2016) research on selfies, archiving was identified as a key motive for posting selfies with a view to “record one's personal life and document special events and occasions” (Sung et al. 2016, p. 263). Consistently with Sung et al.'s research, brand selfies emerged as means to record a personal diary of the self, encompassing people, places, and brands. This self-documentation enables to extend the self digitally, through the narration of events and maintain a sense of the

past (Belk, 2014) with loved brands. In archiving memories through brand selfies, consumers extend the self.

“The guys drinking the Corona are probably on holidays having fun; so, he took a picture to remember the occasion.” [Adam, Alcoholic beverages]

*“When I get my first car that will probably be a big deal and I will post a selfie... just for the achievement! If it’s a special occasion, it could be a way of **archiving memories.**” [Laura, own brand selfies]*

Positive affective states such as brand love also commonly emerged through the archiving motive. As noted by Ahuvia (2005, p. 179) loved objects serve as “symbolic mementos of key events or relationships in the life narrative” (Ahuvia, 2005, p. 179). These loved objects “play special roles in consumers’ understanding of who they are as people”, and thus contribute to the makeup of their identity (Ahuvia, 2005, p. 182). These declarations of love (e.g. “I love this brand”) can be easily shared with others through UGC such as brand selfies. By declaring their love towards a brand, consumers integrate the brand into their identity (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006), and thus express their self-concept (Schau and Gilly, 2003).

*“I love Mac (cosmetics) so **it was part of a diary just to say that I was at this event.**” [Olga, own selfies]*

“The girl is saying I love my car, it’s my baby, I’m on vacation and I am having a great time.” [Adam, Automotive]

Lastly, the archiving motive was also expressed through several different consumer-generated hashtags including #ThrowBackThursday, #TBT; #memories; #latergram; #FlashbackFriday or #lastfriday as a means to record and even immortalize the self alongside a brand in special situations.

*“He used the hashtag **#memories** with a picture of a car; it was probably a special day for him that he **immortalized.**” [Laura, Automotive]*

4.7.3 Brand-led drivers

The second category of drivers for creating brand selfies identified were brand-led drivers. Brand-led drivers drive brand selfie posting in that specific brand cues in images contribute to the maintenance or enhancement the self-concept. The drivers in this category included the actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence constructs.

Actual and ideal self-congruence

The influence of the actual and ideal self on consumption decisions and brand choices has been well-documented in the literature. Through brand meanings, consumers express different aspects of the self (e.g. Aaker 1997; Escalas and Bettman, 2005; Levy 1959). Because SNSs enable the presentation of the self through online profiles, the (brand) UGC created in turn will enable the presentation of both the actual self (who they are) and the ideal self (who they'd like to be seen as) (e.g. Hollenbeck and Kaikati 2012; Seidman 2013) through brands. Social media therefore enables consumers to present themselves using digital, rather than physical, referents in order to create and convey an image of the self (Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin, 2008).

The actual and ideal self-motives were identified through both the verbatim and confirmed through the consumer-generated hashtags identified in the content analysis. The consumer-generated hashtags identified in the content analysis revealed that both the actual self (e.g. #blackhair, #brunette, #greeneyes, #blonde), and the ideal-self (e.g. #stylish, #cute, #cool, #inspiration) were commonly used to express one's personal identity (Oyserman, 2009). Actual self-congruence consumer-generated hashtags appeared to be mostly trait-based (Mittal, 2006) describing an individual's features such as their hair or eye color. Conversely, ideal self-congruence consumer-generated hashtags were personality-based (Mittal, 2006) describing a subjective and ideal vision of what an individual would like to be perceived.

Supporting these findings, the semi-structured interviews transcripts revealed that actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence as drivers of posting intent when the brand possessed a symbolic image similar to their self-image (actual self-congruence) or complementary to their self-image (ideal self-congruence) (Heath and Scott, 1998). Actual self-congruence was identified as a driver for posting selfies when a brand was

seemingly used to express oneself and one's brand preferences. This in turn leads to a positive self-belief and brand image perception (Sirgy, 1982).

*“The girl on the left is saying ‘pink is my color, it’s my thing. This is what I love, **this is who I am.**” [Adam, Sporting Goods]*

*“The brand serves as **a platform for them to be themselves.** They identify with the brand.” [Dylan, Technology]*

Conversely, ideal self-congruence was identified when brands were used as a prop to project an ideal self-image. The tagging of the brand is strategically used to convey an ideal status within society, or to come across as who'd they liked to be seen as:

*‘That brand [Hugo Boss] is saying that he’s really cool; **the brand makes him think that he’s cool.**’ [Marion, Apparel]*

*“I would say that he wants **to be seen as fashionable** by using the brand.” [Richard, Luxury]*

4.7.4 Role of narcissism

Psychology scholars have for long argued about a connection between personality traits and the way people behave online and notably on SNSs (e.g. Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzki 2010; Ross 2009). Different SNSs provide different mechanisms through which narcissism can manifest itself (Davenport et al., 2014). For instance, narcissists on Facebook try to gain as many friends as possible (Davenport et al. 2014), however such relationships tend to remain weak (Davenport et al. 2014; Papacharissi and Mendelson 2011). Narcissists on Facebook are also concerned with the attractiveness of their profile picture (e.g. Papacharissi and Mendelson, 2011). Furthermore, narcissism has been found to predict continued active usage on Twitter, as users attempt to build an attractive profile to grow their network (Davenport et al., 2014). When it comes to selfies, several recent empirical studies suggest that the personality trait of narcissism influences selfie posting (e.g. Arpaci 2018; Fox and

Rooney 2015; Halpern et al. 2016; McCain et al. 2016; Sung et al. 2016; Sing, Farley and Donahue 2018; Sorokowski et al. 2015; Weiser 2015).

Scrutiny of the informants' interviews revealed that some of the brand selfies takers featured in the stimulus appeared to be narcissistic, thus providing evidence of the role of narcissism on brand selfies posting (RQ3). As shown in Table 13, selfies are commonly spontaneously associated with the personality trait of narcissism, although as previously noted, not all selfies are narcissistic (e.g. Lim 2016; Senft 2013). This is arguably because narcissism is the personality trait that is most accurately recognized from photographs through snap judgements or "zero-acquaintance judgments" (Vazire et al., 2008). Selfies posters deemed more narcissistic were found to display exhibitionistic tendencies (Bergman et al. 2011; Buffardi and Campbell 2008; Winter et al. 2014), often engaging in self-grandiose displays, and flaunting their possessions (Buss and Chiodo 1991; Campbell 1999). This exhibitionism was identified when a photograph seemed to be about showcasing the self rather the brand. Thus, similarly to narcissists' interpersonal relationships, the depth of the bond with a brand appeared to be weaker. In these photographs, the brand name was used by proxy of hashtagging to draw attention to the self and self-enhance through Likes:

*'The girl holding the Samsung phone, it's not about the product, it's about her looking cute... **she looks like a narcissist**' [Danielle, Technology]*

Furthermore, consistently with the literature, the brand selfies that were deemed narcissistic were quite posed. As noted by Vazire et al. (2008, p. 1439), "narcissists tend to wear expensive, flashy clothing, have an organized, neat appearance requiring a lot of preparation, and (in females) wear makeup and show cleavage". However, looking at the verbatims below, narcissism was seen as a personality trait related to motives for posting brand selfies, rather than being a driver.

*"This brand selfie is **quite posed**, and she looks **vain and narcissistic**. I guess she really wants to show off that she can afford the handbag." [Lauren, Luxury]*

*“I think their motivations are probably self-identity, so it is **narcissism really**; because there’s also an **element of insecurity of wanting to be seen wearing these clothes.**”*
[Dylan, *Luxury*]

4.8 Semi-structured interviews summary and findings

The second section of this chapter has presented the methodology and findings pertaining to the second study, which consisted of 20 semi-structured interviews. The purpose of these qualitative interviews was to address RQ2 of this thesis: understanding consumers’ motives for posting brand selfies online to develop a testable model of brand selfies.

Through theoretical matching (Goldkhul and Cronholm, 2010), **six motives** for posting brand selfies emerged, with the literature used as guidance to develop the codes. Each motive was argued for by interlacing the literature with supporting verbatim from the interviews, complemented with findings from the content analysis. The four consumer motives for posting brand selfies identified included attention seeking, status seeking social interaction and archiving, while two brand-led drivers were also identified: actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence. These motives will form the basis of the conceptual model that will be developed tested in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

Some of these motives are well-established in the U&G social media literature, while others are unique to brand selfies. Notably, status seeking, social interaction and actual self-congruence are motives and drivers not previously identified among digital photo-sharing motives (cf. Table 3). Interestingly, the content analysis helped uncover consumer-generated hashtags that corroborate some of the motives identified through the qualitative interviews, notably for the attention seeking, archiving and actual and ideal self-congruence motives. Thus, while the inclusion of a hashtag enables a user to partage in various (brand) communities (Dessart and Duclou 2019; Stathopoulou et al. 2017), they also offer insights into what motivates users to post brand selfies. Lastly, the interviews revealed that narcissism may play an important role on brand selfie posting intent. Based on the identification of these motives, the next chapter will be dedicated to the development of the conceptual model and formulation of the hypotheses.

Chapter 5: Conceptual model development

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has presented the first two studies, a content analysis of 2,000 brand selfies to analyze their characteristics (study 1), followed by 20 semi-structured interviews with brand-selfie users to identify the main motives and drivers for posting brand selfies (study 2). The first study, exploratory in nature, helped identify differences in how several characteristics of brand selfies such as the photograph itself (number of people, brand centrality/peripherality), geo-tagging location practices, and consumer-generated hashtags incorporated in brand selfies to address RQ1. The content analysis helped reveal differences in how these characteristics are used in brand selfies among males vs. females, and selfies vs. usies, including 8 types of consumer-generated hashtags commonly used.

The focus of the second study was to identify consumers' motives for posting brand selfies through semi-structured interviews, conducted to inform the development of the conceptual model, thus helping address RQ2. In total, six motives and drivers for posting brand selfies were identified: *attention seeking*, *status seeking*, *social interaction*, *archiving*, *actual self-congruence* and *ideal self-congruence*. Content analysis findings, notably around consumer-generated hashtag use, were interwoven in the discussion of the motives identified to bring greater insights into brand selfies practices. Building on these findings, this purpose of this chapter is to formulate a conceptual model of antecedents and outcomes of brand selfies with a view of addressing RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4. Each hypothesis is presented and argued for based on the existing literature.

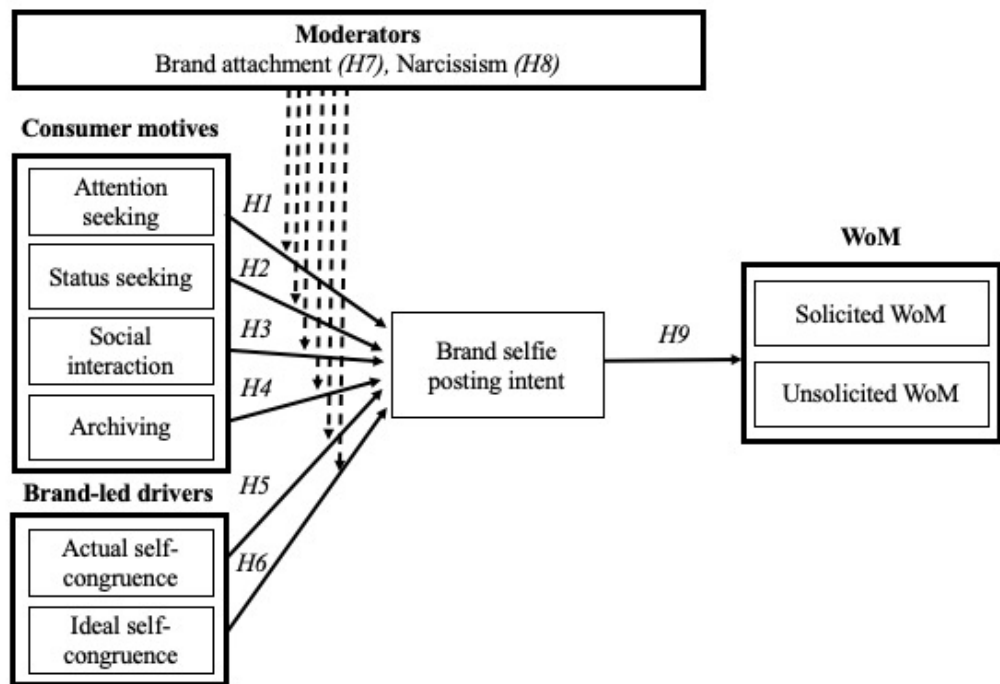
5.2 Hypothesis development

UGC and by extension brand UGC posting lie at the heart of SNSs use, transforming individuals from passive consumers of content to active producers of content (e.g. Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011; Shao 2009). *Posting intent* is therefore defined here as individuals' intention to post a brand selfie online on a social media platform such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or SnapChat.

Grounded in the U&G theory, the conceptual model development employs a two-step approach of semi-structured interviews followed by web-based surveys to test and validate the hypotheses (Greenberg 1974; Rubin 2009). Each U&G study has its own set of motives and drivers linked to the medium under scrutiny (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch 1973). The present conceptual model adopts the philosophy that brand selfie posting intent may be driven by multiple motives, as “no single factor is theorized to drive media use” (Lucas and Sherry, 2004, p. 503). Among the motives identified through the qualitative interviews, some are well-established in the U&G social media literature, while others are unique to brand selfies. On this basis, it is inferred that brand selfie posting intent will be motivated by four consumer motives identified through the semi-structured interviews, *attention seeking*, *status seeking*, *social interaction* and *archiving*, as well as two brand-led drivers, *actual self-congruence* and *ideal self-congruence*.

Acknowledging the role of interactional factors on media use (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1973), these six motives for media use are hypothesized to be moderated by two constructs (e.g. Conway and Rubin 1991; Katz et al. 1974; Lucas and Sherry 2004; Rubin 2009) inferred from the literature: *brand attachment*, a type of consumer-brand relationship, and the personality trait of *narcissism*, commonly associated with selfie posting behaviors. Lastly, it is inferred that the posting of brand selfies will lead to the propagation of *WoM* and more specifically *solicited WoM* and *unsolicited WoM*. Figure 5 presents the conceptual model with the main variables identified.

Figure 5: Conceptual model



5.2.1 Consumer motives

Attention seeking

Much of the research pertaining to the attention seeking construct stems from children development research (e.g. Gewirtz 1954; Gewirtz 1956; Taylor and Carr 1992). Attention seeking is conceptualized as a set of behaviors to gain attention from adults (Gewirtz 1954, 1956) that in turn leads to a social response from another person (Gewirtz, 1954). Within the marketing literature, attention seeking has been defined as the sentiment of getting attention and importance from others (Park, Jaworski, MacInnis 2009; Urista Dong and Day 2009), and is regarded as a self-presentational behavior commonly associated with SNSs use (Seidman, 2012) and Internet addiction (Boland and Anderson, 2019). Through their very design, SNSs enable individuals to seek attention from others through the posting on UGC and brand UGC (e.g. DeWall et al. 2011; Hawk et al. 2019; Seidman 2012) because of “the large audience and positive feedback these platforms can provide” (Hawk, 2019, p. 66). Thus, “SNSs serve as platforms for individuals to seek self-concept validation and affirmation through the approval of others” (Sung et al., 2016, p. 263).

Yet, research on attention seeking in the context of social media use remains embryonic, primarily focusing on the link between personality traits and attention seeking behaviors in social media, such as the posting of status updates and photographs. For instance, Seidman (2012) scrutinized attention seeking as a self-presentational behavior on Facebook, in relation to the Big Five personality traits. The author found that attention seeking was negatively related to agreeableness and conscientiousness. Conversely, research by DeWall et al. (2011) and Hawk et al. (2019) suggests that attention seeking behaviors in social media are prevalent among narcissists. While not all attention seekers are narcissists, narcissists on the other hand, cherish the attention seeking opportunities afforded by posting UGC in social networks. DeWall et al. (2011) found that attention seekers tend to display self-promoting sexy images but use few words to draw attention to the self. Hawk et al. (2019) suggest that social media use among adolescents stems from a desire to validate one's self-image.

Among the various forms of UGC, digital-photo posting, such as selfies posting has become a self-presentational means that particularly appeals to attention seekers (DeWall 2011; Gannon and Prothero 2016; Malik, Dhir and Nieminen 2016; Sung et al. 2016; Urista, Dong and Day 2009). Due to their focus on the self, selfies are especially suited to engage in objectified self-presentation for attention seeking purposes (Bell, Cassarly and Dunbar 2018; Singh Farley and Donahue 2018), as they tend to yield more likes and comments than non-objectified selfies (Bell, Cassarly and Dunbar, 2018). Furthermore, selfies offer an opportunity to over-emphasize stereotypical gender roles of femininity (e.g. feminine touch, lying posture, withdrawing gaze, sparse clothing) as well as masculine roles (e.g. muscle presentation) to seek attention from others (Döring, Reif and Poeschl, 2016). In sum, selfies enable users to seek attention from others by driving attention to the self and gain social rewards in the form of likes and comments (Bell, Cassarly and Dunbar 2018; Malik, Dhir and Nieminen 2016; Urista, Dong and Day 2009) from a wide audience on the Internet (Malik, Dhir and Nieminen 2016; Urista, Dong and Day 2009). Furthermore, the hashtagging of a brand in a brand selfie, notably on Instagram will also help users seek attention from others and gain social responses (Gewirtz, 1954) in the form of likes and comments by harnessing the brand's cachet and symbolic values (e.g. Levy, 1959). Thus, based on the literature and empirical

evidence of attention seeking as a motive for posting selfies online (Sung et al., 2016), the first hypothesis is put forth:

H1: Attention seeking will positively influence brand selfie posting intent

Status seeking

Status seeking is another motive that, similarly to attention seeking, involves a set of behaviors that aim to draw attention to the self. Status may be achieved through one's professional standing, or through the consumption of brands, regardless of a consumer's social class or income (Hayakawa 1963; Brown 1991; Eastman, Goldsmith and Flynn 1999). Consuming brands for status is a "motivational process by which individuals strive to improve their social standing through conspicuous consumption of consumer products that confer or symbolize status for both the individual and surrounding others" (Eastman et al., 1999, p. 310). Status seekers "continually strain to surround themselves with the visible evidence of the superior rank they are claiming" (Packard, 1959, p. 5), and one such visible evidence is brands. Any type of brand has the potential to help individuals seek status, provided they have the right cachet (Eastman, Goldsmith and Flynn 1999; O'Cass 2004). A brand's cachet is conveyed through its symbolic values (Levy 1959) driving "increased marketplace recognition and economic value" (O'Cass, 2004, p. 25), intrinsically and extrinsically benefiting individuals who display or buy those brands. Therefore, the acquisition and display of status brands helps status seekers create their identity, but also enhance and elevate their sense of self and/or their affluence in the eyes of others (e.g. Belk 1988; Goffman 1959; O'Cass 2004; O'Cass and Frost 2002).

SNSs offer an ideal environment for status seekers to further enhance their status online by engaging in capital enhancing practices (Zillien and Hargittal, 2009) such as the posting of brand UGC. As previously noted, status seeking is first and foremost, about getting recognition and (social) elevation from others, which can easily be achieved at scale online. An early example of status elevation within SNSs is the sharing of online experiences about travel or restaurant recommendations within virtual communities (Lampel and Bhalla, 2007). Furthermore, certain SNSs such as TripAdvisor also recognize a user's status where users can earn status badges for creating brand UGC (e.g. Reviewer, Senior Reviewer, Top Contributor etc.), the more

a user contributes through brand UGC, the more their status grows (Liu, Shuckert and Law, 2018). More recently, social networks have enabled the rise of micro-celebrities seeking online status and fame through carefully crafted personas (Marwick 2015; Senft 2013; Wyer, Hung and Jiang 2018), often gaining millions of followers in the process. Those successful at gaining attention, “often reproduce conventional status hierarchies of luxury, celebrity and popularity” (Marwick, 2015, p. 139). However, some will manipulate their image and seemingly reject their status elevation and instead emphasize their ‘ordinariness’, by “carefully balancing professionally looking content with less crafted images of everyday life” (van Driel and Dumitrica, 2020, p. 69).

