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It's All About Me: How Self-Brand Connection and Social Media Interactivity Influence Purchase Intent

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It's All About Me:
How Self-Brand Connection and Social Media Interactivity Influence Purchase Intent

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration

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Abstract

Social media is ubiquitous and allows consumers to display identity by through possessions through posts, images, and interactions. The self is all the individual calls their own and is expressed outwardly through everything visible, including possessions, relationships, and interactions. They tell their story through the display of envy-inducing artifacts, and create a perfect, photoshopped life. Consumers seek a connection to positively viewed brands they feel are self-representative through interaction. This dissertation seeks to better understand consumer rationale for and gratification from online brand engagement and how that, in turn, impacts the brand.

Three studies examined the effects of self-brand connection, narcissism, brand status, and interactivity to better understand their effect on purchase intent. Study 1 measured the effect of narcissism, self-brand connection, and likelihood to interact on social media impact purchase intent. Results indicated narcissism, or concern public perception, positively moderated the relationships between self-brand connection and purchase intent, and likelihood to interact on purchase intent. Results showed self-brand connection mediated the relationship between social value of a brand and likelihood to interact.

Study 2 extended the results to examine the effect of brand status. As narcissists are concerned with others' perceptions and desire to be associated with high status, Study 2 added the variable of status. Results showed a positive relationship between self-consciousness and self-brand connection, as moderated by brand social value, with self-brand connection also mediating the relationship between social value and likelihood to interact. Last, product status moderated the relationship between likelihood to interact and purchase intent.

Based on those results, Study 3 added interactivity with a brand to better understand the effect on purchase intent. Interactivity and self-brand connection both positively mediated the relationship on status and purchase intent, but it depended on the level of social value.

Understanding the effect of consumer-brand interaction is critical to marketers spending key advertising dollars online, as it is a hallmark of identity. Online behavior helps shape the digital self, which partly depends on social interactions. As consumers develop their relationship to a brand, they are more apt to purchase those products to continue incorporating them into their lives.

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What’s next?

#micdrop

Dedication

To my family and friends: you are my inspiration, my joy, my support, and my biggest cheerleaders. When I was in a negative headspace, your patience was unmatched. Without you, I would be much lonelier, boring, and accomplished. To my sweet Caff, my chunk, my snuggle monster: you are so much fun to come home to and the sweetest chair and couch thief imaginable, even with your endless shedding. It is only with your care and support that I achieved even a modicum of success. You have shaped me in ways you will never fully understand.

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INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Topic

Social media is an ever-more pervasive entity in modern life. Consumers no longer have to wait for film to be developed and the days of waiting for someone to download digital photos to a computer to share them with friends are long gone. The advent of smartphones allows for instantaneous display of identity and experiences, no longer temporally or geographically limited. This rapid sharing of the self allows individuals to broaden the visibility of who they are, while also giving a more fully formed picture of how they want to be seen. Social media allows individuals to conspicuously display self-relevant products. A consumer's choice of products reflects their internal identity, and the display of those products provides an outward expression of their internal representations of self.

Identity is partly driven by interaction with others and those interactions can enhance that relational bond. Consumers who interact with other individuals online feel a stronger bond to those entities (Chen 2011; Gabisch 2011). Moreover, as individuals want to feel a strong bond with their in-group, they seek consumption behaviors reflective of that group (Escalas and Bettman 2003, 2005; Thomas, Trump, and Price 2015; White, Argo, and Sengupta 2012). Social media is a vehicle to exhibit off a consumer's desired identity through their interaction with a brand. Consumers display their identity online, through both their product usage and associations.

Social media provides a canvas for the individual to create a curated identity. The individual is able to embody the avatar they feel they are, regardless of reflection of real life. Consumption as a way to demonstrate self-brand connection, either actual or through display of images in a way that others infer a connection.