While not all consumers will seek to become micro-celebrities, the posting of brand UGC to seek status, has become an increasingly commonplace behavior among everyday consumers particularly on photo based SNSs. Those who may seek status through the sharing of brand UGC will associate themselves with brands that allow them to impress others for the purpose of their vanity (Kaufmann et al., 2016). The sharing of brand selfies thus fulfil consumers’ vanity needs by empowering them to be proud of their fashionable look and to exhibit their possessions as a status symbol of success and achievements (Wyer, Hung and Jiang, 2018). As highlighted through the qualitative interviews, users share brand selfies with specific products deemed to be ‘status symbols’ as a means to enhance the self or one’s social status. Notably, some of the informants highlighted a dissonance between the brand and the user’s surrounding in the stimulus materials, leading them to believe that certain brands are deliberately incorporated into brand selfie photographs to elevate one’s social standing. This therefore leads to the formulation of the second hypothesis:

H2: Status seeking will positively influence brand selfie posting intent

Social interaction

Social interaction encompasses several sub-motives that pertain to other people, such as communicating and interacting with others (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011; Papacharissi 2008; Whiting and Williams 2013). Early U&G research highlights that media use helps foster personal relationship such as social interaction (McQuail, Blumler and Brown, 1972), which is still regarded as one of the main motivations for media use (e.g. Kaye and Johnson 2000; Papacharissi and Rubin 2000; Ruggiero 2000). An example of social interaction through traditional media use, is the consumption of TV shows, which has been found to help foster discussions of the content of the shows post-hoc, which in turn leads to media-related gratifications (e.g. McQuail, Blumler and Brown, 1972). More recently, brought by the emergence of the Internet, social interaction has been found to help address needs such as meeting other people with similar interests and to “keep up with what’s going on” (Ko, Cho and Roberts, 2005). Additionally, SNSs help maintain relationships, maintain one’s social life and interact with others (Hunt and Langstedt, 2014; Kim 2018; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011; Whiting and Williams 2013). As noted by Xu, Yao and Teo (2020, p. 2) “in online social interaction among acquaintances, the affective and relational patterns of communication are relatively similar to face-to-face communication because users still have a need to maintain relationships.” For instance, one of the informants interviewed mentioned how she had posted a brand selfie in the past to thank a friend for their birthday gift, thus interacting digitally, while maintaining relationships.

Within SNSs, social interaction may be profile-based or content-based (Zu and Chen, 2015). Profile-based social interaction encourages connection, because consumers are interested in following and interacting with a specific user for their UGC (Zu and Chen, 2015). For instance, Facebook is regarded as a place to interact and socialize with others (Whiting and Williams, 2013), by commenting on status updates or sending private messages. The need for social interaction has also been found to drive social media use through political participation, whereby networks of friendship with strangers are formed (Diehl, Weeks and de Zuniga, 2016). Social interaction can therefore take place within the in-group as well as the out-group.

Content-based social interaction pertains to comments left on a piece of UGC, which in turn may lead to further commenting (Zu and Chen, 2015). For instance, social interaction on YouTube manifests itself through the uploading of videos and the subsequent discussion of these videos through comments (Haridakis and Hanson 2009; Khan 2017). Furthermore, social interaction is also fundamentally changing how consumers communicate with brands (Gallaughar and Ransbotham 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010), with the dyadic nature of SNSs driving consumer-brand social interactions (e.g. Kwon et al., 2014). Notably, Twitter enables consumers to interact with brands in real time (Kwon et al., 2014). Similarly, brand selfies enable users to interact with each other as well as brands by @tagging the brand or responding to comments left on their own brand selfies to encourage further social interactions. Based on the literature, the following hypothesis is therefore put forth:

H3: Social interaction will positively influence brand selfie posting intent

Archiving

Photo-albums that were once private are now commonly shared online through social networks for others to view and interact with (Belk 2014; Eagar and Amichai-Hamburger 2017; van Dijck 2008). The sharing of photographs, enables SNSs users to archive experiences or possessions as means to record the self, construct their identity and preserve memories (Belk 2014; Etgar and Amichai-Hamburger 2017; van Dijck 2008). Furthermore, as noted by Kavka (2019, p. 35) selfies are “central to the ongoing transition from written to image-based communication and has been accompanied by the reconfiguration of identity into a self-curated visual archive.” Although the conceptualization of the archiving construct remains largely embryonic, extant research suggests that archiving is a key motive driving the creation of UGC such as blogs (Hollenbaugh, 2010) and selfies (Sung et al., 2016). Hollenaugh (2010, p. 1663) found that blogging is motivated by the archiving motive to “record thoughts and feelings for further reflection, to organize thoughts and feelings, and to read what was written in previous posts.” Sung et al. (2016) found that selfies are posted online to document special occasions and are commoditized for such documentation in a publicly accessible space.

Consistently with Sung et al. (2016), the qualitative interviews conducted confirmed that brand selfies allow consumers to capture both important and mundane life moments (Iqani and Schroeder 2015; Sung et al. 2016). These life moments range from drinking a Corona on holiday, or a Starbucks coffee while going to work, through to posting about proud moments in one's life such as the acquisition of a car. Brand selfies help consumers express their thoughts and feelings about brands, while documenting their lives (Presi, Maehle and Kleppe 2016; Richardson and Hessey, 2009; Sung et al. 2016), by creating a historical archive online. Consequently, it is inferred that posting brand selfies is driven by an individual's desire to document and archive a specific aspect of their life with a brand at a specific moment in time:

H4: Archiving will positively influence brand selfie posting intent

5.2.2 Brand-led drivers

In addition to the four consumer motives for posting brand selfies previously discussed, it is inferred that two brand-led drivers will influence brand selfie posting intent: *actual self-congruence* and *ideal self-congruence*. The self-congruence construct draws on the idea that consumers prefer brands with images that are consistent with their own self-image, a concept known as the image congruence hypothesis (Sirgy 1982, 1985). The image congruence hypothesis concept suggests that the actual self and the ideal self are affiliated with product image. An actually self-congruent brand reflects who the consumer actually is ("this brand's personality is like who I really am"), whereas an ideally self-congruent brand reflects who the consumer would like to be ("this brand's personality is like who I would like to be"). This therefore suggests that consumers have different selves (Markus and Kunda 1986; Markus and Nurius 1986) and act differently in different situations and with different individuals.

According to Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak and Sirgy (2011), hundreds of studies have been conducted supporting the evidence that self-image congruence explains and predicts different aspects of consumer behavior across different product categories. This body of research on self-congruence with brands has been offline-centered, with brand consumption involving physical interactions and revealing positive outcomes. Notably, self-image congruence has been found to influence positive product

evaluations (Graeff, 1996), purchase intent (e.g. Sirgy, 1985) and intention to re-use (Roy and Rabbane, 2015), but also predict brand loyalty (e.g. Kressman et al. 2006) and post-purchase behaviors such as brand satisfaction (e.g. Jamal and Goode 2001; Sirgy et al. 1997). While some of these studies have treated self-congruence as a single construct, others have differentiated between actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence revealing differences between the two constructs in the outcomes observed.

Within SNSs, Facebook has been found to facilitate the presentation of the actual and ideal self (Back et al. 2010; Hollenbeck and Kaikati 2012). Back et al. (2010) found that consumers express their self through their Facebook profiles, which tend to reflect the actual self. Building on these findings Hollenbeck and Kaikati (2012) broadened the investigation and discovered that consumers use brands interactions to mold impressions of themselves that may represent either the ideal and/or the actual self. Self-congruence also influences the choice of 'liked' brand pages and profiles as well as interactions with brands on Facebook. Wallace, Buil and de Chernatony (2016) found that self-congruence with a brand page is increased by social ties within one's social network. Consistently, Kim and Kim (2016) demonstrated that congruence between the actual self and the ideal self positively influenced interactions with a brand on Facebook. Although no research linking self-congruence and brand UGC has been identified, based on the literature, it may be inferred that both actual self-congruence and ideal-self-congruence will positively influence brand UGC posting. Evidence of this assumption is found through the two preliminary studies conducted. Firstly, the consumer-generated hashtags analysis revealed that actual-self hashtags were commonly used to define and reinforce how consumers see themselves (Mittal 2006; Sirgy 1982) (e.g. #blackhair, #brunette, #greeneyes, #blonde etc.). Conversely, ideal self hashtags were used as a means to define how individuals would like to see themselves (e.g. #stylish, #cute, #cool, #inspiration) to protect and enhance the self-concept (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). Furthermore, as highlighted through the qualitative interviews, brand selfies were seemingly posted when the brand possessed a symbolic image similar to their self-image (actual self-congruence) or an image complementary to their self-image (ideal self-congruence) (Heath and Scott, 1998). Lastly, the overwhelming evidence of the positive impact of self-congruence on consumer behavior, notably on purchase intent (e.g. Sirgy, 1985), will logically also

influence posting intent as a positive behavioral outcome. This therefore leads to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

H5: Actual self-congruence will positively influence brand selfie posting intent

H6: Ideal self-congruence will positively influence brand selfie posting intent

5.2.3 Moderators

As discussed in Chapter 3, the present research aims to tap into the U&G theory's flexibility to develop a sophisticated theoretical model (Palmgreen 1984; Ruggiero 2000), by incorporating additional variables that may influence individual behavior for media use (Ruggiero, 2000). According to the U&G theory, the desire to consume media, or in the case of the present research post brand UGC, is believed to be influenced and moderated by a host of social and psychological factors (Blumler and Gurevitch 1973; Finn 1992; Katz 1959; Katz, Sundar and Limperos 2013). To this point, it is important to note that the hypothesized effects in H1 through H6 may not be equally pronounced for all brand selfie users. These effects may be stronger for brand selfie users with certain characteristics or predispositions. Based on the literature, two moderators are put forth: *brand attachment* and *narcissism*. The rationale for the selection of these moderators is explained in the subsequent sections.

Brand attachment

Brand attachment is the first moderator interfered from the literature, based on the premise that individuals have relationships with brands (Fournier, 1998) featured in brand UGC. The growing popularity of SNSs and brand UGC is "evidence of consumers engaging emotionally with brands" (Dwivedi et al., 2018, p. 1). Within SNSs, consumers seek out brands they share personal attachment or affinity with (Sanz-Blas, Bigne and Buzova, 2019). In turn, consumers will post brand UGC within their network to express this affinity (Belk 2014; Rabbanee, Roy and Spence 2020). Thus, on the basis of the literature, it is inferred that brand selfies posting intent will be moderated by the strength of the attachment with a brand.

In the present study, brand attachment refers to the strength of the emotional bond that connects the consumer and the brand, involving feelings of affection, connection and passion (Malär et al. 2011; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005). Brand attachment

is based on the psychological theory that consumers develop strong emotional attachment to brands over time (e.g. Fournier 1998; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Through attachment with brands, individuals fulfil their experiential, symbolic and emotional needs (Park, MacInnis and Priester, 2006). This in turn predicts several positive interactional outcomes (e.g. Park, Jaworski, MacInnis 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005) such as brand loyalty (e.g. Japutra, Ekinci and Simkin 2018; Park, MacInnis and Priester 2006), positive WoM (Brocato, Baker and Voorhees 2015; VanMeter et al. 2018), and switching intention (Brocato, Baker and Voorhees, 2015). Brand attachment can also lead to multiple and complex feelings and behaviors which may be negative in nature (Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005) such as trash-talking rival brands (Hickman and Ward, 2007), or anti-brand actions when a relationship with a brand deteriorates (Anderson and Jap, 2005). In sum, brand attachment predicts several positive (and sometimes negative) interactional outcomes. In the case of SNSs, this interactional outcome is posting intent.

In the consumer behavior literature, brand attachment has been inherently tied to consumers' self-concept (Kleine, Kleine and Kernan, 1993), with a view of maintaining or enhancing it (e.g. Epstein 1980; Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Sirgy 1982). Thus, the present model proposes that brand selfie posting is a mechanism through which consumers express their self-concept and enact consumer-brand relationships (e.g. Aaker 1999; Belk 1988). As noted by Malär et al. (2011, p. 37), "the more the brand reflects the consumer's self, the greater the personal connection the consumer feels between the self and the brand, the stronger his or her brand attachment becomes." In a recent study which scrutinized pro-brand behaviors on Facebook such as liking, sharing and commenting, Rabbanee, Roy and Spence (2020) found that the stronger individuals are attached to a brand, the more prone to engage in pro-brand SNS behaviours. Thus, following a similar logic in the case of brand selfie posting, it may be inferred that the stronger the brand attachment with a focal brand, the stronger the posting intent will be from actual self-congruent or ideal-self congruent individuals. Conversely, it is expected that posting intent will be weakened when self-congruent consumers do not feel a strong attachment or personal connection to the brand (Malär et al., 2011).

For attention seekers, or status seekers who are interested in drawing attention to the self, posting a photo with a brand which they feel close to will make them feel more confident that they can attract attention to the self (Gewirtz, 1954), and be seen at the status level they wish to be seen at when the brand depicted is closer to them (e.g. Eastman et al. 1999; Packard 1959). Similarly, for those seeking social interaction, posting a brand selfie with a brand these individuals are attached to, will arguably help them better satisfy their needs to interact socially with the relevant groups of users that they believe are close to this brand too.

Another example of the moderating role of brand attachment pertains to the archiving motive. It has been suggested that brands are tied to “affectively laden memories” (Park and MacInnis, 2006, p. 17), evoking or symbolizing nostalgic experiences, eras, people, places, or memories (Holbrook, 2006). In sum, the archiving motive will be strengthened by posting selfies with brands that they feel close to or connected to. Conversely, brand attachment may weaken posting intent when users are not engaging in self-enhancement strategies (Malär et al., 2011), be it to seek attention, seek status, interact with others or to archive the self. Thus, formally, it is hypothesized that brand selfie posting intent will be moderated by brand attachment:

H7: Brand attachment moderates the relationship between consumers’ motives and posting intent.

Narcissism

The personality trait of narcissism was found to have an important role in the decision to post selfies, and is the second moderator in the model. U&G approaches needs as being inferred from media motives (Rubin and Rubin, 1985), and it has been suggested that motivations should be considered more important determinants of SNS use than personality traits because the former are a more proximal cause of behavior than the latter (Ajzen, 1991; Wang et al. 2015). Furthermore, according to the U&G theory, the desire to consume media, or in the case of the present research post brand UGC, is believed to be influenced and moderated by a host of social and psychological factors (Blumler and Gurevitch 1973; Finn 1992; Katz 1959; Katz, Sundar and Limperos 2013). In the present research, the personality trait of *narcissism* is therefore treated as a moderator rather than a driver.

As shown in Table 13, selfies are commonly spontaneously associated with the personality trait of narcissism through snap judgements or “zero-acquaintance judgments” (Vazire et al., 2008). Psychology scholars have for long argued about a connection between personality traits and the way people behave online (e.g. Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzki 2010; Ross 2009), and the proliferation of SNSs is thought to have further exacerbated narcissism in recent years (Halpern, Valenzuela and Katz 2016; Nasralla, 2019; Twenge et al. 2008a, 2008b). Several empirical studies suggest a link between SNSs use and personality such as the Big 5 and the Dark Triad (e.g. Amichai-Hamburger and Ben-Artzi, 2000). Within this body of research, the most commonly investigated personality trait has been narcissism (e.g. Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky 2010; Mehdizadeh 2010), which has been found to predict a wide range of variables and behaviors (Ames, Rose and Anderson, 2006). Hawk et al. (2019, p. 66) suggest that narcissism is the main “personality factor that might be connected to excessive or problematic use of social media and smartphones”.

Different SNSs provide different mechanisms through which narcissism can manifest itself (Davenport et al., 2014). For instance, narcissists on Facebook tend to be concerned with the attractiveness of their profile picture (e.g. Davenport et al., 2014), try to gain as many friends as possible (Davenport et al. 2014), however such relationships tend to remain weak (Davenport et al. 2014; Papacharissi and Mendelson 2011). Conversely, narcissism has been found to predict continued active usage on Twitter, as users attempt to build an attractive profile to grow their network (Davenport et al., 2014).

When it comes to selfies, several recent empirical studies suggest that the personality trait of narcissism influences selfie posting (e.g. Arpaci 2018; Fox and Rooney 2015; Halpern et al. 2016; McCain et al. 2016; Sing, Farley and Donahue 2018; Sung et al. 2016; Sorokowski et al. 2015; Weiser 2015). For instance, individuals exhibiting higher levels of narcissism have been found to spend more time on SNSs than less narcissistic users (Fox and Rooney, 2015). These individuals engage in self-expression (Wang et al., 2012) self-promotion (Moon et al., 2016) and self-objectification (Fox and Rooney, 2015) through selfies. Narcissistic users manipulate their image by spending a considerable amount of time editing selfies (Fox and Rooney, 2015), and place a lot of emphasis on profile picture selection, which is

frequently changed (Kapidzic 2013; Moon et al. 2016). The personality trait of narcissism has also been found to enhance specific behaviors such as selfie-posting frequency (McCain et al. 2016; Moon et al. 2016; Singh, Farley and Donahue 2018; Sung et al 2016; Weiser 2015) and selfie posting intent (Fox et al. 2018; Lee and Sung 2016; Sung, Kim and Choi 2018). Thus, it is expected that narcissism will moderate the six motives and drivers for posting brand selfies identified.

Firstly, Sung et al. (2016) found that narcissism strengthens the relationship between attention seeking and selfie posting intent, a motive commonly associated with narcissism (DeWall et al. 2011; Hawk et al. 2019). Based on these findings, a similar relationship is expected with brand selfie posting. Similarly, because status seekers are interested in drawing attention to the self, growing their networks (e.g. Davenport et al. 2014), and displaying socially desirable self-views (Sung et al., 2016) it is also expected that the personality trait will influence the relationship between the constructs. Thirdly, individuals seeking social interaction, or individuals wishing the archive the self may spend more time on SNSs (Fox and Rooney, 2015) to engage in continued active brand selfie posting (Davenport et al., 2014) to achieve their objectives. Lastly, self-congruent individuals will be concerned in maintaining and enhancing their self-concept (Epstein 1980; Sirgy1982). Based on the literature, it is expected that these users may place particular emphasis in ensuring their pictures are attractive (e.g. Davenport et al. 2014; Kapidzic 2013; Moon et al. 2016), a sign of narcissism. Conversely, narcissism may also weaken posting intent when individuals seek to protect their self-concepts and conceal the personality trait in response to the perception of others (Smith et al., 2016). Based on the considerations above, it is hypothesized that brand selfie posting intent will be moderated by narcissism:

H8: Narcissism moderates the relationship between consumers' motives and posting intent.

5.2.4 Outcomes

The final section in this chapter presents the outcome variable in the model: WoM. While brand UGC posting and WoM are closely aligned and often used interchangeably, they are in fact two different constructs (Cheong and Morrison, 2008). As noted by Cheong and Morrison (2008, p. 3) “UGC and WoM differ depending on whether the content is *generated* by users or the content is *conveyed* by users. For example, footage on YouTube that is generated and posted by users is UGC. However, an Internet user who sends her friends a link to a YouTube site is engaging in eWoM. Likewise, if the owner of a digital camera writes an opinion about his or her camera on a consumer review website, that opinion represents a type of UGC, because the content originates with the user. If a video including the recommendation of the camera, generated by that user gets posted on YouTube, it is considered UGC. However, once the video is e-mailed to other Internet users by an acquaintance, it becomes eWoM. Thus, though UGC and eWoM are distinct concepts, they are related; to be successful, eWoM depends on the dissemination of content, and UGC has less influence without eWoM.” Thus, following the arguments of Cheong and Morrison (2008), brand selfies, including brand selfies that may contain a caption explicitly recommending the brand are regarded as a form of brand UGC, but they are not a form of WoM.

Extant research shows that online brand-related activities can lead to offline WoM. For instance, Wallace, Buil and de Chernatony (2016) found that consumers who engage with brands by “liking” brand pages on Facebook will offer WoM when they perceive a congruency between the brand and their self-identity. Individuals who ‘like’ brand pages belong to the category of *consumers* of brand UGC (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011), displaying low levels of social media activeness (Heinonen 2011; Li and Bernoff 2008, Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011). If individuals who showcase low engagement with brand UGC are willing to propagate WoM for a brand, then it is highly likely that *creators/producers* of brand UGC (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011) who display the highest level of online activeness, will too. In engaging with brands through brand UGC, individuals experience enjoyment and enthusiasm, with both the brand itself and through interactions with the wider community (Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2016). In turn, this engagement has a positive impact on self-brand connections, which will likely result in WoM, solicited or unsolicited in

nature. Solicited WoM is regarded as a reactive behavior, while unsolicited WoM is regarded as a pro-active behavior (Kiecker and Cowles 2002; Wien and Olsen 2014). Pro-active, unsolicited WoM enables individuals to promote themselves, and showcase their expertise about a brand (Godfrey, Jones, and Lord, 1986). Conversely, those engaging in solicited WoM seek to obtain status (Lampel and Bhalla, 2007). In sum, users may gain additional self and social benefits (Alexandrov, Lilly, and Babakus, 2013) by propagating WoM. This leads to the articulation of the following hypothesis:

H9: Brand selfie posting intent will positively influence the relationship with WoM

5.3 Summary

This chapter has presented the development of the conceptual model of the study, with motives and drivers for posting brand selfies identified through 20 semi-structured interviews. Based on this understanding, six motives and drivers for posting brand selfies were proposed, namely attention seeking, status seeking, social interaction and archiving, actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence. Additionally, the moderating effects of brand attachment and narcissism were inferred from the literature. Lastly, it is proposed that brand selfie posting intent will lead to WoM including solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM. The next chapter presents the methodology employed to test and validate the conceptual model.

6. Chapter 6: Main study methodology

6.1 Introduction

Following the articulation of a set of hypotheses leading to the development of a conceptual model in Chapter 5, this chapter presents the methodology employed to test and validate the model, a web-based self-completed survey administered through Qualtrics. The methodology details the steps followed to develop the questionnaire including the selected measures, pre-test and questionnaire piloting procedures, and the sampling method. Concluding the chapter, the characteristics of the sample are presented.

6.2 Methodology: conceptual model testing through web-based surveys

This section presents the methodological considerations surrounding the measurement and testing of the conceptual model. As previously noted, the U&G framework follows a two-step approach (e.g. Greenberg 1974; Rubin 2009) of qualitative interviews, followed by a survey to measure the interrelationships among the dependent and independent variables within a conceptual model (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1973). The third study, quantitative in nature, will therefore aim to address the following research questions:

RQ2: What are the main motives and drivers for posting brand selfies?

RQ3: What is the role of narcissism on brand selfies posting?

RQ4: What is the effect of brand selfies posting and consequently the effect of brand selfies posting intent on WoM?

6.2.1 Questionnaire design

To test the conceptual model, a web-based, self-completion survey was used to collect data. 'Web-based' signifies that the data were collected through the Internet with the use of an online questionnaire hosted by qualtrics.com. Qualtrics was chosen as it provides high flexibility in questionnaire design (scale types, format and layout, skip logics, filter questions, etc.), administration (custom administration link) and data retrieval formats (Das et al., 2011). Data collection was asynchronous, as the respondents had the freedom to answer the self-completion questionnaire at their leisure.

The choice of a web-based self-administered survey was motivated by several reasons. Firstly, surveys are the most appropriate tool to obtain data to test hypotheses (Baker, 2001). Secondly, surveys are deemed to be particularly appropriate to analyze relationships between various constructs (Klassen and Jacobs, 2001), a key objective of conceptual model testing. Furthermore, web-based surveys, can accommodate and gather rapid data collection at relatively low cost without any geographical boundaries (in this instance UK-wide) (Das et al., 2011). The questionnaire was designed using a rigorous process, involving a number of decisions regarding the *response strategy*, the *sequence* of questions, *wording* and *measurement* (Churchill, 1999). These decisions were then re-examined through the pre-testing and subsequent piloting of the survey to ensure coherence, clarity and consistency of the final instrument (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2007). The questionnaire in its entirety can be found in **Appendix 9**.

In terms of the *response strategy*, multiple-choice closed questions using predominantly seven points Likert scales were used throughout the survey. This type of response strategy is considered the most appropriate for self-administered surveys (Czaja and Blair, 2005), as they ensure ease of information recoding, save analysis time, and ensure response format homogeneity (Buckingham and Saunders, 2004). Additionally, prior research suggests that seven-point Likert scales have an ideal number of points, as scales with a larger amount of point do not tend to improve reliability or validity (Dawes, 2008). Scales with an uneven number provide a neutral option in the middle are preferable (Czaja and Blair, 2005). This is because respondents might not feel strongly about an issue (Czaja and Blair, 2005), and might otherwise feel that they are forced to take a stance (Cox, 1980).

In terms of *sequence*, the questionnaire was divided in 5 broad sections. First, information about the survey itself (topic, estimated completion time, use of data, confidentiality and withdrawal from the study) was presented to potential respondents with the aim of gaining their consent to take part in the research. The second section of the survey opened with a screening question to assess potential respondents' eligibility to take part in the research, by asking whether they had taken and posted a brand selfie online in the past (yes "proceed"; no "close survey"). This was followed by a series of questions pertaining to their gender to ensure an even mix of males and females were surveyed, and frequency use for *generic social media usage*, *selfie usage*

and *brand selfie usage* across various SNSs (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, SnapChat) using 1-7 Likert scales (1 “Never”, 7 “Very often”). Next, questions focused on gathering information about brand selfies posted online were presented. Respondents were asked to write down the name of the brand featured in the latest brand selfie they had posted online in an *open-ended type question*. The use of the Qualtrics ‘Piped Text’ option was subsequently implemented throughout the questionnaire allowing the platform to automatically retrieve the brand name stated in the open-ended question at the beginning of the survey and administer the rest of the survey against their chosen brand. Furthermore, respondents could *optionally* upload the brand selfie in question to qualtrics.com, confirm the brand category (e.g. Fashion, sports apparel, drinks etc.) their chosen brand fell into.

The third and fourth sections of the survey were respectively designed to measure consumer motives (attention-seeking, status-seeking, social interaction, and archiving), brand-led drivers (actual and ideal self-congruence), as well as brand attachment and narcissism as moderators. Furthermore, the dependent variable, posting intent, and outcome variables, solicited and unsolicited WoM were measured. Finally, the last section of the survey included additional demographics questions such age, education and income. Attention checks were added throughout the questionnaire to filter out careless respondents.

6.2.2 Measures

The measures employed to operationalize respondents’ consumer motives and brand-led drivers, moderators and outcomes are hereby discussed. In most cases, Likert scale anchors ranged from 1 “Strongly Disagree” to 7 “Strongly Agree”, with some exceptions which are discussed at a later stage in this section. Scale items were randomized throughout the survey, and the Qualtrics ‘force response’ was also selected to avoid the issue of missing values (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2007).

Consumer motives

Consistently with prior U&G literature pertaining to SNSs use, several *consumer motives* for posting brand selfies online were identified. These included attention-seeking, status-seeking, social interaction, and archiving. *Attention-seeking* (5 items), is defined as ‘the sentiments of getting attention and importance from others’ (Malik, Dhir and Nieminen 2016, p. 132), to seek self-validation from other (Bazarova and Choi, 2014). The construct was measured using items from Sung et al. (2016) prior research on selfies and included items such as ‘*I posted a brand selfie to attract attention*’ or ‘*I posted a selfie to be acknowledged by others*’ to measure the construct.

Second, *status seeking* (3 items), the desire for status through conspicuous consumption’ (Eastman, Goldsmith, Flynn, 1999) was measured through Eastman, Goldsmith, Flynn’s (1999) status consumption scale. These items were adapted to relate to the posting of selfies online as opposed to the consumption of selfies. Two items were subsequently removed from the original scale (‘*I would pay more if the product had status*’, ‘*the status of a product is irrelevant to me**’) as they were not deemed relevant in the context of brand selfie posting.

The third motive, *social interaction* (4 items) helps satisfy important social and psychological needs such as the need to belong to a group or community, but also to have positive feelings about oneself (McKenna and Bargh, 1998). In the context of SNSs and the Internet, social interaction encompasses behaviors such as commenting, but also seeking and providing information to others (Khan, 2017), in sum, communicating and interacting with others on the Internet (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo 2004; McKenna and Bargh 1998; Shao 2009). The social interaction scale was adapted from Park, Jaworski, MacInnis (2009) and included items such as ‘*I posted a selfie with Brand X...to stay in touch with other users*’ and ‘*I posted a selfie with Brand X...to feel like I belong to a community.*’

Finally, *archiving* (5 items), which pertains to the recording of memories to maintain a sense of the past (Belk, 1990; 2013), was adapted from Sung et al.’s (2016) prior research on motivations for posting selfies. The scale included items such as ‘*I posted a brand selfie to record a specific moment*’ and ‘*I posted a brand selfie to*

record my interests and hobbies' to capture various situation in which a user may post a selfie to record specific moments with a brand.

Brand-led measures

Two brand-led constructs are also included within the present conceptual model; actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence. First, both *actual and ideal self-congruence* were measured using Sirgy et al.'s (1997) scales comprising of 3 items each. While actual self-congruence reflects the fit between the *actual self* and the brand's personality (Aaker 1999; Malär et al. 2011), ideal self-congruence conversely pertains to *ideal self* and the brand's personality (Aaker, 1999), in other words what consumers like to aspire to become (Lazzari, Fiovaranti and Gough, 1978).

Moderating variables

Two moderators, brand attachment and narcissism are also included within the present model. The three dimensions of *brand attachment*, affection (4 items), connection (3 items) and passion (3 items) were measured using a scale adapted from (Thomson, MacInnis and Park, 2005). *Narcissism* was measured through the short version of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16) (Ames, Rose, and Anderson, 2005), a unidimensional measure of the construct which comprises of 16 pairs of statements. This measure was favored over Raskin and Hall's (1981) 40-item Narcissistic Personality (NPI-40), offering the benefit of reducing risks of time pressure and participant fatigue (Ames, Rose, Anderson, 2005). The NPI-16 has been used in other studies pertaining to SNSs use and narcissism and has been found to provide a reliable alternative measurement of the construct (e.g. Etgar and Amichai Hamburger, 2017).

Posting intent and WoM

The dependent variable, posting intent was measured using Jones, Mothersbaugh, and Beatty's (2000) scale of repurchase intention (4 items) which was adapted to measure the likelihood and probability of posting a selfie with a focal brand. Items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale anchored as "Strongly unlikely - Very likely" for the first item, "Strongly improbable - Very probable" for the second item, "Impossible – Possible" for the third item, and finally "No Chance – Certain" for the final item.

Finally, WoM was measured using a combination of scales from the literature. *Solicited WoM* (2 items) was adapted from Gremler, Gwinner and Brown (2001), while *unsolicited WoM* (2 items) was measured with a scale adapted from Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann (2005). Table 15 presents the adapted measures administered in the web-based survey.

Table 15: Adapted measures

Construct	Scale items
Consumer motives	
Attention seeking Sung et al. (2016)	I posted a selfie with Brand X... AS1: To be acknowledged by others AS2: To gain self-confidence from others' reaction AS3: To have my existence reaffirmed by others AS4: To show off AS5: To seek attention from the opposite sex
Status seeking Eastman et al. (1999)	I posted a selfie with Brand X... SS1: because the brand featured in it has status SS2: because I am interested in new products with status SS3: I posted a selfie with this brand because the brand has some snob appeal
Social Interaction Park, Jaworski, MacInnis (2009)	I posted a selfie with Brand X... SI1: To stay in touch with other users SI2: To meet interesting people SI3: To feel like I belong to a community SI4: To connect with people who share some of my values
Archiving Sung et al. (2016)	I posted a selfie with Brand X... AR1: To record a specific moment AR2: To record my everyday life AR3: To record a special day AR4: To record my life in general AR5: To record my interests and hobbies
Brand-led drivers	
Actual self-congruence Sirgy et al. (1997)	Brand X is... ASC1: consistent with how I see myself ASC2: a mirror image of me ASC3: is similar to me
Ideal self-congruence Sirgy et al. (1997)	Brand X is... ISC1: a mirror image of who I'd like to be ISC2: similar to the person I'd like to be ISC3: consistent with who I would like to be

Moderators	
Brand attachment Thomson, MacInnis and Park (2005)	<p>Please read and rate all of the following statements based on your level of disagreement/agreement with Brand x</p> <p>Affection: AFF1: This brand is an affectionate brand AFF2: This brand is a loved brand AFF3: This brand is a peaceful brand AFF4: This brand is a friendly brand</p> <p>Connection: CON1: I am attached to this brand CON2: I have a bond with this brand CON3: I am connected to this the brand</p> <p>Passion: PA1: This brand makes me passionate PA2: This brand makes me delighted PA3: This brand makes me captivated</p>
Narcissism Ames et al. (2005)	<p>On a scale of 1-7 where 1 is not at all how I feel and believe about myself, and 7 very much like what I feel and believe about myself.</p> <p>NPI1: I really like to be the center of attention NPI2: I think I am a special person NPI3: Everybody likes to hear my stories NPI4: I insist upon getting the respect that is due to me NPI5: I like having authority over people NPI6: I am going to be a great person NPI7: I can make anybody believe anything I want them to NPI8: I expect a great deal from other people NPI9: I like to be the center of attention NPI10: I am an extraordinary person NPI11: I always know what I am doing NPI12: I find it easy to manipulate people NPI13: People always seem to recognize my authority NPI14: I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so NPI15: I am apt to show off if I get the chance NPI16: I am more capable than other people</p>
Dependent and mediating variables	
Brand selfie posting intent Jones et al. (2000)	<p>POS1: How likely is it to post a selfie with this brand again in the future? [Strongly Unlikely/ Very Likely] POS2: How probable is it that you'll to post a selfie with this brand again in the future? [Strongly improbable/ Very probable] POS3: How possible is it that you'll post a selfie with this brand again in the future? [Impossible/Possible] POS4: What are the chances that you'll post a selfie with this brand again in the future? [No Chance/Certain]</p>
Solicited WoM Gremler et al. (2001)	<p>Solicited WoM: SO1: I encourage friends, relatives or peers to buy from this brand when they ask me my opinion SO2: I recommend this brand whenever anyone seeks my advice in this product category</p>
Unsolicited WoM: Algesheimer et al. (2005)	<p>Unsolicited WoM: UNS1: When the product category of this brand comes up in a conversation, I go out of my way to recommend this brand UNS2: I never miss an opportunity to recommend this brand to others, even if they do not ask me</p>

6.2.3 Pre-test and pilot

An iterative approach was taken to the development of the questionnaire, as the first draft rarely leads to the final instrument (e.g. Churchill 1999; Malhotra, Birks and Wills 2007). Even after careful crafting of the instrument, the researcher can still miss important issues, which pre-test and pilot studies can help detect (Czaja and Blair, 2005). Numerous rounds of revisions occurred, based on comments from supervisors, and feedback from peers. Pre-testing was first carried out on a sample of three friends and colleagues. During pre-testing, the questionnaires were administered face-to-face in order to apply cognitive interviewing techniques (Tourangeau, Rasinski, and Rips, 2000). In cognitive interviewing, respondents are asked to report directly on the internal cognitive processes employed to answer survey questions to identify potential issues with the wording of scale items. The survey was then seeded to a larger sample of friends and colleagues (n=15) in order to establish the survey length and identify problems in wording, instructions or question sequence (Buckingham and Saunders, 2004). These respondents were selected on the basis that they took brand selfies, but also due to their expertise in marketing and survey design (Diamantopoulos, Reynolds and Schlegelmilch, 1994). Regarding the administration of the pre-test questionnaire, the pilot study mimicked the survey conditions (Czaja and Blair, 2005), by seeding the Qualtrics survey link.

Following the initial pre-tests, minor spelling mistakes were corrected, and some of the adapted scale items were updated based on the feedback. The pre-test was followed by a pilot study on a larger number of respondents (n=50), using Qualtrics' survey panel. This pilot study was primarily used to check the reliability of the scale items a second time.

6.2.4 Sampling method

The sample for this study was recruited by a major research firm, Qualtrics, over a period of two weeks between 26th March 2018 and 10th April 2018, using their proprietary online panel. The panel was funded partly through the Worshipful Company of World Traders small research grant awarded in 2017, and partly through the supervisors' research funds. Online panels provide convenient access to a large pool of potential respondents at a relatively low cost (Smith et al., 2016). This approach was selected due to limitations in seeding out an online survey to the target

sample through SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or SnapChat. For instance, because Facebook is a private SNS (Convery and Cox, 2012), it was not possible to identify and contact potential respondents who post brand selfies directly, and no suitable Facebook groups of brand selfie takers, which tend to be publicly accessible, were identified. Similarly, because of the way SnapChat is designed, it would not have been possible to identify individuals who had posted brand selfies and shared the survey link. While Twitter and Instagram are public SNSs (Convery and Cox, 2012), seeding out a large number of survey invitations would be regarded as ‘spam’, and could have resulted in the researcher being banned from these SNSs. In sum, the Qualtrics panel was used to bypass restrictions linked to seeding the survey link, while ensuring a large enough sample was recruited for this research. The selection of the vendor is critical to ensure respondent integrity and data quality (Smith et al, 2016), and Qualtrics is generally deemed to be one of the most reliable (e.g. Boas, Christenson and Glick 2018; Chang and Vowles 2013).

This survey employed a *quota sampling* approach, a form of non-probability sampling, and used pre-defined control characteristics (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2007). Although, non-probability samples are problematic as they “do not allow for objective evaluation”, and the “estimates obtained are not statistically projectable to the population” (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2007, p. 501), quota sampling, in this instance, was deemed to be the most appropriate sampling method, allowing for a specific group of individuals to be surveyed: brand selfie users. In order to achieve generalizability, no quotas were placed on income, or age, or the SNS where selfies were posted. In order to take part in the survey, potential respondents were required to take brand selfies, while a roughly even mix of males and females were also recruited. The gender quota requirement was decided based on the content analysis findings, which revealed through random sampling that a broadly even mix of men and woman post brand selfies. High brand selfie posting frequency was however not a prerequisite to take part in the research. Potential respondents who were members of the Qualtrics research panel were notified by e-mail of the opportunity to take part in this study. The online panel is an opt-in, consensual, and privacy-protected subject pool for online research. After reading the study description, qualified and consenting respondents were led to the web-based survey.

6.3 Sample characteristics

The questionnaire was designed to collect sample demographics information such as age, gender, age and income, but also yield additional context into selfie and brand selfie frequency as well brand selfie product categories featured in brand selfies within the sample. In total, 663 survey responses were recorded, however 120 of those responses were incomplete. A further 32 responses were discarded from the sample (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2007) on the basis that the response at Q6 (*‘Please take a look at your Instagram/Facebook/Twitter account and identify the latest brand selfie that you shared within your social networks. In the box below please write down the name of the brand featured in this selfie. If your selfie contains multiple brands, please select the central brand in your selfie.’*) did not contain a specific brand name (e.g. answer ‘None / Don’t know’), which was a key criterion to complete a valid survey (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2007). This therefore resulted in an effective sample of n=511 responses, of which 52.1% were males (n=266) and 47.9% females (n=245).

Most participants within the sample were under 44 years of age (72% of the total sample), and the largest group were aged 25-34 (n=162; 31.7%). This in line with recent statistics which suggest that individuals aged 18-34 are largest group of selfie users (Tankovska, 2021). The majority of the participants were either college educated (n=168; 32.9%) or had a degree (n=160; 31.3%). Salary-wise, the sample was skewed towards lower earners, with 53.2% (n=272) of the total sample earning £29,999 per annum or less, arguably as the sample was mostly made-up of younger individuals. This in line with the UK’s government’s most up to date data, which indicates that the median salary in 2016 was £23,200 per annum (gov.co.uk, 2018). In sum, the sample provides an accurate representation of an average selfie-user. Table 16 provides a summary of the survey’s sample characteristics.

Table 16: Samples characteristics: age, income and education

Sample demographics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-24	76	14.9
25-34	162	31.7
35-44	130	25.4
45-54	83	16.2
55-64	48	9.4
65+	12	2.3
Rather not say	0	0
Income		
£20,999 or less	168	32.9
£21,000 - £29,999	104	20.4
£30,000 - £39,999	88	17.2
£40,000 - £49,999	52	10.2
£50,000 - £59,999	43	8.4
£60,000+	28	5.5
Rather not say	28	5.5
Education		
GSCEs	89	17.4
Some college, no qualifications	25	4.9
College (A-levels)	168	32.9
Bachelor's degree	160	31.3
Master's degree	55	10.8
Doctorate degree	8	1.6
Rather not say	6	1.2

The survey also aimed to establish through descriptive statistics the frequency for selfie and brand selfies posting. Selfie and brand selfie posting frequency was measure using Likert scale where was 1 = “never” and 7 = “all the time”. Descriptive statistics revealed differences between selfie and brand selfie use across different SNSs. In terms of selfie posting, Facebook was the favored SNS for posting selfies (Mean=5.10, SD=1.232) followed by Instagram (Mean=3.71, SD=1.873). As highlighted in Table 17, brand selfie posting frequency was however lower overall across all social networks.