Overview of the Research Context

Tuten and Solomon (2015) defined social media as the online means of communication, conveyance, collaboration and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities, and organizations enhanced by technological capabilities and mobility. This platform is the sum of the online information created, initiated, circulated and used by people and entities, intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues. Multiple social media platforms, also known as social networking sites, currently exist for people to actively utilize, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, Vine, LinkedIn, and Pinterest, to name a few. Twitter is a channel that is especially effective at readily facilitating consumer-brand interaction. Twitter allows consumers to engage with members interested in the brand community, as well as the brand itself (Hamilton and Hewer 2010; Jin and Phua 2014). Specifically, Twitter bills itself as “a service for friends, family and coworkers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages” (Twitter n.d.). It functions as an internet-based social network and microblog (an individual profile with journal-like entries posted in reverse chronological order, using a limited number of characters) that allows for interpersonal and mass interaction between entities (Chen 2011). Individual posts, which may include text, images, and/or video, are known as “tweets.” The three key modes of communication and interaction on Twitter are posting original content, replying to a post, and liking a post.

With over 90% of individuals 18-29 using social media (Perrin 2015), it is essential to utilize the demographics’ chosen medium to project the marketing message. Consumers receive messages and can interact with brands and other individuals through their online social networks and the growth in site use has been rampant since the sites’ inception. Due to the rapid growth

and widespread adoption of social media, developing an understanding of consumers' curation of a visible identity through displayed consumption via digital media is a key to understanding how to best utilize media to connect with consumers.

As social media is still a relatively new avenue for marketing research, it provides ample opportunities to further extend research into how consumers view brands in relation to the self.

Purpose of the Research

This research intends to glean information regarding the effectiveness of social networks as a means of conspicuously displaying their self-brand connection. The main purpose of this dissertation is to better understand how self-brand connection and social media interaction can influence perceived social value and purchase intent for a product. Previous research has examined consumer perceptions of relationship investment by brand social networking (Park and Kim 2014), personality traits as antecedents for social networking behavior (Davenport et al. 2014; Garcia and Sikström 2014), self-presentation on social media (Belk 2013; Croft 2013; Labrecque, Markos, and Milne 2011), and the impact of social networking on the individual (Buechel and Berger 2012; Croft 2013). Additional research has largely ignored the influence of narcissism, a trait strongly associated with positive identity expression for social advancement, on social media behaviors. Understanding how and why consumers behave the way they do and what they post online can give insight into how online behavior translates to offline behavior.

As consumers display their self readily online, brands can leverage this information to both better serve the consumer and better develop the consumer-brand relationship, which is important because consumers feel connected to those with whom they network. Consumers with stronger connections with brands are more likely to display their chosen brands (Escalas and

Bettman 2005; Escalas 2004; Fournier 1998) as a part of how they view themselves. Consumers seek out brands and products which reflect their identity and tell their story (Escalas 2004), with interaction acting as a meaningful expression of that relationship (Robinson 2007).

However, research has not directly examined how interaction and self-brand connection can further the bond with the brand, inciting the consumer to demonstrate their perceived relationship to the brand via social media. While studies have been undertaken to understand reference group reflection on self, social media provides a new avenue to pursue a better understanding of this relationship.

Significance of the Research

Developing an understanding of how the consumer views self-brand interaction on social media is essential to appropriate spending of marketing dollars, as digital spending is expected to surpass that of television advertising spending by 2017 (Ember 2015). Social media is an important vehicle to test such an influence of online behavioral interaction, because online social networking connections typically develop as a follow up to offline interaction (Ross et al. 2009). Additionally, this study explores the effect of certain individual personality characteristics focused on positive self-enhancement through the use of brands as a driver of purchase intent.

As individuals feel greater connection to others they engage with on social media space (Chen 2011), brands can leverage this to activate consumption via social media activity.

As narcissists relate to self-enhancing brands, these envy-inducing brands have the opportunity to focus their resources toward developing more rich relationships with those most likely to purchase and display their products, effectively functioning as brand ambassadors (Peters et al. 2013). The online shift creates a new challenge for brands to engage in customer relationship

marketing, due to a lessening of control over message diffusion and a weaker understanding of the best strategies for integrating customer touchpoints (Malthouse et al. 2013; Peters et al. 2013). Consumers, in effect, become co-senders of the marketing message to those within their network through their public use and discussion of the brand.

Contributions

Measurement of return on investment in social media marketing is a major challenge for the medium (Malthouse et al. 2013). The monetized value of social media has yet to truly have been effectively measured and understood. Methods like click-through rates and page or profile follows are easily quantified, but they do not tell the full story of the value of social media. This dissertation aims to provide support for the idea that social media interaction with consumers can support and enhance purchase intent for brands. Brand equity and purchase behavior are essential elements for return on investment, which makes understanding this process important for brands. The need for an understanding of the value of the consumer-brand relationship is at an all-time high, as marketing is expected to clearly demonstrate the return on investment in ad spending.