Table 17: Means of selfie and brand selfie posting frequency by SNS

Selfie type	Social Networking Site	Mean	SD
Selfies	Facebook	5.10	1.232
	Instagram	3.71	1.873
	Twitter	3.67	1.798
	Snapchat	3.16	1.904
Brand selfies	Facebook	3.79	1.690
	Instagram	3.14	1.883
	Twitter	2.59	1.817
	Snapchat	2.84	1.964

Brands featured in brand selfies as reported within the sample spanned across all product categories including sports brands (n=93; 18.2%), drinks (n=88; 17.2%), fashion (n=82; 16%), tech (n=58; 11.4%), cosmetics (n=37; 7.2%), restaurants (n=35; 6.8%) and automotive (n=26; 5.1%). Finally, 18% of respondents (n=92) selected the other category and mentioned brands ranging from FMGC (e.g. Frosties, Mars, Nescafe, Bovril), as well as services brands (e.g. Nationwide, Virgin). These descriptive statistics are summarized in Table 18 below.

Table 18: Brand selfie product categories

Brand characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Product category		
Fashion (e.g. Zara, H&M, Topshop, Hugo Boss etc.)	82	16
Sports Apparel (Nike, Adidas, Puma etc.)	93	18.2
Automotive (BMW, Ford, Mercedes-Benz, Toyota, Porsche etc.)	26	5.1
Drinks (e.g. Jack Daniels, Corona, Coca-Cola, Pepsi etc.)	88	17.2
Restaurants or coffee shops (e.g. Starbucks, McDonald's, KFC etc.)	35	6.8
Cosmetics (e.g. L'Oréal or any other make-up brand such as Nars, Too Faced etc., male grooming products e.g. Gillette etc.)	37	7.2
Technology or electronic products (e.g. Apple, Apple iPhone, Samsung, Sony etc.)	58	11.4
Other	92	18

6.4 Summary

Based on a post-positivist paradigmatic stance, this chapter has presented the hypotheses, and quantitative methodology developed to test the conceptual model. The conceptual model comprises of four consumer motives for posting brand selfies (attention seeking, status seeking, social interaction and archiving) as well as two brand-led drivers (actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence), two moderators (brand attachment, narcissism) and finally, solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM as outcomes. The second part of the chapter discussed the methodology employed to test the conceptual model. Using the context of brand selfies posted within various SNSs (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, SnapChat), data was collected using a web-based self-completed survey administered through Qualtrics, which was also pre-tested and piloted. The sampling methodology, and the guidelines according to which the research was conducted were also discussed, and the sample characteristics presented. The next chapter of this thesis is dedicated to the analysis of the data using structural equation modeling (SEM).

7. Chapter 7: Main study results

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 has presented the methodology employed to test and validate the conceptual model, which was developed from a synthesis of the existing literature and preliminary qualitative research to identify a set of motives and drivers for posting brand selfies. This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the survey data with the aim of addressing research question 2 (what are the main motives and drivers for posting brand selfies?), research question 3 (what is the role of narcissism on brand selfies posting?) and research question 4 (what is the effect of brand selfies posting and consequently the effect of brand selfies posting intent on outcomes such as WoM?). It presents the statistical procedures followed to analyze the survey data to test and validate the model using SEM procedures. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is computed first to assess the measurement model's reliability and validity, followed by Common Method Variance (CMV) procedures and convergent and discriminant validity analyses. As a second step, structural theory path analysis is then performed to test the relationships (Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Hair et al. 2006) between the motives and outcomes of brand selfies. Moderation and mediation effects are subsequently computed, and the results presented.

7.2 Data analysis procedure

The main data analysis method selected for the study was structural equation modeling (SEM). Although a clear definition of SEM is hard to find (Nachtigall et al., 2003), Kaplan (2000, p. 1) proposes that SEM "can perhaps best be defined as a class of methodologies that seeks to represent hypotheses about the means, variances and covariances of observed data in terms of a smaller number of 'structural' parameters defined by a hypothesized underlying model". Thus, "SEM is a particularly effective method, to measure models, a statistical statement about the relations among variables" (Hoyle, 1995, p. 2), as it allows to measure "separate relationships for each of a set of dependent variables" (Hair et al., 2009, p. 19). As such, SEM was deemed the most appropriate statistical method given the type of research questions and the nature of the data. Furthermore, SEM is particularly suited when multiple relationships of dependent, independent variables, and moderating variables are investigated (Hair et al., 1998). Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach to SEM was followed

to test the model, by firstly conducting a CFA, and secondly a path analysis to test the hypotheses. The overall statistical analysis process followed to test the model is presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6: SEM analysis process

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • χ^2, CFI, TLI, RMSEA
Model respecification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • χ^2, CFI, TLI, RMSEA until good model fit is achieved
Common Method Variance (CMV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harman's single test factor • CFA marker technique
Convergent and discriminant validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cronbach Alpha, AVE, CR
Structural model testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Path analysis • Moderation, mediation

7.3 The measurement model

The first step in SEM is to conduct a CFA to provide evidence of the model's validity and a confirmatory test of the measurement theory (Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Hair et al. 2006). The measurement theory "specifies how measured variables logically, and systematically represent constructs involved in a theoretical model" (Hair et al., 2006, p. 693). The CFA thus helps establish "how measured variables represent a latent construct that is not measured directly" (Hair et al., 2006, p. 693). First, the path diagram was computed into IBM SPSS Amos 20, by specifying the latent constructs, the measured variables, the item loadings of specific constructs, the relationships among constructs and the error terms (Hair et al., 2006). All measures with the exception of brand attachment and WoM were unidimensional and contained multiple items which can help maximize reliability (Hair et al., 2006). The brand attachment scale contained 3 dimensions (affection, passion, connection), while WoM, and its solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM dimensions were computed using a second order model.

Once the CFA model was specified, the fit of the model was assessed using the model's χ^2 statistic, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) indices. These absolute fit indices are widely used to evaluate factor structures in branding research and offer a direct measure of how well the theory fits the sample data. The χ^2 statistic is used to test goodness of fit, and provides a test of statistical significance, and helps establish the fit of the model. The CFI compares the hypothesized model with a null model (or independence model) and considers the sample size. CFI values "range between 0 and 1 with higher values indicating better fit" (Hair et al., 2006, p. 693). The Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) was also checked (Tucker and Lewis, 1973), with values above 0.90 being indicative of good fit (Bentler, 1992), while values above 0.95 are even more desirable (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Finally, the RMSEA was also checked as the index has been considered the most informative criteria in covariance structure modeling (Byrne, 2010). The RMSEA index measures "how well a model fits a population, not just a sample used for estimation" (Hair et al., 2006, p. 667). RMSEA values below 0.08 are deemed to represent good fit (Hair et al., 2006). At first, the CFA model exhibited a poor fit with the TLI below the acceptable threshold of 0.90 (χ^2/df ratio of 2.254 ($p < 0.000$), CFI equal to .903, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) of .894, and root RMSEA equal to .05). Consequently, model respecifications were performed using modification indices until a good fit was obtained, by removing problematic items following the procedures proposed by Hair et al. (2006). Problematic items included 1 item from social interaction, 2 items from archiving, 2 items from brand attachment (affection dimension), 1 item from posting intent and 6 items from the NPI-scale. The scale items and their factor loadings are presented in Table 19.

Table 19: Standardized factor loadings

	Number of items	Factor loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Construct reliability	Average variance extracted
Attention seeking	5	0.829 0.851 0.83 0.752 0.707	0.893	0.896	0.633
Status seeking	3	0.894 0.903 0.698	0.862	0.874	0.700
Social Interaction		0.761 0.812 0.826	0.840	0.842	0.640
Archiving	3	0.738 0.741 0.724	0.777	0.778	0.539
Actual self-congruence	3	0.907 0.846 0.868	0.905	0.907	0.764
Ideal self-congruence	3	0.915 0.929 0.912	0.942	0.942	0.844
Brand attachment	8	0.751 0.645 0.83 0.843 0.831 0.801 0.811 0.814	0.906	0.920	0.794
Narcissism	10	0.853 0.678 0.735 0.636 0.823 0.717 0.701 0.628 0.772 0.623	0.893	0.896	0.633
Posting intent	3	0.925 0.938 0.804	0.916	0.970	0.941
WoM	4	0.863 0.906 0.904 0.783	0.862	0.914	0.519

Following the removal of these items, a good model fit was obtained with a χ^2/df ratio of 2.487 ($p < 0.000$), 898 degrees of freedom, the CFI equal to .926, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) of .918, and root RMSEA equal to .054 (Hair et al. 2009; Kline, 2005).

7.3.1 Common Method Variance

CMV was assessed using Harman's single factor test. CMV is the variance in a variable shared with other variables in the analysis (Hair et al. 2006; Malhotra, Birks and Wills 2007). CMV can occur as a result of artificially inflated relationships in self-reports such as surveys (Podsakoff and Organ 1986, Simmering et al. 2015; Williams et al. 2010) and is linked to respondents' consistency such as mood states, or social desirability (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986). This in turn can have a substantial effect such as inflating or deflating the relationships identified among constructs (Podsakoff, MacKenzie and Lee, 2003). The most commonly used test for CMV is Harman's single factor test, where all items of the questionnaire are used in an exploratory factor analysis (Malhotra, Kim and Patil 2006; Podsakoff, MacKenzie and Lee 2003). This technique allows to present all items as single factors to identify common method variance. If one factor emerges from the analysis, or if a single factor accounts for the majority of the covariance, then common method variance is present (Malhotra, Birks and Wills 2007; Podsakoff et al. 2003). The threshold for common method variance commonly used is 50%, which means that if a single factor explains more than 50% of the total variance then common method variance exists (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986). Harman's single factor test has been conducted in the present study using Principal Axis Factoring (unrotated). The single factor from the factor analysis explained 29% of the variance, which is much lower than the 50% which is the cut point for common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Thus, the results suggest that common method variance is not a problem in the present study.

7.3.2 Construct reliability and validity

As a final step, reliability, convergent and discriminant validity analyses were performed "to assess the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable" (Hair et al., 2006, p. 123). Convergent validity assesses the "degree to which measures of the same concept are correlated" while discriminant validity assesses the "degree through which two conceptually similar concepts are distinct" (Hair et al., 2006, p. 124).

As noted by Hair et al. (2006, p. 123) “reliability is an assessment of the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable”, to ensure that the measurements of the constructs are reliable when taken at a specific point in time, and that individual items in a scale all measure the same construct. The measurement of reliability is achieved through several tests. The first measure of reliability relates to internal consistency across each separate item by assessing inter-item correlation among items to ascertain the degree of consistency between several measurements (Hair et al., 2006). All item-to-total correlations exceeded 0.50 while inter item correlations exceeded 0.30 suggesting a satisfactory fit (Hair et al., 2006). Secondly, scale reliability assessing the consistency of the scale was computed. Reliability was achieved at dimension level for each construct with Cronbach’s Alpha all largely above the cut-off value of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Finally, reliability measures derived from the CFA were computed including construct reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE). Construct reliabilities (CR) were satisfactory and ranged from 0.778 to 0.942 above the advocated threshold (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al. 2006). Convergent validity was ensured thanks to AVE values above 0.50 for all constructs (Hair et al., 2006). Discriminant validity was established by ensuring that every factor was greater than the squared correlation of that factor (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) The intercorrelation matrix is presented in Table 20.

Table 20: Intercorrelation matrix

	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	Att. seeking	Status seeking	Social int.	Archiving	Actual SC	Ideal SC	Brand att.	Posting intent	WoM	Narcissism
Attention seeking	0.893	0.896	0.633	0.578	0.903	0.796									
Status seeking	0.862	0.874	0.700	0.578	0.903	0.760***	0.837								
Social interaction	0.840	0.842	0.640	0.520	0.845	0.668***	0.648***	0.800							
Archiving	0.777	0.778	0.539	0.534	0.778	0.640***	0.574***	0.721***	0.734						
Actual self-congruence	0.905	0.907	0.764	0.756	0.911	0.565***	0.597***	0.680***	0.731***	0.874					
Ideal self-congruence	0.942	0.942	0.844	0.756	0.943	0.563***	0.582***	0.623***	0.633***	0.870***	0.919				
Brand attachment	0.931	0.931	0.629	0.622	0.936	0.436***	0.532***	0.609***	0.612***	0.754***	0.739***	0.793			
Posting intent	0.906	0.920	0.794	0.476	0.938	0.415***	0.512***	0.557***	0.571***	0.628***	0.577***	0.652	0.891		
WoM	0.916	0.970	0.941	0.622	0.970	0.422***	0.547***	0.627***	0.542***	0.689***	0.706***	0.789***	0.690***	0.970	
Narcissism	0.862	0.914	0.519	0.267	0.925	0.517***	0.458***	0.496***	0.377***	0.438***	0.425***	0.351***	0.314***	0.375***	0.721

Notes: ***Significant at $p < 0.000$ **Significant at $p < 0.05$; * significant at $p < 0.10$

7.4 The structural model

Following the CFA, the theoretical model was assessed using a structural model path diagram in IBM SPSS Amos 20. While the CFA tests a measurement theory, the aim of the structural theory is to test the relationship between the constructs (Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Hair et al. 2006). The fit of the SEM was assessed using the χ^2 statistic, CFI, TLI and RMSEA. Results indicate a good model fit with χ^2/df ratio of 2.552 ($p < 0.000$), 300 degrees of freedom, the CFI equal to .958, a TLI of .951, and root RMSEA equal to .055 (Hair et al., 2009; Kline, 2005). Secondly, the SEM's model root mean square residual (RMR) was assessed. The RMR is a measure of average residuals, which is useful for comparing fits across models (Hair et al., 2006) with lower RMR represents a better fit. The model's RMR was .0730 thus also indicating a good fit. Lastly, to test the hypotheses, path estimates were assessed. As noted by Hair et al. (2006, p. 567), "path estimates the strength of each structural relationship in a path diagram" and enable to estimate the strength of each relationship within the path diagram. These estimates may be interpreted like regression coefficients (Hair et al., 2006). The results of the path analysis for each hypothesis are shown in Table 21.

Table 21: Results of SEM

Hypothesis	Beta	p-value	t-value	Acceptance / Rejection
(H1) Attention seeking -> posting intent	-.204	.005**	-2.805	Not supported
(H2) Status seeking -> posting intent	.236	.000***	3.474	Supported
(H3) Social Interaction -> posting intent	.171	.019*	2.340	Supported
(H4) Archiving -> posting intent	.180*	.029*	2.178	Supported
(H5) Actual SC -> posting intent	.258*	.018*	2.360	Supported
(H6) Ideal SC -> posting intent	.135	.134	1.499	Supported
(H7) Posting intent -> WoM	.713	.000***	14.305	Supported

Notes: $n=511$ ***Significant at $p < 0.000$ **Significant at $p < 0.05$; * significant at $p < 0.10$

H1

The first hypothesis was not supported. Interestingly, a significant inverse relationship between attention seeking and brand selfie posting intent ($\beta=-.204$, $p=.005$) was identified.

H2 to H5

Hypotheses H2 to H5 were all supported with varying degrees of statistical significance, supporting the U&G theory in that drivers for media use are varied, and in the case of brand selfies may be both consumer-led and brand-led. Data highlight strong support for the status seeking ($\beta=.236$, $p<.001$) and actual self-congruence ($\beta=.258$, $p=.018$) motives.

H6

While the data support the hypothesis that actual self-congruence positively influences posting intent, the ideal self-congruence motive was conversely not supported ($\beta=.135$, $p=.134$).

H7

A significant relationship was also identified between posting intent and WoM ($\beta=.713$, $p<.001$), confirming that posting brand selfies positively influences WoM about brands.

7.4.1 Moderation analysis

Two moderators were inferred to positively influence the relationship between the dependent and independent variables: brand attachment and narcissism. A moderation effect has been described as a model that postulates “when” or for “whom” an independent variable causes a dependent variable (Baron and Kenny 1986; Frazier, Tix and Baron 2004). In other words, a moderator modifies the strength positively, or negatively of a relationship (Wu and Zumbo, 2008). Moderation analysis determined which of the drivers of brand selfie posting were moderated, and at what level, by brand attachment and narcissism. All results were bootstrapped. Table 22 presents the moderation effects for each brand selfies motive and driver.

Table 22: Moderation effects

Moderation model Dependent variable: Posting Intent	Effect	SE	LLCI	UCLI	p value	Moderation result
Attention seeking x brand attachment	-.0064	.0238	-.0532	.0403	.7879	Not supported
Attention seeking x narcissism	-.0195	.0243	-.0673	.0283	.4236	Not supported
Status seeking x brand attachment	-.0291	.0245	-.0773	.0190	.2353	Not supported
Status seeking x narcissism	-.0614	.0261	-.1127	-.0100	.0192	Supported
Social interaction x brand attachment	-.0215	.0241	-.0689	.0258	.372	Not supported
Social interaction x narcissism	-.0065	.0269	-.0594	.0463	.8077	Not supported
Archiving x brand attachment	-.0529	.0254	-.1029	-.0029	.0380	Supported
Archiving x narcissism	-.0489	.0317	-.1111	.0133	.1231	Not supported
Actual self-congruence x brand attachment	-.0423	.0236	-.0887	-.0040	.0731	Partially supported
Actual self-congruence x narcissism	-.0186	.0270	-.0717	.0346	.4927	Not supported
Ideal self-congruence x brand attachment	-.0282	.0225	-.0724	.0160	.2110	Not supported
Ideal self-congruence x narcissism	-.0323	.0255	-.0823	.0178	.2059	Not supported

LLCI = lower level confidence interval.

UCLI = upper level confidence interval.

Negative interactions were identified for brand attachment and narcissism. Firstly, brand attachment was found to have a negative interactional effect with archiving ($\beta = -.0529$, $p = .0380$), actual self-congruence ($\beta = -.0423$, $p = .0731$) and posting intent. Narcissism was found to weaken the relationship between status seeking ($\beta = -.0614$, $p = .0192$) and posting intent.

7.4.2 Mediation analysis

Mediation analysis was performed to establish potential mediation effects between the motives for posting brand selfies, posting intent, solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM. WoM was modeled as a second order construct in SEM with two dimensions (i.e. solicited and unsolicited WoM). Mediation analysis through AMOS allowed us to check the specific indirect effect on each dimension providing additional insights into the mediating effect of posting intent. For the purpose of mediation analysis this was examined at the dimension level to yield. Mediating variables are prominent in psychology research with the view of testing whether a mediating variable transmits the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable (MacKinnon, Fairchild and Fritz, 2007). A mediational analysis attempts to “identify the process that leads from the independent variable to the dependent variable” (Muller, Judd and Yzerbyt, 2005, p. 852). Mediation can be likened to "a line of dominos and knocking over the first domino starts a sequence where the rest of the dominos are knocked over one after another" (Collins, Graham and Flaherty, 1998, p. 297). Thus, the independent variable is presumed to cause the mediator, while the mediator causes the dependent variable (Collins, Graham and Flaherty, 1998). As highlighted in the path analysis (Table 21), posting intent was found to positively influence WoM ($\beta=.713$, $p<.001$). The effect of posting intent on WoM was modelled as a second order factor, indicating indirect effects with both solicited WoM ($\beta=.337$, $p<.001$) and unsolicited WoM ($\beta=.340$, $p<.001$). The mediational effects for each supported motive on both WoM types are presented in Table 23.

Table 23: Mediation effects

Mediation model	SE	LLCI	UCLI	p value	Mediation result
Attention seeking -> posting intent -> WoM	-.0068	-.161	-.0017	.033	Supported
Status seeking -> posting intent -> WoM	.081	.038	.166	.008	Supported
Social interaction -> posting intent -> WoM	.054	.009	.164	.072	Supported
Archiving -> posting intent -> WoM	.066	.008	.228	.074	Supported
Actual self-congruence -> posting intent -> WoM	.092	.028	.233	.031	Supported
Ideal self-congruence -> posting intent -> WoM	.037	-.025	.124	.287	Not supported
Posting intent -> WoM -> solicited WoM	.337	.225	.390	.001	Supported
Posting intent -> WoM -> unsolicited WoM	.340	0.240	.403	.001	Supported

LLCI = lower level confidence interval.

UCLI = upper level confidence interval.

Mediational effects with WoM were identified for each of the supported motives at the 90% confidence level. Aiken, West and Reno (1991) have suggested that the significance criteria for moderating effects in hierarchical regression analyses are conservative and may be accepted at the .10 level. The data also provide support for solicited WoM ($\beta = .337, p < .001$), and unsolicited WoM ($\beta = .340, p < .001$) as outcomes of brand selfies posting mediated through posting intent.

7.5 Summary

The present chapter has presented the steps and procedures followed to test and validate the conceptual model of antecedents and outcomes of brand selfies. The factor structure of the conceptual model was first assessed using CFA procedures on the measurement model, followed by the evaluation of the structural model properties to test the research hypotheses. The measurement model exhibited good fit as well as good values of reliability and validity. 4 of the 6 hypothesized motives and drivers for posting brand selfies were supported. The data also show support for several moderation and mediation effects within the model. These findings and their implications are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 8: Discussion

8.1 Introduction

The present chapter discusses the implications of the study results presented in Chapter 7 analyzed using SEM, which aimed to address RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4. The discussion interlaces findings from the content analysis and semi-structured interviews. The consumer motives identified through the semi-structured interviews, attention seeking, status seeking, social interaction and archiving, were all hypothesized to positively impact posting intent. Additionally, two brand-led drivers, actual and ideal self-congruence were also hypothesized to positively impact brand selfie posting intent. To address past criticisms of the U&G theory (e.g. Sundar and Limperos, 2013), these six motives for media use were hypothesized to be moderated by two constructs (Conway and Rubin 1991; Katz et al. 1973; Lucas and Sherry 2004; Rubin 2009), thus tapping into the flexibility of U&G research, permitting to analyze individuals' activity in a plethora of contexts (Lin, 1996; Palmgreen 1984; Ruggiero 2000). These moderators were inferred from the literature and included brand attachment and narcissism. Lastly, solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM were inferred as outcomes mediated through posting intent following Palmgreen's (1984) recommendation that researchers should investigate one or more independent variables and more than one dependent variable.

This chapter structures the discussion of the results as follows. Firstly, a discussion of the consumer motives and brand-led drivers for posting brand selfies is presented. Secondly, the chapter provides a discussion of the moderation effects identified. Lastly, the outcomes of brand selfie posting are discussed. This chapter offers a thorough discussion of these findings.

8.2 Discussion of the hypotheses

Consistently with prior U&G studies, the empirical validation of the model confirms that no single factor drives brand selfie posting intent (Lucas and Sherry, 2004). The SEM data support most of the hypotheses except H1, which revealed a significant inverse relationship between attention seeking and brand selfie posting intent, and H6, which was rejected. Negative interactions were identified for each of the moderators, brand attachment and narcissism. Lastly, the data also highlights

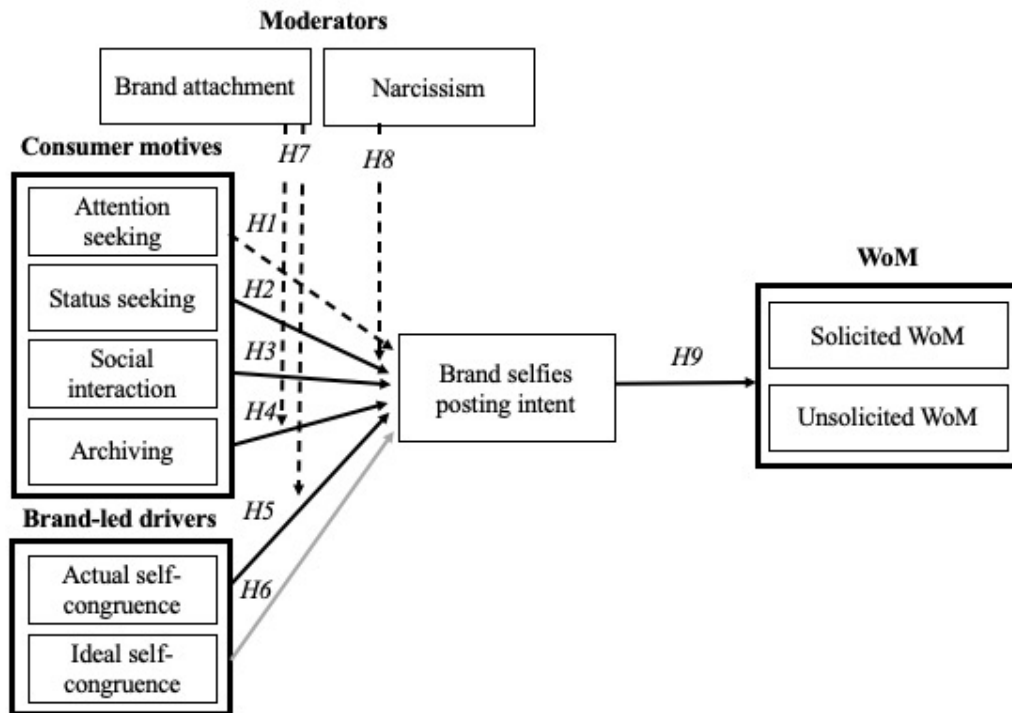
partial support for solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM as outcomes mediated through brand selfie posting intent.

Table 24 summarizes the research hypotheses and their results. The table presents an overview of the confirmed or rejected relationships between consumer motives and brand-led drivers and outcomes for posting brand selfies. For clarity, the supported hypotheses, moderating and mediating effects are also depicted in Figure 7.

Table 24: Summary of the research hypotheses

Hypotheses		Acceptance/Rejection
H1	Attention seeking will positively influence brand selfie posting intent	Not supported
H2	Status seeking will positively influence brand selfie posting intent	Supported
H3	Social interaction will positively influence brand selfie posting intent	Supported
H4	Archiving will positively influence brand selfie posting intent	Supported
H5	Actual self-congruence will positively influence brand selfie posting intent	Supported
H6	Ideal self-congruence will positively influence brand selfie posting intent	Supported
H7	Brand attachment moderates the relationship between consumers' motives and posting intent	Partially supported
H8	Narcissism moderates the relationship between consumers' motives and posting intent	Partially supported
H9	Brand selfie posting intent will positively influence the relationship with WoM	Supported

Figure 7: Drivers, moderators and outcomes of brand selfies



8.3 Consumer motives for posting brand selfies

The first set of hypotheses concerns consumer motives for posting brand selfies. The conceptual model posited that four of those motives were consumer-led and driven by the self with the brand acting as a relational partner to seek attention from others, seek status, interact with others (social interaction) or archive memories and the self. 4 of the 6 hypotheses were supported, with the exception of attention seeking and ideal self-congruence. This section provides an in-depth discussion of each hypothesis.

Attention seeking -> posting intent

Attention seeking was the first presumed motive for posting brand selfies identified through the semi-structured interviews. Unexpectedly, the data indicates a significant inverse relationship with posting intent suggesting that attention seekers are likely not to post brand selfies despite theoretical support for the relationship found in previous U&G studies pertaining to digital photo-sharing (DeWall 2011; Malik, Dhir and Nieminen 2016; Urista, Dong and Day 2009), including selfies (Sung et al., 2016). Crucially, these findings highlight a key difference between the motives for non-brand related UGC posting and brand UGC posting, which unlike prior research on photo-based UGC, is not motivated by attention seeking purposes. There are several potential

explanations for differences between UGC and brand UGC motives. Firstly, SNSs are considered important platforms for gaining or sharing a discussion through status updates or photos, and these platforms provide the perfect avenue to fulfil those needs, by gaining likes and comments, and ultimately popularity (Malik, Dhir and Nieminen, 2015). For instance, in Sung et al.'s study (2016), selfies were deemed to enable individuals to build a desirable self-image and pursue social validation goals (Bazarova and Choi 2014; Sung et al. 2016; Urista, Dong and Day 2009). When seeking attention, individuals ultimately aim to draw attention to the self, however the inclusion of a brand could detract attention from the self, thus preventing attention seekers from achieving their goals. An example of this would be if a comment was received on the brand selfie about the brand itself rather than the self. Such comment about the brand could prevent the attention seeker from feeling they have achieved his/her goals or satisfied his/her needs.

Furthermore, this inverse relationship may be explained by looking more broadly at the hypotheses supported within the model. Status seeking, as opposed to attention seeking, was empirically validated as a motive for posting brand selfies. Both the attention seeking motive and the status seeking motive have an ulterior motive in common: drawing attention to the self. While the attention seeker seeks to get "attention and importance from others" (Malik, Dhir and Nieminen, 2016, p. 132), status seekers strive to "improve their social standing through consumption" (Eastman et al., 1999, p. 310), a goal which may be achieved through brand selfies. While these constructs are closely related through their common goal, it may well be that what was deemed to be an attention seeking behavior through the qualitative interviews, may in fact have been a status seeking a behavior.

Status seeking -> posting intent

The first hypothesis supported was status seeking. Support for this hypothesis is consistent with other studies suggesting that status seeking is a motive for social media use such as online news sharing (Lee and Ma, 2011), Facebook group participation (Park, Kee and Valenzuela, 2009) and virtual community participation (Lampel and Balla 2007; Liu, Shuckert and Law 2018). Status seeking behaviors have arguably been exacerbated in recent years as a result of the rise in popularity of SNSs and virtual brand communities (Kozinets 1999; Lampel and Balla 2007; Liu, Shuckert and Law

2018), as well as the professionalization and commoditization of SNSs (van Driel and Dumitrica 2020). For many individuals, SNSs are no longer solely about creating UGC. Brand selfies are seen as a route through which some individuals can claim symbolic power (van Driel and Dumitrica 2020). Through brand selfies, individuals carefully craft their identities (e.g. Belk 1988; Goffman 1959; O’Cass 2004; O’Cass and Frost 2002; Wyer, Hung and Chiang 2018) with a view of elevating the self (e.g. Belk 1988; Goffman 1959; O’Cass 2004; O’Cass and Frost 2002). The three studies conducted, showed that individuals post brand selfies with a variety of high and low involvement brands. For those in the early stages of status seeking, low involvement or utilitarian brand selfies may contribute to status elevation (Liu, Shuckert and Law, 2018) as these users initially aim to grow their following. The brands commonly included in brand selfies as suggested by the survey data were sports apparel brands (18.2%), drinks brands (17.2%), fashion brands (16%), technology brands (11.4%) and cosmetic brands (7.2%). Fashion brands are regarded as types of products that can not only help increase one’s status, but also express one’s identity (O’Cass and Frost, 2002). Similarly, the showcasing of the latest tech gadget could be regarded as a means through which individuals seek status. In sum, brand selfies help these individuals showcase their possessions as a symbol of their achievements.

Some users will also strive to elevate their status online by achieving micro-celebrity status through brand selfies (Senft 2013; Marwick 2015) through the posting images of everyday life with carefully selected brands (van Driel and Dumitrica, 2020). Consistently with Zappavigna and Zhao (2020), hashtagging behaviors were found to be used strategically to increase the visibility of these photographs through status-seeking ‘follow me’ hashtags such as #followme, #likeforlike, #follow4follow (n=150; 7.5%). The content analysis revealed that such status seeking hashtags are more commonly used among males. However, the strategic use of hashtags also extends to participation in hashtag-based communities (Dessart and Duclou, 2019), which may be leveraged to elevate one’s status. Analysis of the types of hashtags identified in brand selfies showed that individuals simultaneously partake in several brand-based communities and identity-based communities. Participation in these communities was achieved through social identity hashtags such as #fashionblogger, #fitfam, #instagrammer, #photographer, as well as personal identity hashtags (e.g. #blackhair, #brunette, #greeneyes, #blonde, #piercings #tattoos). The content analysis

also revealed that social identity hashtags are commonly used across brand selfies and usies, which suggests that brand selfies and usies may equally be used to elevate one's sense of self or status (Belk 1988; Goffman 1959; O'Cass 2004; O'Cass and Frost 2002; van Driel and Dumitrica, 2020). Whilst status seekers conform to group norms within each community, they will also strive to maintain their need for uniqueness (Clark et al., 2007) by incorporating personal identity trait-based hashtags in their brand selfies. In summary, support for this hypothesis suggests that brand selfies offer individuals to seek status (O'Cass and McEwen, 2004), gain recognition, and social standing online (Eastman et al. 1999; O'Cass and McEwen 2004). The content analysis suggests that females will be more likely than males to tag several brands in their brand selfies indicating brand peripherality. This would be the case for instance with a #fashionblogger posting an outfit with several items of clothing. Thus, for status seekers, brands are seen as key relational partners to achieve status seeking objectives within both the in-group and the out-group, often through the strategic use of hashtags.

Social interaction -> posting intent

The second hypothesis supported was social interaction which was found to positively influence posting intent. The social interaction motive is an established motive for media and social media use which has been validated across several SNSs and UGC types (e.g. Haridakis and Hanson 2009; Khan 2017; McQuail, Blumler, and Brown 1972; Mull and Lee 2014; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011; Smock et al. 2011). In the case of brand selfies, social interaction helps achieve relational and interactional needs (Hunt and Langstedt 2014; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011; Xu, Yao and Theo 2020) in two ways: with others, as well as with brands themselves (Kwon et al., 2014). Overall, online interactions share many similarities with offline interactions with a view of discussing brands (Xu, Yao and Theo, 2020).

Brand selfies act in a similar way as status update by allowing users to share "what's going on" and what they've purchased within their networks in a visual manner (Ko, Cho and Roberts, 2005). A stereotypical manifestation of the social interaction motive would be someone posting a brand selfie with a Starbucks coffee. Through the posting of such brand selfies, users extend their life to virtual environments, and interact with people they do not see regularly, or like-minded others (Kwon et al., 2014). Furthermore, brand selfies posting enables an interactional person-thing-person

tripartite, appealing to consumers' need to connect and interact with others. Given the interactive nature of SNSs, individuals may seek interactions within the in-group (i.e. friends and followers) or the out-group (i.e. other brand selfie users who may have hashtagged a brand, or maybe fans or consumers of a brand), as well as brands themselves. Interactions with brands are achieved either by @ tagging the brand, as well as through participation in brand-hashtag communities (Dessart and Duclou, 2019) on Instagram. Brand admirers or brand fans within a brand-hashtag community may acknowledge membership in the community and in turn engage in social relations (Carlson et al., 2008) by following the brand selfie poster and beginning a virtual relationship with the user. In sum, brand selfie posting enables individuals to co-construct and extend the self through likes and comments (Belk 2014; Grubb and Grathwohl 1967), however the brand may be regarded as a prop rather than necessarily a meaningful relational partner.

Archiving -> posting intent

The third consumer motive supported was archiving, corroborating with prior empirical research on selfies motives (Etgar and Amichai-Hamburger 2017; Sung et al. 2016). While SNSs have been described as spaces where individuals can maintain social and relational memories (Richardson and Hessey, 2009), the same may be said about brands. Support for this hypothesis cements the idea that selfies and brand selfies enable the creation and maintenance of a diary of the self to recall special moments and experiences with brands, and cement social and relational memories with these brands (Richardson and Hessey, 2009). As highlighted through the semi-structured interviews selfies are used to archive the self and keep a diary of the self in various situations and with various types of brands, such as drinking a corona on holiday (a low involvement product) through to the acquisition of a new car (a high involvement product). In terms of characteristics, several archiving hashtags emerged through the content analysis, including #ThrowBackThursday, #TBT, #memories, #latergram, #FlashbackFriday or #lastfriday, however these hashtags were only identified in a small number of selfies compared to other types of hashtags (n=31, 1.6%). The content analysis also revealed that archiving hashtags were more commonly used in usies, alongside geo-tagging and the use of positive affective states hashtags. This therefore suggests that usies enable the archiving of the self, places and brands. The archiving of brand selfies may be regarded as situation-specific with the brand acting as a prop

to express one's self-image in a given situation (Schenk and Holman, 1980). As previously noted, In curating their identity into a visual archive, individuals self-document their lives, and in doing so extend the self (Belk, 1993).

8.4 Brand-led drivers for posting brand selfies

The second set of hypotheses concerns brand-led drivers, which comprised of the actual self-congruence and ideal-self congruence motives. Extant research has shown that consumers incorporate brands as part of their self-concept (Giakoumaki and Krepapa, 2020), be it their actual selves (Fox et al. 2018; Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012) or their ideal selves (Fox et al. 2018; Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012; Ma, Yang and Wilson, 2016; Pounders, Kowalczyk and Stowers 2016). The data in the present research provide support for the actual self-congruence motive, but not ideal self-congruence. The results for both drivers are discussed in this section.

Actual self-congruence -> posting intent

The first brand-led driver supported was actual self-congruence. The posting of brand selfies enables individuals to express their actual or true self to others through brands: 'this brand's personality is like who I really am' (Aaker 1999; Malär et al. 2011). In other words, actual self-congruent individuals post brand selfies serving the purpose of defining how they see themselves (Mittal 2006; Sirgy, 1982). In doing so, these individuals incorporate those brands as part of their self-concept (Giakoumaki and Krepapa, 2020), with a view of protecting, maintaining or enhancing it (Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012). Furthermore, through the process of posting brand selfies, the self becomes a social object in that social interactions are sought (e.g. Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak and Sirgy 2011; Blumer 1969; Solomon 1983). Thus, self-image becomes part determined via brand selfie posting through the reactions of others in the form social interactions such as likes or comments.

Scrutiny of consumer-generated hashtags in brand selfies also appear to confirm these findings, and are aligned with current trends of photo-based SNS self-presentation (e.g. van Driel and Dumitrica, 2020). Hashtags describing trait-based characteristics were found to be the most commonly used type of hashtags overall (n=382, 19.1%), incorporated in brand selfies to describe, or reinforce features such as

hair or eye-color (e.g. #blackhair, #brunette, #greeneyes, #blonde). Such hashtags were used more prominently among females. Females were also more likely to use situational self-image hashtags such as #todayiamwearing, #lookoftheday #ootd, #ootn, #motd, arguably to influence the perception of others when posting brand selfies (Schenk and Holman, 1980), and showcase their most authentic self (Iqani and Schroder, 2015) more than males. This congruency results in a positive self-belief and brand image perception which in turn influences posting intent (Sirgy, 1982).

Ideal self-congruence -> posting intent

The hypothesis that ideal self-congruence positively influences brand selfie posting intent was conversely rejected. While the actual self is regarded as something that is psychologically close, the ideal self is regarded as something psychologically more distant (Malär et al., 2011). Individuals posting brand selfies as a result of ideal-self congruence would have been expected do so as a result of the imagination of ideals and goals related to what they would like to be (Wylie 1979). Corroborating with these findings, the content analysis revealed that only 5.6% (n=112) of the brand-selfie analyzed contained ideal-self hashtags, significantly lower than actual-self hashtags. The rejection of this hypothesis could be explained by the fact that the brands included in brand selfies within the sample (cf. Table 18) did not have the right cachet to make these individuals feel good about who they are, and consequently self-enhance (Malär et al., 2011).

Additionally, these findings contradict extant research which suggests that individuals present both the actual and ideal selves through brand linkages (Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012), brand UGC creation (Kim and Kim, 2016) on Facebook (Hollenbeck and Kaikati 2012), selfies (Pounders, Kowalczyk and Stowers, 2016) and brand selfies (Fox et al. 2018; Ma, Yang and Wilson, 2016). Methodologically, the present study is closest to that of Fox et al. (2018) who developed and tested a conceptual model with Millennials, while others scrutinized brand linkages on Facebook (Kim and Kim, 2016), employed qualitative techniques (Hollenbeck and Kaikati 2012; Pounders, Kowalczyk and Stowers, 2016) or content analysis research techniques (Ma, Yang and Wilson, 2016). The differences between the present research and Fox et al.'s research (2018) could be explained for several reasons. Firstly, Fox et al.'s study (2018) was conducted on a sample of Millennials,

while the present research was conducted on a broader sample age-wise. It has been suggested that Millennials are highly concerned in their self-image (Bucuta, 2015), which may explain why they express different facets of the self. Another key difference is that the author's studies scrutinized marketer-led brand selfies, while the present studies scrutinized brand selfies in general. It may well be that in posting marketer-led brand selfies, individuals experience higher levels of public self-consciousness, and are highly concerned about the impression they make (e.g. Carver and Scheier, 1987). In posting marketer-led brand selfies, these users become social objects (Malär et al., 2011). In contrast, ideal self-congruence does not drive posting intent for non-marketer led brand selfies, arguably as such brand selfies do not provide sufficient opportunities to project an idealized version of the self.

8.5 Moderating effects

The hypotheses relating to the moderating role of brand attachment and narcissism have proven to be more problematic and were only partially supported. This section is dedicated to discussion the moderation effects identified.

8.5.1 Brand attachment

The hypothesis that brand attachment moderates the relationship between consumers' motives for posting brand selfies and posting intent was only partially supported. The data suggest that brand attachment weakens the archiving and actual self-congruence motives, however no moderation effects were identified with the other supported motives.