As marketers devote greater time and monetary resources to social media, this study presents an opportunity to better understand how more effectively use such resources. Social media marketing activities positively impact value, relationship, and brand equity (Ford et al. 2014; Kim and Ko 2012). These online platforms provide consumers the opportunity to use the brand to use the brand to positively reflect and enhance their own equity, by building a positive association.

As this public identity is so readily available, social media grows in importance to marketers. Understanding how consumers utilize brands and use brand interaction to form an

identity on social media can lead to more efficient and effective methods of building long-term consumer-brand relationships. As consumers use brands and their internalized self-brand connection to fashion their identity, this study can help in building the body of knowledge this amalgamates. Understanding what factors influence relationship building between the consumer and the brand can also help shape the nature of the interaction. This paper will explore the role of narcissism, self-brand connection, and Twitter interaction as mechanisms to drive purchase behavior.

Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter one provides an overview of the topic of self and self-brand connection within the context of social media. Chapter two will discuss existing research into the topics of self and identity, self-brand connection, and social media. This chapter is intended to help the reader develop an understanding of previous research in this area. Because social media is relatively new area for marketing research, ensuring readers understand how this new context fits with, and helps to extend, previous theory into a new realm is key.

Chapter three focuses on the body of research undertaken within this dissertation. In this chapter, the methodology and results of three main studies will be described and explained. Study 1 utilized survey research to examine the relationship between narcissism, self-brand connection, and social media usage. Study 2 took the results of Study 1 to form a framework for an experiment to better understand how product status and self-brand connection can influence a consumer's intent to purchase and brand value. To better develop Study 2, two pretests were conducted. Pretest 1 used a 2 (**product status**) x 4 (**product type**) to revalidate previously used scales and demonstrate reliability of a new scale for self-consciousness, a proxy for narcissism.

Pretest 2 determined appropriate high status and low status goods. The main study for Study 2 involved a two condition, random assignment experiment, examining the effect of high and low status products on the relationships among the variables used in Study 1. Study 3 was a 2 (**brand status**) x 2 (**interactivity**) experiment to determine how social media interaction and self-brand connection most readily influence a consumer's perception of a product's value and purchase intent.

Chapter 4 involves a discussion of the meaning of the results of Study 1, 2, and 3. Within this chapter, managerial and theoretical implications, limitations of the study, and future research opportunities will be discussed. Chapter 5 provides an understanding of the studies and contributions as a whole.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Self and Identity

James (1890) defines the *self* as “all an individual can call his or her own, including his or her body, thoughts, family, ancestry, lands, and possessions” (as cited in Belk 1988), with the *extended self* including all external objects and possessions, but also “persons, places, and group possessions, as well as such possessions as body parts and vital organs” (Belk 1988, p. 140). Identity is a function of all displayed elements, including images, interactions, and relationships. People see their possessions as having value and adding to their identity when they control the entity (Cushing 2013). Consumers use these elements to display who they are through those elements. Self is a product of interaction, with the self being collectively built and interwoven with others in the individual’s social sphere (White, Argo, and Sengupta 2012). In effect, individuals use everything they own and connect with to build an external expression of both who they feel they are, how they are in public view, and how they want to be seen.

The ideas of identity and self are wholly intertwined, and identity is the central tenet to who the individual is, however, individuals often create numerous, often incongruent, identities to represent the facets of self. Identity is developed, expressed and modified throughout the social sphere, based on actual or imagined observations and interactions between the individual and those they contact, including other actors and the audience (McAdams 1993; Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin 2008). These other actors take on the role of characters in the individual’s perceived story, with those characters telling their story and explaining providing a framework for the individual to express their self. Possessions, relationships, and interactions act as artifacts and symbols within the story of the individual.

Artifacts help to provide the individual with meaning in psycho-, socio-, and cultural contexts (Fournier 1998), allowing the individual to tell their story in the manner they choose. Typically these relationships help define the individual's identity, with individuals selectively choosing venerated products and relationships. These possessions are a signal for identity, helping to tell the story of the individual (McAdams 1993) and form the outwardly projected identity. Brand usage supports this narrative chronicle of the life of the individual (Escalas 2004; McAdams 1993), with the brands helping to map the individual's preferences and desires as they change over time (Chaplin and John 2005; McAdams 1993). The personally used brands act as outward signals of a public identity.