Archiving -> brand attachment -> posting intent

In the present research, brand attachment was found to found to weaken posting intent when brand selfies are posted to archive the self. This contradicts Kedzior and Allen's (2016) suggestion that brand selfies users are committed to their brands, a construct similar to attachment, providing empirical evidence to the contrary. A potential reason for these findings could be that individuals posting archiving selfies are not yet emotionally attached to the brands featured in brand selfies or may not have yet established a relationship with those brands. The process of becoming attached to an object or a brand occurs over time through product use and investment (Hofstetter,

Kunath and John 2020; Mittal 2006). Thus, the posting of a brand selfie to express and archive the self will spark a “self-inferential process: (Hofstetter, Kunath and John, 2020, p. 1) that may lead to involvement or attachment over time (Hofstetter, Kunath and John 2020; Mittal, 2006). In sum, brand selfies posting may contribute to relationship formation over time.

As demonstrated through the first two studies conducted, individuals are motivated to post brand selfies to archive a moment with the brand acting as a prop to express one’s self-image (Schenk and Holman, 1980), and further the self-concept (Mittal, 2006). However, the consumer-generated hashtag analysis revealed that brand selfies containing an archiving hashtag were more common across usies. These brand selfies are arguably posted to commemorate a special moment with friends in a specific location or situation, rather than necessarily being about archiving a special brand. Furthermore, the brands mentioned in the qualitative interviews in relation to the archiving motive were often consumables (e.g. Corona beer, Macs cosmetics) but not possessions, which are part of the ‘I’ (Mittal, 2006). While brand attachment has been found to predict several positive interactional outcomes (e.g. Park, Jaworski, MacInnis 2010; Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005), the construct does not enhance brand selfie posting intent.

Actual self-congruence -> brand attachment -> posting intent

Brand attachment was also found to weaken posting intent when brand selfies were posted as a result of actual self-congruence. Similarly, to the archiving motive, these results suggest that actual self-congruent consumers digitally associate themselves with certain brands (Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012), but are not yet attached to those brands. The posting of brand selfies however suggests that these individuals are already engaged with the brand (e.g. Van Doorn et al. 2010; Vivek Beatty and Morgan 2012), by actively participating in the sharing of experiences with a brand online (Brodie et al., 2013). In behaviorally engaging with brands through the posting of brand UGC, individuals, over time, will likely develop commitment or attachment towards those brands (e.g. Brodie et al. 2013; Hofstetter, Kunath and John 2020; Vivek Beatty and Morgan 2012).

8.5.2 Narcissism

In spite of robust evidence of the role of narcissism on selfie and brand selfie posting (e.g. Arpaci 2018; Fox and Rooney 2015; Halpern, Valenzuela and Katz 2016; Kim and Chock 2017; March and McBean 2018; McCain et al. 2016; Moon et al. 2016; Shane-Simpson et al. 2019; Singh, Farley and Donahue 2018; Sorokowski et al. 2015; Wang 2019; Weiser 2015), the data in the present research suggest that narcissism weakens posting intent when brand selfies are posted to seek status. This section provides a discussion of these results.

Status seeking -> narcissism -> posting intent

The moderation results for narcissism provide another interesting finding. In the presence of narcissism, status seeking marginally becomes a weaker driver of posting intent. Narcissism is the personality trait most recognizable through snap judgements (Vazire et al., 2008), and is commonly associated with anti-social behaviors (Fox and Rooney, 2015). Indeed, as highlighted through the qualitative interviews, selfies are commonly spontaneously associated with the personality trait of narcissism. For status seekers, this personality trait is likely to be non-desirable as their brand selfies may be evaluated as less attractive (Re et al., 2016), which could be detrimental to status seekers' self-enhancement objectives (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). For instance, a negative reaction to brand selfies posted online such as a negative comment could be detrimental to these individuals' sense of self-concept (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967).

Status seekers and narcissists however have one goal in common: to attract new 'friends' and grow their networks (Buffardi and Campbell 2008; Carpenter 2012; Liu, Shuckert and Law 2018; Senft 2013). However, whilst narcissists will not hesitate to employ cheater strategies (Fox and Rooney, 2015), status seekers will conversely carefully craft online personas (Marwick 2015; Senft 2013; Wyer, Hung and Jiang 2018), and strategically use hashtags to increase their status within the in-group and the out-group. Thus, to achieve status, status seekers will refrain from engaging in behaviors that could be perceived as narcissistic or exhibitionistic when posting brand selfies.

8.6 Outcomes of brand selfies

The last set of hypotheses concern the outcomes of brand selfies, WoM. The data supports the hypothesis that posting intent positively influences WoM. The present research empirically demonstrates that the posting of a brand selfie can also lead to offline WoM, beyond SNSs. Consumers will therefore engage in offline WoM during spontaneous encounters with others about products and brands they have directly experienced (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014). It may well be that this WoM is triggered following gratifications experienced from brand selfie posting. The WoM propagated may be both solicited and unsolicited WoM, mediated through posting intent. Mediations were identified for each of the supported motives and drivers are discussed in the next section.

Status seeking -> posting intent -> solicited WoM/unsolicited WoM

Posting intent was found to mediate both solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM when selfies were posted to seek status. The transmission of WoM provides status seekers an additional opportunity to self-promote and seek-status. Self-promotion will likely occur through unsolicited WoM (Godfrey, Jones, and Lord, 1986) enabling individuals to showcase their expertise about a brand, or their social identity such as being a #fashionblogger, an #instagrammer, or a #photographer. In contrast, through solicited WoM, status seekers can direct the conversation in a way that showcases their expertise and knowledge, whilst avoiding trick questions (Godfrey, Jones, and Lord, 1986). Solicited WoM will help these individuals further enhance their status offline (Lampel and Bhalla, 2007), particularly if the individual was to showcase their brand selfies or SNSs profiles in a WoM situation or encounter.

Social interaction -> posting intent -> solicited WoM/unsolicited WoM

Posting intent was also found to mediate solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM when brand selfies were posted to interact with others. Individuals who seek social interaction through brand selfies, do so to satisfy their relational and interactional needs (Hunt and Langstedt 2014; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011). This desire for relational and interactional needs, also leads to a greater willingness to propagate WoM. Through solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM, these individuals expect to gain additional personal and social benefits when sharing their opinions about products and brands (Alexandrov, Lilly, and Babakus, 2013). These benefits may include social

bonding, with a view of creating stronger social ties with others (Baumeister and Leary, 1995), social-intention needs (Alexandrov, Lilly, and Babakus, 2013) by helping others seeking information about a brand (Dichter 1966; Sundaram 1998), or even to help the brand itself.

Archiving -> posting intent -> solicited WoM/unsolicited WoM

Mediations were identified for the archiving motive for both solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM. As highlighted through the studies conducted, selfies are used to archive the self and keep a diary of the self in various situations and with both low and high involvement products and brands, in turn extending the self (Belk,1993). Thus, the simultaneous archiving of the self, places and brands increases brand engagement (e.g. Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Papasolomou, 2020) through posting intent leading to both solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM.

Actual self-congruence -> posting intent -> solicited WoM/unsolicited WoM

Mediational effects were also identified for the actual self-congruence motive. Consistently with Wallace, Buil and de Chernatony (2016), these findings suggest that that congruency with a brand predicts WoM. Actual self-congruent consumers will offer solicited WoM if the brand resonates with their inner selves (Wallace, Buil and de Chernatony, 2016) in order to maintain the integrity of their self-image, particularly when the self is threatened (Steele, 1998). This in turn helps these users protect the self (Sirgy, 1982).

8.7 Summary

The objective of this chapter was to interpret the results of the data analysis in the light of the U&G framework. The conceptual model draws from the outcomes of the semi-structured interviews to present a set of motives for posting brand selfies. Chapter 5 articulated a set of hypotheses, while the main methodology employed to test and validate the conceptual model was presented in Chapter 6. This chapter has presented the results in the light of the existing literature.

Support was found for 4 of the 6 hypotheses and evidences the multi-dimensional and interactional nature of the motives for posting brand selfies online. The data suggests that brand selfies are posted as a result of goal-oriented consumer

motives including status seeking, social interaction, and archiving, as well as brand led motives manifesting itself in the form of self-congruency. Moderation hypotheses were only partially supported. The data provided unexpected findings in relation to the hypothesized moderators for posting brand selfies, brand attachment and narcissism which were all found to weaken posting intent. Brand attachment was found to weaken posting intent in relation to the archiving and actual self-congruence motives. These findings suggest that consumers who post brand selfies are not yet attached to brands however brand selfie posting may contribute to relationship formation. The third, moderator narcissism was found to weaken the status seeking motive contradicting extant research on the prominent role of the personality trait on selfie behaviors. Lastly, the data suggest that in posting brand selfies consumers will also propagate solicited and unsolicited WoM, a desirable outcome for brand managers. Overall, these results contribute to the understanding of the brand selfie phenomenon and offers several methodological, theoretical and managerial implications, which are discussed in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter (Chapter 8), the results of the main quantitative study were presented and discussed. This concluding chapter offers an overview of the thesis and research problem, followed by the main conclusions deriving from this research including the theoretical contributions, managerial implications, limitations and future research directions.

9.2 Overview of the thesis

This study set out to identify and empirically test the motives for posting brand selfies, a popular sub-genre of selfies and ubiquitous form of brand UGC. By reviewing the literature from several academic disciplines across sociology, psychology, communication and marketing, this thesis starts by presenting the selfie phenomenon as a modern form of digital self-portraiture, which enables the presentation and expression of the self. Review of the selfie literature highlights a highly fragmented and diffused body of research. Crucially, the review of the brand selfies literature suggests that research on this form of brand UGC has remained scant, highly conceptual in nature, and has failed to provide empirical generalizability on the phenomenon. On this basis, this research answered Sung, Kim and Choi's (2018) call for research into consumers' motivations for posting brand selfies.

To address the identified research gaps, three studies were developed based on the U&G theory with a view of advancing the understanding of the brand selfie phenomenon through primary and secondary research methods. In order to gain a holistic understanding of the brand selfie phenomenon, the research was developed to firstly, scrutinize consumers' actual behavior with brand selfies and identify their visual and textual characteristics (study 1), and secondly explore what brand selfie users say they do when posting them through the development and testing of a conceptual model (studies 2 and 3).

The first study, a quantitative content analysis of n=2,000 brand selfies was conducted to concurrently analyze the visual and textual characteristics of brand selfies, including the photographs themselves, consumer-generated hashtags and geo-

location tagging practices. The purpose of this exploratory study, was to identify and measure how these characteristics differed across genders and selfies vs. usies. By expanding the methodological scope of U&G (Papacharissi, 2008), the resulting findings helped uncover several characteristics of brand selfies to understand what consumers actually do when posting brand selfies that may not have emerged through primary research methods. These important findings also complemented the discussion of the motives, notably in relation to consumer-generated hashtags use.

To develop and test the conceptual model, a post-positivist approach was adopted. Firstly, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with (brand) selfie users with the aim of identifying a set of motives and drivers for posting brand selfies. These motives were uncovered by using stimulus materials comprising of brand selfie images randomly selected, followed by a discussion of respondents' own selfies behaviors using projective techniques and photo elicitation techniques (Harper, 2002). Through these interviews, four consumer motives, (attention seeking, status seeking, social interaction, archiving) and two brand-led drivers (actual self-congruence, ideal self-congruence) were identified.

The conceptual model was subsequently developed addressing recommendations that U&G models should incorporate motives for media use, moderating and mediating variables, and outcomes (Rubin 1994; Ruggiero 2000). Drawing from the literature on the self-concept, brand attachment and narcissism were hypothesized as moderators, while solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM were inferred as outcomes. In sum, the final conceptual model developed consisted of four consumer motives and two brand-led drivers for posting brand selfies, two moderators and two outcomes mediated through posting intent.

The hypotheses were tested using SEM from survey data of n=511 UK-based respondents collected using Qualtrics' online survey panel. Results provide support for 4 of the 6 hypotheses. Data reveal that status seeking, social interaction, archiving and actual self-congruence all positively influence posting intent, while attention seeking, and ideal self-congruence were rejected. The hypotheses that brand attachment and narcissism moderate the motives for posting brand selfies were only partially supported. The data indicate that brand attachment weakens posting intent

when brand selfies are posted to archive the self or as a result of actual self-congruence. Narcissism was similarly found to weaken posting intent when selfies are posted to seek status. Lastly, the data indicate that posting intent positively influences WoM, with solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM mediated through posting intent.

9.3 Theoretical contributions

The findings from this study contribute to several areas of research including the brand selfies literature, the brand UGC literature, the hashtag literature, the psychology literature, and the WoM literature.

The first theoretical contribution pertains to the identification of the visual characteristics of brand selfies uncovered through the content analysis conducted and associated hashtags. These findings contribute to the brand selfie literature and hashtag literature. While existing content analyses have analyzed the textual and visual characteristics of brand selfies (e.g. Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Pappasolomou, 2020), this is the first study conducted at time of writing, that concurrently analyzes geo-tagging practices, offering an additional contribution into the characteristics of brand selfies.

Firstly, the content analysis demonstrates that brand selfies characteristics are not homogenous, differing across genders and different types of brand selfies (brand selfies vs. brand usies). Specific characteristics such as geo-tagging practices or consumer-generated hashtag use, are strategically leveraged by individuals based on their personal motives for posting brand selfies. While it has been suggested that geo-location tagging is used to share real-time consumption experiences (Roma and Aloini, 2019), the present study offers additional insights into such practices. In the present study, geo-tagging was more common among males, and importantly in brand usies when users are looking to archive the self. Thus, in addition to the sharing of real-time consumption experiences, geo-location tagging features in SNSs serve the purpose of reinforcing and extending the self-concept (e.g. Lewicka 2011; Stiglbauer and Weber 2018) by archiving memories.

Secondly, this study contributes to the understanding of how brand centrality/peripherality differs in brand UGC (Roma and Aloini 2019; Smith, Fischer and Yonglin 2012; Sung, Kim and Choi 2018). This study addresses a call to further scrutinize additional types of UGC across a broader sample of brands and product categories (Roma and Aloini 2019; Smith, Fischer and Yonglin 2012), in this instance brand selfies. The content analysis demonstrates that females are more likely to feature brands peripherally in brand UGC using brands as a prop, while males' brand selfies were more likely to be brand central. This suggests that through brand selfies females engage in behaviors similar to that found on YouTube (Smith, Fischer and Yonglin, 2012) by showcasing several brands and products to reinforce their social identity (e.g. being a blogger, a fashion influencer etc.). Conversely, males are more likely to post brand central selfies to showcase the self and their brand associations (Schau and Gilly, 2003).

Thirdly, building on the work of Woodruff, Santarossa and Lacasse (2018), **new categories of consumer-generated hashtags were identified.** The content analysis helped uncover 8 categories of consumer-generated hashtags: situational self-image hashtags, social identity hashtags, actual and ideal self hashtags, positive and negative affective states hashtags, archiving hashtags, and lastly attention/status seeking hashtags. Among these categories, *situational self-image hashtags*, *archiving hashtags* and *social identity hashtags* had not been previously identified, and appear to be unique to brand selfies. These consumer-generated hashtags are inextricably interlinked to the motives for posting brand selfies, and play a key role in helping individuals self-express, archive the self with a brand, and articulate their personal and social identities through group memberships (Barker and Rodriguez 2019; Merle, Reese and Drews 2019; Oyserman 2009; Reyes-Menendrez, Saura and Thomas 2020).

The second main theoretical contribution concerns the identification and validation of a set of motives, moderators and outcomes for posting brand selfies. The conceptual model developed delineates why individuals post brand selfies and its impact on WoM. The review of the literature on the motives for posting (brand) UGC revealed a lack of empirical validation on the motives for posting brand UGC. The present research firstly offers a contribution to this body of literature, by empirically validating four motives and drivers for posting brand selfies as a form of

brand UGC, namely *status seeking*, *social interaction*, *archiving* and *actual self-congruence*. Notably, status seeking, social interaction and actual self-congruence are motives and drivers not previously identified among digital photo-sharing motives (cf. Table 3).

Furthermore, while the selfie phenomenon offers a robust body of literature, empirical research on the brand selfie phenomenon is still in its infancy, with much of the research focusing on marketer-led brand selfies (e.g. Fox et al. 2018; Hofstetter, Kunath and John 2020; Kedzior, Allen, and Schroeder 2016; Sandhya 2016). The present study answers a call for research to investigate the motivations for posting brand selfies on SNSs (Sung, Kim, and Choi, 2018). This research cements the idea that brand selfie posting is driven by several different motives, which may be both consumer-led and brand-led (Lucas and Sherry, 2004). Consumer motives are goal-oriented to satisfy specific needs, however brand selfies posting may also occur as a result of actual self-congruency. This research also contributes to the debate on consumer-brand relationships on social media, enacted through brand UGC. The data also reveal that brand attachment does not enhance posting intent, but in fact weakens it. This therefore suggests that brand selfies posting may contribute to stronger consumer-brand relationship formation over time, particularly if positive self-congruity, or positive incongruity is achieved through likes and comments. Additionally, these findings suggest that any brand has the potential of being featured in a brand selfie, including brands consumers may not have a lot of experience with. However, consistently extant research, the posting of brand selfies sparks a self-inferential process that leads the consumer to feel connected to the brand, thus increasing brand preference (Hofstetter, Kunath and John, 2020), self-brand connections and attachment (Panigyrakis, Panopoulos, and Koronaki, 2020).

The third theoretical contribution concerns the role of narcissism on brand selfie posting. As discussed in Chapter 2, much of the academic debate on the selfie phenomenon has been fiercely divided with proponents of the selfie phenomenon suggesting that narcissism has been exacerbated by media panic (e.g. Murray 2020; Piancatelli, Massi and Vocino 2020; Senft and Baym 2015). Yet, several empirical studies have identified a link between narcissism and specific selfie-posting behaviors (e.g. Arpaci 2018; Fox and Rooney 2015; Halpern, Valenzuela and Katz 2016). These

behaviors tended to be repetitive in nature such as selfie posting frequency (Moon et al. 2016; Singh, Farley and Donahue 2018; Weiser 2015), time spent editing selfies (Moon et al., 2016); or tagging, commenting and liking behaviors (Singh, Farley and Donahue, 2018). While Sung, Kim, and Choi (2018) found that brand selfie posters exhibit higher levels of narcissism than non-brand selfie posters, the findings in this study demonstrate that narcissism did not enhance any of the supported brand selfies posting motive, and even weakened posting intent when brand selfies were posted to seek status. Given the importance of brand selfies in the construction of the self to build social capital online, and the negative views held about narcissists, these findings suggest that this personality trait may be regarded as undesirable for users, in turn weakening posting intent. In other words, it is in status seekers' best interests to manipulate their self-image and minimize any associations with narcissism.

The fourth theoretical contribution concerns the mediating effect of posting intent on solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM, as outcomes of brand selfie posting. It is one of the few studies that distinguishes between solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM, offering additional insights into these unresearched constructs, and brings additional insights into consumers' willingness to talk about brands. While brand selfies have been regarded as a form of visual WoM (e.g. Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Pappasolomou, 2020), the present research assumed that brand UGC and WoM are two different constructs (Cheong and Morrison, 2008). Firstly, this study demonstrates that brand selfie posting intent transcends on and offline barriers leading to WoM. The data suggest that brand selfies posting is therefore highly beneficial to marketers as engagement with this form of brand UGC will likely trigger offline WoM, both solicited and unsolicited in nature during spontaneous encounters (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014).

The final contribution concerns how the self-concept manifests itself in brand selfies. The empirical validation of the model has revealed that brand selfie posting is driven by actual self-congruence but not ideal self-congruence. Thus, through brand linkages (Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012), individuals express and maintain their actual self-concept (Belk, 1988). The content analysis revealed that brand selfies enable users express different facets of the self through brands, while maintaining or enhancing the self-concept (e.g. Aaker 1997; Belk 1988; Hollenbeck and Kaikati 2012). For some

individuals, brand selfies are harnessed to express, enhance, or even build one's social identity online, such as becoming a micro-celebrity. However, brand selfies are also used to express one's personal identity. The depth of the relationship with brands included in brand selfies will vary. For some individuals, and notably status seekers, the brand will be regarded as a key partner in achieving their objectives (Grubb and Stern, 1971). However, for individuals who tend to express their personality through brand selfies, brands will be regarded as 'props' central to the construction of the personal narrative (Mittal, 2006). In associating themselves with brands, consumers extend their experiences online (Uzunboylu, Melanthiou and Pappasolomou, 2020), thus leading to brand preference (Hofstetter, Kunath and John, 2019), which over time may lead to brand attachment (Rabbanee, Roy and Spence, 2020).