The public identity is the character enacted to fulfill social roles and obligations (Goffman 1959). Public identity encapsulates the individual's identity outside the home and in public, such as at work, at school, or simply out and about with friends and acquaintances. This public identity is a manifestation of the individual's desire to be distinct, yet still fulfill expected social behavior. The private role is the identity the individual keeps behind closed doors, the truest form of the self, enacted only when alone or in a protected space (Goffman 1959). This private behavior is the individual's true self, which may or may not be socially acceptable. Social media, however, blurs these lines. Previous research indicated public behavior differed from private behavior (Schlenker 1980), with individuals portraying distinct, more socially advantageous roles (McAdams 1993). Online behavior, however, as elements of both public and private behavior as individuals perform their public role, yet are also able to display their public identity from the comfort of being behind a screen. They craft their narrative through the exposition their choices in products, experiences, and images.

Consumers prefer to share their story, as opposed to directly “telling,” with online interaction acting as a storytelling mechanism (Pera, Viglia, and Furlan 2016; Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin 2008) to communicate the external self to others. Consumers strive to convey a desired identity to the outside world, with their possessions serving as an integral element of the self (Belk 1988; Berger and Heath 2007). Individuals often identify with highly-visible, status-building entities through the use of the entity’s products. They project the entity in their life (Banister and Cocker 2014; Hamilton and Hewer 2010), with the hope these high-status products will reflect on the individual and, due to the desirable nature of the product, enhance the identity status of the individual.

While consumption and possessions do not define the all-encompassing identity, visible consumption, however, is the most obvious source of identity for most (Belk 1988; Drenton 2012; Veblen 1899). People trot out their favorite products to signal how they internally view themselves and how they want to be seen by others. These products function to signal status, boosting the self-concept and sense of self for the individual. Consumers use products and brands to further construct meaning to their life, seeking out those which reflect back on the self in a desired manner, and avoiding those deemed detrimental to the intended self (Banister and Cocker 2014; Thomas, Trump, and Price 2015). By evading negative interactions and relations, the individual is able to readily self enhance and take on a persona which is positively viewed by those around them.

Narcissism

Narcissism is a personality disorder that includes characteristics and behaviors of delusional grandiosity, compulsive ambition, exceptional arrogance, with negative interpersonal

interactions, most notably involving a sole focus on the self and a lack of empathy (American Psychiatric Association 2000). While it can reach a level of psychopathy, narcissism exists on a continuum, with individuals exhibiting a spectrum of these attributes, behaviors, and traits in a more limited manner. While there are multiple features under this umbrella, one central concept is the idea of unwarranted conceit, acting as a motive of self-enhancement (Baumeister and Vohs 2001; Chatterjee and Hambrick 2007; Sidikides and Gregg 2001). This self-obsession is manifested in an unwavering attempt to be continuously seen in a positive, enviable manner, with the individual's identity having high public standing.

In order to enhance identity, narcissists purchase products promoting uniqueness through their exclusivity and personalization (Lee, Gregg, and Park 2013). Narcissists display positively viewed products, while simultaneously avoiding negatively viewed brands (Thomas, Trump, and Price 2015), which may provide cause for excess scrutiny of the individual's personal choices. The threat of receiving fewer "likes" may threaten the narcissist's identity, resulting in the emphasis of positively viewed identity-linked products (White, Argo, and Sengupta 2012) to enhance the socially accessible identity. To self-enhance, individuals can engage in conspicuous consumption, or the idea of consuming products and experiences merely to be seen consuming such experiments (Veblen 1899). Individuals engage in virtual conspicuous consumption, by displaying envy-inducing possessions or purchases, gifts like roses or engagement rings, and experiences, like dining out, attending events, or worldwide travel, with the expectation of approval of a personal identity through likes, comments and follows (Croft 2013). Individuals often display high-status goods as sign equipment to indicate material wealth and status (Banister and Cocker 2014; Belk 1988; Goffman 1959). These indicators of wealth convey an individual's

station in relation to others, in effect, telling the individual's story of self in a manner which is significantly enhanced.

This signaling of status enhances the idea of self, particularly when consumers are in a public setting (Rucker and Galinsky 2009). High status products reinforce this idea of grandiose self through association for narcissists. This overlap between self and brand helps the narcissists again boost their sense of self. Narcissists readily seek out attention as a means to bolster their grandiose identity, a key characteristic of the personality (American Psychiatric Association 2000). Use of envy-inducing products can support this need for the narcissist as narcissists imagine themselves to be of monumental importance and interest. Narcissists can project this idealized outward identity and connect with aspirational brands they may not otherwise be able to purchase; thus supporting their imagined grandiosity and almost pathological need to boost their self-esteem.

As narcissism is associated with a desire to be seen as an enviable figure, social media is the perfect channel to demonstrate this positive identity. Social media provides the opportunity to engage in image management, the attempt at controlling information to create the desired image and affect others' viewpoints of the self (Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky 2010; Goffman 1959). Narcissists have been shown to utilize social media to inhibit a negative self-evaluation (Andreassen, Pallesen, and Griffiths 2016), while also sharing information about achievements (Macek 2013; Marshall, Lefringhausen, and Ferenczi 2015), and show off connections and associations (Gentile et al. 2012; Macek 2013; Marshall, Lefringhausen, and Ferenczi 2015; Murray 2015).

The unhealthy obsession with self is routinely associated with narcissism. A key trend on social media is the "selfie." A "selfie" is a self-photograph which is then posted to an

individual's social media profile. Narcissists are drawn to this concept as a means to display their status-symbols and show off to those within their social network. Significant research has focused on the connection between narcissism and selfies, with results indicating narcissists use selfies to boost positive self views (Halpern, Valenzuela, and Katz 2016), post selfies more frequently (Weiser 2015), and disclose positive information (Barry et al. 2015; Liu, Ang, and Lwin 2016; Marshall, Lefringhausen, and Ferenczi 2015). This evidence can show the positive affiliations the individual possesses, while also accentuating the demonstrable relevance to the narcissist. Selfies provide the narcissist the opportunity to show off their experiences and possessions under the assumption that those in their social network care about and are concerned with the narcissist, underscoring the obsession with and need to be the center of attention.

Self-Brand Connection

The *self-brand connection* is the extent to which the individual incorporates a brand into their self-concept (Escalas and Bettman 2003, 2005; Escalas 2004). In effect, self-brand connections highlight how consumers relate to brands, feel a parallel between the personality and image of the self and brand, and call the brand their own. A female who sees herself as a quirky, independent, and fun individual might see herself as a 'Kate Spade Girl,' viewing her usage of Kate Spade products as a descriptor of her internal identity, as outwardly expressed. A man who is athletic, plays basketball, and idolizes Stephen Curry of the Golden State Warriors may purchase Under Armor products and the Under Armor Curry shoes in an attempt to communicate who he feels he is at his most true self.

People aim to put their best foot forward and craft their self-concept by using brands connected to their aspirational groups (Escalas and Bettman 2003), as those brands and products

are perceived as something to strive for. Often, those products take the form of higher status goods, compared to items used by the individual's current membership, since people want to be viewed in the best light possible. People consume highly observable goods to signal their wealth and power to others, particularly those within their reference group (Perez-Truglia 2013), with the individual's social network functioning in that role, which helps to define group norms and expectations. Consumers want to, at minimum, equal their class or reference group, with the typical desire of matching their aspirational group (Mazzocco et al. 2012; Snow 2008). This higher level group represents an internal ideal the person seeks to achieve, with achievement vaulting them to a more enviable position.

Since the 1980s, there has been an expectation of reciprocal interaction between brands and consumers, in which two-way interactional relationship development is considered essential (Aggarwal 2004; Fournier 1998; Palmatier et al. 2009). Relationship marketing involves attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships (Berry 2002; Berry, Shostack, and Upah 1983), with the intent of connecting and engaging with consumers in a manner to best suit their needs and desires. Brands engage with consumers to determine their consumers' needs and find the best way to satisfy those needs with their brand's offerings. This exchange often results in an interdependent relationship between the individual and the brand (Fournier 1998).

As possessions are the most visible element of the self, the connection between a consumer and a brand can further develop identity. Brands viewed positively by an individual's social group are more likely to be incorporated into the individual's overall self-concept (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, and Gruen 2005; Park and Kim 2014), as oftentimes people have an almost overwhelming desire to be viewed positively.