9.4 Managerial implications

The results of this study provide valuable insights to Social Media Marketers involved in the development brand selfie campaigns. It is common practice that companies will approach micro-celebrities on social media to recommend their brand through sponsorships (e.g. Fox et al. 2018; Hofstetter, Kunath and John 2020). This study provides empirical evidence that even 'regular' social media users can contribute to the 'advertisement' and WoM of the brand. This study helps Social Media Marketers understand what drives brand selfie posting as well their characteristics, to help them develop the right type of brand selfie campaign, and encourage the posting of brand selfies at scale.

The first set of contributions pertains to how consumers incorporate different characteristics in their brand selfies, which may help marketers appeal to the right target audience as not all brand selfie users are equal. Marketer-led brand selfie campaigns targeted at women should allow them to express the self and tap into popular trends such as #todayiamwearing, #ootd or #motd where any brand has the potential of being featured. Social Media marketers should however be aware that females will likely tag multiple brands in their selfies. While such brand selfies may be devoid of brand information (Smith, Fischer and Yonglin, 2012), and feature competitor brands, marketers should bear in mind that the posting of these brand selfies will nevertheless lead to WoM. Marketers wishing to have their brands featured more prominently, should conversely target men, who tend to feature brands centrally

through brand hashtags compared to women. Location-based/real-time sharing brand selfies campaigns, or brand selfies campaign that allow men to grow their following should be successful with these users. Secondly, marketers should not neglect brand usies campaigns. Successful brand usies campaign should be developed to encourage the archiving of the self, for instance encouraging users to post selfies at memorable locations to archive special moments (e.g. on holiday, at a concert).

The second set of managerial implications concerns the motives and drivers for posting brand selfies identified through this research, which may be also leveraged by social media managers to develop successful brand selfies campaigns. Excitingly for marketers, the moderation results indicate that pre-existing brand attachment does not enhance posting intent, and in the case of the archiving and actual self-congruence motives may weaken it. This suggests that any brand has the potential to develop a successful and impactful brand selfie campaign, which may in turn lead to attachment and WoM.

In order to leverage these results, marketers should select the drivers of motives that best fits their brand. Consumer motives are well suited for such campaigns, as they tend to reflect a goal-oriented use of brand selfies to satisfy status seeking needs, social interaction needs, or digital archiving needs. For instance, brand selfie campaigns that allow individuals to partake in several hashtag-based communities to express their social identity (e.g. #fashionblogger, #fitfam #instagrammer, #photographer), as well as their personal identity (e.g. #blackhair, #brunette, #greeneyes, #blonde, #piercings #tattoos) should particularly appeal to status seekers, be it a high or low involvement product. Social Media marketers may also consider developing campaigns that have the potential of fostering social interaction with others, or with the brand itself. A successful example of this, is the #shareacoke campaign, which encouraged users to share brand selfies with bottles of Coca-Cola with names that held personal meanings, and share them with friends and family (Tarver, 2019). Lastly, brands may also consider strategically developing brand selfies campaigns that allows individuals to archive the self. In order to be successful such campaigns should offer individuals the opportunity to archive the self in specific situations and locations. Such campaigns, as previously noted, will be particularly suited to usies. This could be achieved through strategic packaging or point-of-sale messaging to encourage the posting of brand

selfies. If successful, these brands will become part of the extended self, and will benefit from WoM that would not have occurred otherwise. Lastly, brands may also leverage consumers' actual self-congruence motive by encouraging consumers to showcase the self with their brands. An example of brand that has successfully managed to encourage consumers to showcase the actual self through is Calvin Klein's #mycalvins campaigns, which since 2014 has captured the minds of consumers and generated thousands of pieces of brand UGC (Fumo, 2015). This campaign was arguably successful as the brand hashtag itself lends itself well to the presentation of the actual itself ('this is who I am') through brand UGC.

9.5 Limitations and directions for future research

Notwithstanding, and despite its theoretical and managerial contributions, this research presents several methodological limitations. The first of these limitations pertains to the breadth of SNSs analyzed. The content analysis was only conducted on Instagram, but not other SNSs, which are also important platforms where brand selfies are posted. As discussed in Chapter 4, Instagram was selected over other SNSs as the brand UGC posted on the platform is deemed to be in the public domain (Convery and Cox, 2012), and therefore do not require informed consent (Eysenbach and Till, 2001). Conversely, the retrieval of brand selfies shared on private SNSs such as Facebook or SnapChat, would be have considerably more challenging, and required informed consent, which can also present additional issues due to the difficulties involved in contacting Internet users (Convery and Cox, 2015). While the content analysis provided some interesting findings, particularly in relation to hashtagging behaviors, selfies posted to private SNSs, or non hashtagged-based apps will likely have produced different results. Lastly, Instagram 'stories', a form of ephemeral (brand UGC) with a limited lifespan (Waddell, 2016), are another example of SNSs feature, that may appeal to brand selfies users. Due to challenges involved in analyzing this time-bound form of UGC, 'stories' were not analyzed in this research.

Another limitation of the content analysis pertains to the types of brands selected as part of the sampling frame. Due to methodological limitations and resources, it was not possible to content analyze all brands on Instagram, and therefore the Interbrand Best Global Brands ranking (2015) was selected as the sampling frame. This means that smaller, lesser-known brands are not represented in this content analysis. Lastly,

due to methodological limitations, the sample of brand selfies content analyzed was global in its scope. Consequently, it was not possible to analyze non-English speaking consumer-generated hashtags included in brand-selfies. While English-speaking consumer-generated hashtags were included in all selfies analyzed regardless of the location of the user, foreign language hashtags were not analyzed.

The qualitative study also has some limitations. Recruiting consumers who frequently post brand selfies proved to be difficult. Although theoretical saturation was reached, some users heavily relied on the stimulus materials to articulate their own motivations. The introduction of quota sampling could have helped ensure a better mix of low and frequent brand selfies users which could have led to hidden or obscure motivations to surface (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011).

Lastly, the quantitative study also has several imitations. This study is also limited in its ability control more effectively for the effects of different brands and product categories. While the content analysis offered a robust sample encompassing different brands and product categories. Further research is encouraged to introduce quota sampling on larger samples of specific brand types to encourage to identify differences in motives and moderation effects.

While this study has paved the way in exploring the motives for posting brand selfies, there are several ways to extend this research. Firstly, further research could be conducted across specific brands such as luxury brands, which are widely regarded a manifestation of conspicuous consumption (e.g. Phau and Prendergast, 2000). It has been suggested that the conspicuous consumption of luxury brands is associated with narcissism (e.g. Neave, Tzemou and Fastoso 2020; Velov, Gojković and Đurić 2014). Further research could therefore help establish if the role of narcissism enhances posting intent in the case of luxury brands. The role of brand symbolism, found to influence luxury and conspicuous consumption (O’Cass and Frost, 2002), should also be explored.

Another way to extend this research would be to conduct this study across different cultures, in order to further the cross-cultural applicability of the model. More specifically, the comparison between very individualistic and very collectivistic

cultures would be of interest, as previous studies have highlighted differences across Chinese selfie-users and British selfie users (Ma, Yang and Wilson, 2016). Indeed, it has been suggested that members of individualist cultures tend to be more self-reliant, while members from collectivist cultures value group achievement and harmony over individual success (Hofstede, 1980). As noted by Goffman (1959), the self-presentation theory denotes distinguishable differences between “frontstage” and “backstage” behaviors of self, suggesting that individuals present themselves differently in public vs. private settings. According to Eckhardt and Houston (1998) most consumption activities in China display frontstage behavior, suggesting consumption activities in China are primarily symbolic in nature. This finding implies that selfies and brand selfie posting will likely have stronger symbolic meaning for Chinese consumers than people from highly individualistic cultures, which could in turn lead to different motives and drivers being identified as well as potential differences in moderating effects.

Lastly, further research on brand selfie could look at the effectiveness of brand selfies from the point of view of the *consumer/receiver* of brand UGC, which has been largely under-researched. This research has demonstrated that in posting brand selfies, the creator is willing to propagate solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM. Given that selfies and brand selfies are often spontaneously seen as vain or narcissistic, further research could establish whether a brand selfie has the potential to provoke positive outcomes such as impulse buying, brand engagement or future purchase intention (e.g. Kim and Johnson, 2016).

9.6 Summary

This concluding chapter has provided an overview of the research conducted, and discussed the resulting managerial and theoretical contributions, and proposed directions for future research. Notwithstanding some limitations, three studies were developed based on the U&G theory with a view of advancing understanding of the brand selfie phenomenon through primary and secondary research methods.

Advancing the methodological scope of the U&G theory, the first study, a content analysis of brand selfies aimed to analyze the visual and textual characteristics of brand selfies and, geo-location tagging practices. This study analyzed *what consumers actually do* with brand selfies, offering insights that would not have emerged through primary research methods. The findings revealed that not all brand selfies are equal, and that brand selfies characteristics differ across genders and types of brand selfies (selfies vs. usies). This study also helped uncover, 8 categories of consumer-generated hashtags, some of which are unique to brand selfies.

Secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with (brand) selfies users to uncover the motives for posting brand selfies. Through these interviews four consumer motives and two brand-led drivers for posting brand selfies were identified. The conceptual model was subsequently developed based on the qualitative interviews, while moderators and outcomes were inferred on the basis on the literature.

The conceptual model was tested through a web-based survey analyzed using SEM. Data provided support for four of the six motives identified. The findings resulting from the validation of the conceptual model indicate that brand selfie use is not driven by a single factor, and that consumers' motives for posting are both consumer and brand-led. In terms of moderation effects, the data indicate that brand attachment does not enhance posting intent, and even weakens when users post brand selfies to archive the self or in the case of actual self-congruence. This therefore suggests that any brand has the potential of being included in a brand selfie. Furthermore, while selfies have empirically been associated with the personality trait of narcissism, the moderation results of this research demonstrate that brand selfie posting is not enhanced by narcissism and may in fact be weakened by this personality trait, notably in the case of status seeking. Excitingly for marketers, the research suggests that brand selfie posting leads to solicited WoM and unsolicited WoM, beyond SNSs. The results of this study provide several theoretical, methodological and managerial contributions to marketers and scholars alike, and significantly advance understanding of the brand selfie phenomenon.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Independent Sample Test results: males vs. females

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Geo-location tagging	Equal variances assumed	36.147	.000	-3.036	1998	.002	-.062	.020	-.102	-.022
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.026	1942.107	.003	-.062	.020	-.102	-.022
Self-centered hashtags	Equal variances assumed	18.322	.000	2.127	1998	.034	.034	.016	.003	.066
	Equal variances not assumed			2.138	1997.488	.033	.034	.016	.003	.066
Brand centrality/peri	Equal variances assumed	39.854	.000	-3.122	1998	.002	-.053	.017	-.087	-.020

perality tagging	Equal variances not assumed			-3.143	1997.664	.002	-.053	.017	-.086	-.020
Photo centrality/periphality	Equal variances assumed	2.456	.117	-.946	1998	.344	-.021	.022	-.065	.023
	Equal variances not assumed			-.946	1974.242	.344	-.021	.022	-.065	.023
Situational self-image hashtag	Equal variances assumed	22.455	.000	2.370	1998	.018	.051	.021	.009	.093
	Equal variances not assumed			2.374	1986.587	.018	.051	.021	.009	.093
Positive affective states	Equal variances assumed	.104	.748	.161	1998	.872	.003	.019	-.035	.041
	Equal variances not assumed			.161	1976.586	.872	.003	.019	-.035	.041
Actual self	Equal variances assumed	7.134	.008	1.331	1998	.183	.023	.018	-.011	.058

	Equal variances not assumed			1.335	1990.573	.182	.023	.018	-.011	.058
Social identity	Equal variances assumed	1.637	.201	.639	1998	.523	.008	.013	-.018	.035
	Equal variances not assumed			.640	1988.458	.522	.008	.013	-.018	.035
Attention seeking/status seeking	Equal variances assumed	4.233	.040	-1.028	1998	.304	-.012	.012	-.035	.011
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.024	1934.014	.306	-.012	.012	-.035	.011
Ideal self	Equal variances assumed	.144	.704	.190	1998	.849	.002	.010	-.018	.022
	Equal variances not assumed			.190	1981.297	.849	.002	.010	-.018	.022
Negative affective states	Equal variances assumed	.673	.412	-.410	1998	.682	-.003	.007	-.018	.011

	Equal variances not assumed			-.409	1947.832	.682	-.003	.007	-.018	.012
Archiving	Equal variances assumed	3.736	.053	.965	1998	.335	.005	.006	-.006	.016
	Equal variances not assumed			.974	1989.754	.330	.005	.005	-.005	.016

Appendix 2: Independent Sample Test results: selfies vs. usies

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Geo-location tagging	Equal variances assumed	70.691	.000	-5.888	1902	.000	-.168	.029	-.225	-.112
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.404	371.228	.000	-.168	.031	-.230	-.107
Self-centered hashtags	Equal variances assumed	39.111	.000	2.903	1902	.004	.068	.023	.022	.113
	Equal variances not assumed			3.372	460.174	.001	.068	.020	.028	.107
Brand centrality/perip	Equal variances assumed	143.432	.000	-5.122	1902	.000	-.126	.025	-.174	-.078

herality tagging	Equal variances not assumed			-6.774	551.590	.000	-.126	.019	-.162	-.089
Photo centrality/peripherality	Equal variances assumed	146.741	.000	5.416	1902	.000	.172	.032	.110	.234
	Equal variances not assumed			5.596	407.563	.000	.172	.031	.112	.232
Situational self-image hashtag	Equal variances assumed	.088	.766	.147	1902	.883	.005	.031	-.056	.065
	Equal variances not assumed			.147	396.516	.883	.005	.031	-.056	.065
Positive affective states	Equal variances assumed	8.484	.004	-1.548	1902	.122	-.043	.028	-.097	.011
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.491	384.467	.137	-.043	.029	-.099	.014
Actual self	Equal variances assumed	31.916	.000	2.615	1902	.009	.066	.025	.016	.115

	Equal variances not assumed			2.916	439.406	.004	.066	.023	.021	.110
Social identity	Equal variances assumed	19.070	.000	2.102	1902	.036	.040	.019	.003	.077
	Equal variances not assumed			2.452	462.437	.015	.040	.016	.008	.071
Attention seeking/status seeking	Equal variances assumed	3.748	.053	-.980	1902	.327	-.017	.017	-.050	.017
	Equal variances not assumed			-.918	376.521	.359	-.017	.018	-.052	.019
Ideal self	Equal variances assumed	19.214	.000	2.128	1902	.033	.032	.015	.002	.061
	Equal variances not assumed			2.673	509.916	.008	.032	.012	.008	.055
Negative affective states	Equal variances assumed	.321	.571	.283	1902	.777	.003	.010	-.017	.023

	Equal variances not assumed			.294	409.367	.769	.003	.010	-.017	.022
Archiving	Equal variances assumed	22.908	.000	-2.412	1902	.016	-.019	.008	-.034	-.004
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.775	329.361	.077	-.019	.011	-.040	.002

Appendix 3: Email cover letter and Twitter outreach for the recruitment of informants (qualitative semi-structured interviews)

Email cover letter:

Hi [name]

I hope that you are well.

I am a PhD candidate at Birkbeck, University of London, currently doing some research on user generated content such as selfies. I recently noticed that you occasionally share selfies online, and I was wondering if you would be up for taking part in an interview on the topic? The study is undertaken for the sole purpose of fulfilling my PhD thesis at Birkbeck, University of London.

At the end of the interview, you will receive an Amazon gift card (or any other voucher of your choice) as a thank you for your time.

The interview will take place face to face at a mutually convenient time and place of your choice.

Please let me know if you can help!

Many thanks

Twitter/Instagram outreach:

Hi @ [name] I am a PhD candidate researching selfies, and I was wondering if I could ask you a few questions about sharing selfies?

Appendix 4: Semi-structured interviews information sheet

Information on the requirements of taking part

The interview will last approximately 60 minutes depending on how much you have to say. The interviews will ideally take place face-to-face at a mutually convenient time and location, although Skype is also an option. We can arrange when the interview takes place over email; the interview should take place before **31st December 2016**.

In terms of the interview process, I will ask you to fill in a short questionnaire, which should take no longer than 5 minutes. We'll then go through some examples of selfies people have taken and will then discuss some of your selfies. Note that I will audio-record the interviews for analysis purposes. You can ask me to stop recording at any time during the interview.

Information on implications of taking part and about participants' rights

Participation is voluntary and you are entitled to refusing to answer any of my questions and may withdraw from this interview at any time. You may also ask me to stop audio-recording the interview at any time.

Additionally, you may withdraw from participating in the study up to **February 2017**. This means that your interview will be completely discarded from my analysis, and PhD chapter. After this date, it will however not be possible for you to withdraw from this research.

Information on the use of information

Please note that the interview will be audio-recorded for transcribing and analysis purposes, and I will refer to you with your first name only during the interview. The audio-recordings will be saved on my laptop and password protected in order to guarantee your anonymity and will be destroyed once the interviews have been transcribed. The interview transcripts will be destroyed upon completion of my PhD and subsequent journal publications. Only my supervisors, my PhD examiners, and myself will have access to these recording and data throughout the duration of my PhD.

Your contact details will not be passed onto anyone, nor used in the research. I will use aliases in the final thesis to report of the findings, thus further ensuring your complete anonymity. Quotes from different informants (including yourself) will be used in my research, however I will use aliases to ensure your complete anonymity and remove any materials that could identify you.

Information on whom to contact with questions

Feel free to contact Laurence Borel (main researcher) should you have any questions about this research: lborel01@mail.bbk.ac.uk

Appendix 5: Self-completion NPI-16 questionnaire

Read each pair of statements below and place an "X" by the one that comes closest to describing your feelings and beliefs about yourself. You may feel that neither statement describes you well but pick the one that comes closest. **Please complete all pairs.**

1. ___ I really like to be the center of attention
 ___ It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention
2. ___ I am no better or no worse than most people
 ___ I think I am a special person
3. ___ Everybody likes to hear my stories
 ___ Sometimes I tell good stories
4. ___ I usually get the respect that I deserve
 ___ I insist upon getting the respect that is due me
5. ___ I don't mind following orders
 ___ I like having authority over people
6. ___ I am going to be a great person
 ___ I hope I am going to be successful
7. ___ People sometimes believe what I tell them
 ___ I can make anybody believe anything I want them to
8. ___ I expect a great deal from other people
 ___ I like to do things for other people
9. ___ I like to be the center of attention
 ___ I prefer to blend in with the crowd
10. ___ I am much like everybody else
 ___ I am an extraordinary person
11. ___ I always know what I am doing
 ___ Sometimes I am not sure of what I am doing
12. ___ I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people
 ___ I find it easy to manipulate people
13. ___ Being an authority doesn't mean that much to me
 ___ People always seem to recognize my authority
14. ___ I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so
 ___ When people compliment me I sometimes get embarrassed
15. ___ I try not to be a showoff
 ___ I am apt to show off if I get the chance
16. ___ I am more capable than other people
 ___ There is a lot that I can learn from other people

Appendix 6: Interview guide

Objective	Questions
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informant must be a regular brand selfies creator – this will be checked by looking at their Instagram profiles
Introduction	<p>Explain nature of research and procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researcher introduces herself Research is part of PhD thesis at Birkbeck, University of London Research is about consumers’ who take and share selfies including selfies with a brand in social media – there is no right or wrong answer. Interested in genuine opinions and behaviors surrounding brand selfies. Interview will last around 60-80 minutes and will be structured as follows: First, I will ask you to fill in a short questionnaire, which should take no longer than 5 minutes. We’ll then go through some examples of selfies people have taken, and will then discuss some of your selfies Answers and results will be used as part of thesis and academic publications Recording for recollection purposes and analysis only Anything said will be treated as confidential and anonymous. Aliases will be used in transcripts. Personal data will not be passed onto anyone else Birkbeck consent form to be signed
NPI self-report form/questionnaire (5 minutes)	
Warm up (2 minutes)	
(5 mins)	<p>As mentioned earlier, this interview is about people who take and share selfies online...</p> <p>PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUE – WORD ASSOCIATIONS</p> <p>When you think of selfies, what comes to mind?</p> <p>PROBE: What else? why do say that?</p> <p>PROBE: What about group selfies/usies?</p>
SECTION 1: Brand selfies behaviors (20 minutes)	
Establish whether the selfie is about showcasing the self and the brand OR mostly the self.	<p>Now, I’d like us to talk about <u>selfies specifically taken with a brand</u> and posted on social media.</p> <p>I am going to show you some examples of selfies people have taken with brands. For each product category [Apparel, sporting goods, luxury, automotive, alcoholic beverages, beverages, restaurants, FMGC, technology, electronics] ask...</p>

<p>Establish whether the actual self, ideal self or false self is presented</p> <p>(20-25 mins)</p>	<p>[Cards to be grouped as follows – interviewer to rotate the order of the cards shown]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Apparel, Sporting Goods, Luxury 2) Automotive 3) Alcoholic beverages, beverages, Restaurants 4) FMGC 5) Technology, electronics] <p>PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUE – IMAGERY ASSOCIATIONS</p> <p>In your opinion, how does this person feel about brand x? PROBE: Why? Why do you say that?</p> <p>How does this selfie speak about product x? [NB: interviewer to establish/probe whether the selfie is about showcasing the brand and the self or just the self] PROBE: Why? Why do you say that?</p> <p>How does this photo speak about the person sharing the selfie? [NB: interviewer to establish/probe whether the selfie is about showcasing the brand and the self or just the self] PROBE: why has this person hashtagged the brand in the selfie? PROBE: what are they trying to say about themselves</p> <p>In your opinion, what prompted/motivated these users to share this sort of selfie with a brand?</p> <p>LET INFORMANT TALK FREELY THEN PROBE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-presentation inc. archiving memories (e.g. #tbt, #flashbackfriday) • Self-promotion / coolness and popularity (e.g. microcelebrity status) • Self-expression (a brand can be used to express one’s identity) • Social-identity expressiveness (E.g. gain recognition, popularity, assurance seeking, communication through the building of a community) • Entertainment • Empowerment (e.g. to influence other’s purchase decisions, to change perceptions) • Co-creation (e.g. to create content related a specific brand community) • Community (to build a network, and share content with others) • To increase your following (e.g. #followforfollow) • To express love towards a brand
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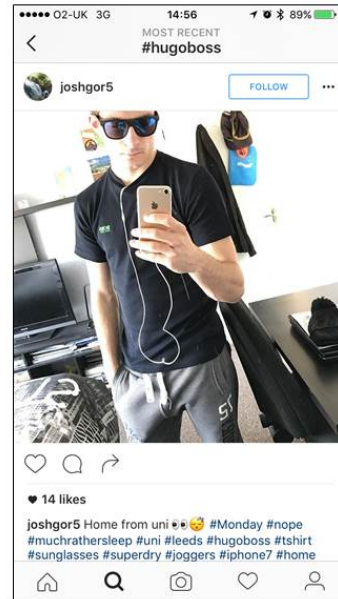
SECTION 2: Informants' brand selfies behaviors (5 minutes)	
<p>Understand whether what type of brands are centrality or peripheral in brand selfies</p> <p>(5 mins)</p>	<p>If you were to take a brand selfie with the aforementioned brands...</p> <p>Which brands would take a central role in a brand selfie? PROBE: Why are these brands central to a selfie? What do these brands have in common?</p> <p>Which brands would not take a central role in a selfie? PROBE: Why are these brands peripheral to a selfie? What do these brands have in common?</p>
<p>Establish which brands are experiential, functional and symbolic in the mind of consumers</p> <p>(5 mins)</p>	<p>Of the brands we've just discussed/looked at...</p> <p>Which of these brands would you <u>personally</u> include/take a selfie with? PROBE: What do these brands have in common? Why?</p> <p>Which of these brands would you personally <u>NOT</u> include/take a selfie with? PROBE: What do these brands have in common? Why?</p>
<p>Do consumers present their actual, ideal or false self through brand selfies?</p> <p>(5 mins)</p>	<p>We've looked at a range of selfies posted online, and I'd now like to think about your own selfies behaviors</p> <p>Which social network(s) do you typically use to share selfies? PROBE: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, other...</p> <p>Are there any differences in how you share selfies across these social networking websites? PROBE: How does the way you present or show yourself online to others, differ on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, other. PROBE: Why do you share selfies on xxx SNS but not xxx SNS? PROBE: <u>If filters</u> are mentioned: why do you use filters when sharing selfies? What does a filter add to a selfie?</p>

SECTION 3: Consumers' motives and situational-specific for sharing brand selfies (30 minutes)	
<p>What are consumers' motives for taking and posting brand selfies?</p> <p>Are these drivers tied to specific product categories, or are these drivers applicable to all types of brand selfies?</p> <p>(20 mins)</p>	<p>Now, I'd like us to take a look at some of the selfies you've posted online. [Invite informant to open his/her Instagram/Facebook/Twitter feed and select a selfie with a brand – repeat exercise for 2 or 3 selfies]</p> <p>What prompted you to share a selfie with this brand and hashtag this selfie on Instagram/Twitter/Facebook?</p> <p>LET INFORMANT TALK FREELY THEN PROBE [ALSO LOOK AT HASHTAGS USED TO USE APPROPRIATE PROBES]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-presentation inc. archiving memories (e.g. #tbt, #flashbackfriday) • Self-promotion / coolness and popularity (e.g. microcelebrity status) • Self-expression (a brand can be used to express one's identity) • Social-identity expressiveness (E.g. gain recognition, popularity, assurance seeking, communication through the building of a community) • Entertainment • Empowerment (e.g. to influence other's purchase decisions, to change perceptions) • Co-creation (e.g. to create content related a specific brand community) • Community (to build a network, and share content with others) • To increase your following (e.g. #followforfollow) • To express love towards a brand <p>What benefits do you get from sharing selfies with a brand?</p> <p>LET INFORMANT TALK FREELY THEN PROBE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express your identity • Feel better about myself (Self-esteem) • Show off my possessions (Exhibitionism)

<p>How do situational-specific variables influence brand selfies creation?</p> <p>(10 mins)</p>	<p>Now, I'd like you think specifically about the situations when you take and share selfies with a brand online</p> <p>Still thinking about selfie A/B/C [Repeat for each selfie discussed]</p> <p>Can you talk to me about the day when you took this selfie?</p> <p>PROBE: specific occasion: holiday, new purchase, day/evening out with friends etc.</p> <p>PROBE: positive/negative affective states (e.g. #happy/#fail – would you share a selfie with a #fail hashtag)</p> <p>Interviewer to establish whether situation differ depending on the types of brands included in a brand selfie and probe for any differences across brands</p>
<p>Relationship with brands featured in brand selfies</p> <p>(5-10 mins)</p>	<p>How would you describe your relationship with this brand?</p> <p>PROBE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommending the brand (eWoM) – (e.g. I like to recommend this brand to others) • Involvement with a brand • Brand love • Brand loyalty <p>PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUE – IMAGERY ASSOCIATION</p> <p>How do you feel about the brand featured in selfie A/B/C?</p> <p>PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUE- SENTENCE COMPLETION</p> <p>I am going to read out a sentence which I'd like you to complete...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This brand makes me think that I am... • This brand makes me feel more...
<p>Conclusion</p> <p>(2 mins)</p>	<p>Our interview is coming to an end. Is there anything else that you'd like to add which we haven't discussed?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">THANK INTERVIEWEE AND CLOSE</p>

Appendix 7: Stimulus materials

Category: Apparel



Category: Sporting goods



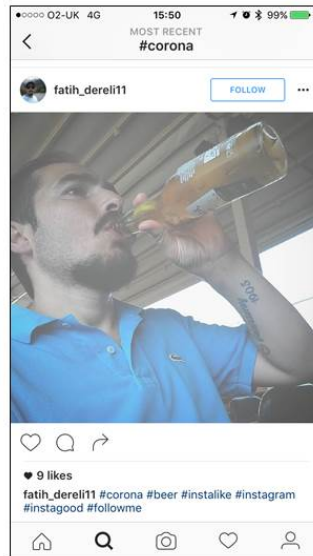
Category: Luxury



Category: Automotive



Category: Alcoholic beverages



Category: Beverages



Category: Restaurants



Category: FMGC



Category: Technology



Category: Electronics



Appendix 8: Qualitative data summary

Theoretical themes	Keywords	Sample quote 1	Sample quote 2	Sample quote 3
<i>Consumer motives</i>				
Attention-seeking	Showing off, brand selfie is about them, showing off what they have, hashtagging for attention	“She’s trying to get attention by using the hashtag L’Oréal.” [George, FMGC]	“These brands are big, so they want to get some sort of fame to get some attention. ” [Marion, Technology]	“She’s probably trying to get BMW’s attention... ” [Richard, Automotive]
Status-seeking	Look at me, showing off one’s possessions, status elevation	“The guy is like, look at me; this car is probably not even his car.” [Marion, Automotive]	“Or it’s about me and my cool life, and I want to be part of the cool gang similar to me. They want to maintain or upgrade their status. ” [Olga, Luxury]	“I think it’s about social elevation and class elevation. In a class system titles whether it’s hierarchy or wanting better sounding job titles, it’s about elevating one status to the point where it’s nominal but that extends everything that’s associated with you.” [Dylan, Luxury]
Social Interaction	Interacting with others through likes and comments, seeking feedback, updating friends	“Her photo is more like dialogue with friends...” [Olga, Automotive]	“Maybe he’s updating his friends... ” [Sara, FMGC]	“I want people who love similar brands to mine to interact with my pictures, if it’s a cool picture.” [Lauren, Own selfies]

Archiving	Keeping a diary of the self, recording memories	“He’s just taking picture of what’s happened to her during the day, so maybe it’s an unusual moment or an unusual situation, she wants to have a memory of and she with friends.” [Olga, Automotive]	“If it’s a show or a concert or a restaurant/bar, I would tag it... [...] to archive where I went as a means of remembering .” [Danielle, Own selfies]	“She’s just taking picture of what’s happened to her during the day, so maybe it’s an unusual moment or an unusual situation, she wants to have a memory of and she with friends.” [Olga, Automotive]
Brand-led drivers				
Actual self-congruence	My brands, personal image, expressing brand preferences, this is who I am personally or professionally	‘She was more interested in showing the pic; she’s showing what’s she’s showing every night maybe. This me and this is my brand. ’ [Olga, Luxury]	‘The man is using Canon; I think he’s trying to say that he takes pictures professionally on that front... he could well be a professional photographer, and this is the brand that I use to take my pictures.’ [Martine, Technology]	‘The brand is about supporting their image. ’ [Ben, Luxury]
Ideal self-congruence	Idealizing the self, coming across as, being seen as, impression management	“She’s clearly part of the make-up community and wants to be seen as an influencer ” [Adam, FMGC]	She saves up to buy these brands to come across as a fashionista ’ [George, Luxury]	‘I’m trendy thanks to this coat. ’ [Matt, Luxury]
Role of narcissism				
Narcissism	Vanity, loving oneself, self-esteem	“I don’t think it’s about showing off their love for the brand, it’s about showing themselves off and having likes.” [Martine, Luxury]	“I think that she is very confident and a little bit vain ... or very vain in fact.” [Olga, Apparel]	‘Her aim was to share a picture of herself with a new outfit... no it’s more about her than H&M. ’ [Martine, Apparel]

Appendix 9: Web-based self-completion questionnaire

Q1. Dear participant,

My name is Laurence Borel, and I am a PhD student at Birkbeck, University of London. I am currently carrying out a survey on the topic of **brand selfies** in other words selfies taken with a brand and shared in social media.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

You will be asked to answer several questions about your attitude and behaviors when sharing brand selfies online. The survey will take 15-20 minutes to complete

What else do you need to know?

Risks associated with participation: There are no risks associated with this study

Withdrawal from the study: Submitting a completed questionnaire implies consent to participate in this research project. All participants can withdraw at any given point during the questionnaire, **before** submitting their completed questionnaire by clicking ‘**next**’ in the last page of the questionnaire.

Confidentiality:

- The data collected in this survey will be used only for the purpose described in this form, and will be available only to the principal investigators, myself and my supervisor
- No information will be shared with other entities, and neither will the survey provider store any IP address or geo-location
- No identifying information will be sought by researchers from participants, and no individual participant data will be revealed in any publication that may result from this study
- The survey is anonymous there is not possibility to link data gathered to anyone’s identity.
- Your participation is voluntary (and greatly appreciated)

For questions: Questions or concerns about this study or the use of your data, or interest in the final results of the study, may be directed to Laurence Borel (lborel01@mail.bbk.ac.uk)

I understand the above information and I am interested in taking part

Yes >> proceed

No >> close

<p>Screening question</p>	<p>Have you ever taken, and posted a selfie with a brand within your social networks (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, SnapChat)? This could be any type of brand (fashion, sports apparel, car, technology, make-up etc.)</p> <p>Brand selfies are defined as selfies, a photograph taken by yourself usually at arm’s length, taken specifically with a brand, which you may have hashtagged or talked about in your status update or photo caption</p> <p>Yes >> Continue No >> Close</p>
<p>Gender (even mix of males and females)</p>	<p>Are you...? 1 – Male 2 – Female</p>
<p>Social Media Usage</p>	<p>I’d like to find out more about your social media usage...</p> <p>On a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is never and 7 very often...</p> <p>How often do you use the following social networking sites?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instagram - Facebook - Twitter - SnapChat <p>How often do you post selfies on each of the following websites?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instagram - Facebook - Twitter - SnapChat <p>How often do you post brand selfies (i.e. selfies taken with a brand) on each of the following websites? ⁶,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instagram - Facebook - Twitter - SnapChat

⁶ 1: Never; 2: Very rarely, 3: Rarely; 4: Sometimes; 5: Often; 6: Very Often; 7: All the time

Brand selfie selection	<p>Please take a look at your Instagram/Facebook/Twitter account and identify the latest brand selfie that you shared within your social networks.</p> <p>In the box below please write down the name of the brand featured in this selfie. If your selfie contains multiple brands, please select the central brand in your selfie.</p> <p>[Please name only one brand in the box below]</p> <p>[Open ended]</p>
Brand selfie upload	<p>Please upload your brand selfie that you have just mentioned. If you do not have this photo at hand, press the arrow at the bottom right hand side of the screen to skip to the next question. This upload is entirely optional</p> <p>[UPLOAD]</p>
Brand types	<p>Which product category does the brand you previously mentioned falls into?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fashion (e.g. Zara, H&M, Topshop, Hugo Boss etc.) 2. Sports apparel (e.g. Nike, Adidas, Puma etc.) 3. Automotive brands (e.g. BMW, Ford, Mercedes-Benz, Toyota, Porsche etc.) 4. Drinks (e.g. Corona, Jack Daniels, Coca-Cola, Pepsi) 5. Restaurants or coffee shops (e.g. Starbucks, McDonald's, KFC etc.) 6. Cosmetics (e.g. L'Oréal or any other make-up brand such as Nars, TooFaced etc.; Gillette or male grooming products) 7. Technology and Electronic products (e.g. Apple, Apple iPhone, Samsung, Sony, laptop brand etc.) 8. Other
Consumer motives	
Attention-seeking	<p>In regard to Brand x [<i>piped text option</i>], please read and rate all of the following statements based on your level of disagreement/agreement</p> <p>[Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree]</p> <p>I posted a selfie with brand x [Qualtrics piped text option] to...</p> <p>AS1: Be acknowledged by others AS2: Gain self-confidence from others' reaction AS3: Have my existence reaffirmed by others</p>

	<p>AS4: Show off AS5: Seek attention from the opposite sex</p>
Status-seeking	<p>In regard to Brand x [piped text option], please read and rate all of the following statements based on your level of disagreement/agreement</p> <p>[Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree]</p> <p>I posted a selfie with brand X because... SS1: because the brand featured in it has status SS2: because I am interested in new products with status SS3: because the brand has some snob appeal</p>
Social interaction	<p>In regard to Brand x [piped text option], please read and rate all of the following statements based on your level of disagreement/agreement</p> <p>[Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree]</p> <p>I posted a selfie with brand x [Qualtrics Piped text option] to...</p> <p>SI1: Stay in touch with other users SI2: Meet interesting people SI3: Feel like I belong to a community SI4: Connect with people who share some of my values</p>
Archiving	<p>In regard to Brand x [piped text option], please read and rate all of the following statements based on your level of disagreement/agreement</p> <p>[Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree]</p> <p>I posted a selfie with brand X [Qualtrics Piped text option] to...</p> <p>AR1: Record a specific moment AR2: Record my everyday life AR3: Record a special day AR4: Record my life in general AR5: Record my interests and hobbies</p>
Brand-led drivers	
Actual self-congruence	<p>In regard to Brand x [piped text option], please read and rate all of the following statements based on your level of disagreement/agreement</p> <p>[Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree]</p> <p>Brand x [Qualtrics Piped text option] is ...</p> <p>ASC1: consistent with how I see myself ASC2: a mirror image of me</p>

	ASC3: similar to me
Ideal self-congruence	<p>In regard to Brand x [piped text option], please read and rate all of the following statements based on your level of disagreement/agreement</p> <p>[Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree]</p> <p>Brand x [Qualtrics Piped text option] is ...</p> <p>ISC1: a mirror image of who I'd like to be ISC2: similar to the person I'd like to be ISC3: consistent with who I would like to be</p>
Brand attachment	<p>In regard to Brand x [piped text option], please read and rate all of the following statements based on your level of disagreement/agreement</p> <p>[Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree]</p> <p>Affection: AFF1: This brand is an affectionate brand AFF2: This brand is a loved brand AFF3: This brand is a peaceful brand AFF4: This brand is a friendly brand</p> <p>Connection: CON1: I am attached to this brand CON2: I have a bond with this brand CON3: I am connected to this the brand</p> <p>Passion: PA1: This brand makes me passionate PA2: This brand makes me delighted PA3: This brand makes me captivated</p>
Dependent and outcome variables	
Posting intent	<p>In regard to [piped text], please read and rate the following questions</p> <p>POS1: How likely is it to post a selfie with this brand again in the future: [Strongly Unlikely/ Very Likely]</p> <p>POS2: How probable is it that you'll to post a selfie with this brand again in the future? [Strongly improbable/ Very probable]</p> <p>POS3: How possible is it that you'll post a selfie with this brand again in the future? [Impossible/Possible]</p>

	<p>POS4: What are the chances that you'll post a selfie with this brand again in the future? [No Chance/Certain]</p>
<p>Solicited / Unsolicited WoM</p>	<p>In regard to [piped text] please read and rate all of the following statements based on your levels of disagreement/agreement</p> <p>Solicited/Sought: SO1: I encourage friends, relatives or peers to buy from this brand when they ask me my opinion</p> <p>SO2: I recommend this brand whenever anyone seeks my advice in this product category</p> <p>Unsolicited/Unsought: UNS1: When the product category of this brand comes up in a conversation, I go out of my way to recommend this brand</p> <p>UNS2: I never miss an opportunity to recommend this brand to others, even if they do not ask me.</p>
<p>Narcissism, Common method bias, and demographics</p>	
<p>Narcissism</p>	<p>The final few questions pertain to your feelings about yourself. Read each pair of statements below and rate them according to how they describe your feelings and beliefs about yourself.</p> <p>On a scale of 1-7 where 1 is not at all how I feel and believe about myself, and 7 very much like what I feel and believe about myself.</p> <p>NPI1: I really like to be the center of attention NPI2: I think I am a special person NPI3: Everybody likes to hear my stories NPI4: I insist upon getting the respect that is due to me NPI5: I like having authority over people NPI6: I am going to be a great person NPI7: I can make anybody believe anything I want them to NPI8: I expect a great deal from other people NPI9: I like to be the center of attention NPI10: I am an extraordinary person NPI11: I always know what I am doing NPI12: I find it easy to manipulate people NPI13: People always seem to recognize my authority NPI14: I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so NPI15: I am apt to show off if I get the chance NPI16: I am more capable than other people</p>

<p>Demographics</p>	<p>The final few questions are for classification purposes only</p> <p>Which of the following age brackets do you fall into? 1 - 18-24 2 – 25-34 3 – 35-44 4 – 45-54 5 – 55-64 6 - 64+</p> <p>What is your education level? 1 - GCSEs 2 - Some college, No qualifications 3 - College (A-levels) 4 - Bachelor’s degree 5 - Master’s degree 6 - Doctorate degree 7 - Rather not say</p> <p>What is your annual income? 1 – £20,999 per annum or less 2 - £21,000-£29,999 3 - £30,000-£39,999 4 - £40,000-£49,999 5 - £50,000-£59,999 6 - £60,000+ 7 - Rather not say</p> <p>In your honest opinion, should we use your data? 1 – Yes 2 – No</p>
	<p>THANK INFORMANT AND CLOSE</p>

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