Consumers use brands to display their desired identity, with the interaction projecting the brand into the consumer's life (Banister and Cocker 2014); social interaction is a necessary building block of self. The self-brand connection grows when brands help the individual achieve a goal (Escalas and Bettman 2005), be it by accomplishing a feat or simply through the reflective power of ownership. By merely displaying the brand, the consumer associates the brand with themselves. The consumer has come to view the brand as a relational partner with whom they connect and reciprocally influence. Individuals seek likeminded others to bolster identity and feel a sense of community (Banister and Cocker 2014) and interacting with a brand the consumer views as likeminded can serve to grow and strengthen the relationship between the brand and consumer, further integrating the brand's image into their own identity. Possessions are a part of the self, particularly when the individual feels a likeness to the personality of the brand. They feature these items prominently in their life as a way to show off the affiliation.

The individual interweaves possessions into the self in three main ways: controlling, creating, and knowing (Belk 1988). Controlling involves the individual's mastery of a skill or ownership possession. Individuals often will "conquer" a goal, such as climbing a mountain, or utilize control over money to purchase a tangible product like a computer, but social media allows individuals to post pictures of and brag about these accomplishments. Individuals can physically create possessions or services, by making a meal or building a table, or through the items selected for purchase, as purchasing items reflects preferences, as well as by displaying and marketing their wares on their social networks. Knowing involves a strong desire for, or connection with, a possession. An armchair could become known, as it is integrated into regular family activities as an almost safety blanket. Knowing can be communicated via online relationships with others, by showing off interaction with a person, indicating a relationship in a

person's profile, or by posting an inside joke on the person's profile or Facebook wall.

Consumers interact with brands on social network sites as they perceive the brand as an actual communication partner (Kwon and Kim 2013) who will readily interact with them in a friendly manner.

Social Media

Online social networking sites (SNS) are online services which allow a person “to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd and Ellison 2008, p. 211). These sites allow users to connect with entities they know directly, tangentially, or view in an aspirational manner. Online SNSs are colloquially known and referred to as social media.

As of 2015, over 65% of all adults in the U.S. utilize some form of social media, with 90% of young adults (18-29) and 78% of individuals making \$75,000 per year actively utilizing some form of social media (Perrin 2015). A broad range of platforms are available to create and share an online persona, ranging from Facebook to Twitter to Snapchat, Vine, and Instagram. Social media is a pervasive engagement tool that provides the consumer the opportunity to build and maintain those connections, as consumers want to display the positive relationships for all to see. These online networks enable individuals to clarify and display the visible social ties of the individual (Boyd and Ellison 2008). The *digital extended self* comprises those possessions, relationships, events, and interactions displayed (Belk 2013; Sheth and Solomon 2014; Siddiqui and Turley 2006), however, a key difference from the original extended self is the consumer selectively choosing what to display, share, and disclose online, which allows them to take a

private identity and make it public (Belk 2013). The online realm allows the individual to craft a precisely exhibited identity. These images and items displayed create a context for both the individual and those around them (Davies 2007), which further helps to drive the sense of self by allowing the individual to display who they feel they are at their core.

Social media serves as a platform for identity development. However, the platforms often establish a filtered and photoshopped version of a person's persona and life as opposed to a true reflection. Careful selection of digital artifacts allows the individual to craft their desired persona, through their envy-inducing possessions, personality, or personal connections and relationships. Historically, we only interacted with those who were visible around us. The idea of "keeping up with the Joneses" was limited to those with whom we interacted on a daily basis in person. However, with the advent of social media, the landscape of interactivity has changed dramatically. People are able to network and connect with friends, family, and acquaintances at the push of a button or the click of a mouse.

While individuals were previously temporally and geographically limited in personality display (Belk 2013; Schau and Gilly 2003), today's consumers have an identity accessible to anyone, anywhere, 24 hours a day, seven days a week (Murray 2015). Suddenly, all the world's a stage. Anyone can access someone's online profile at their leisure and see what the consumer elects to display, be it their posted statements, relationships, photos, friendships, or likes. People build a profile using products, images, interactions, and brands they feel best represent how they internally view themselves and want to be seen externally by others..

Online provides an avenue to utilize a narrative structure. The phrase, "nothing ever truly disappears on the internet," comes to mind, as a personal history can be found in the annals of webpages. Photographs, things tweeted, and friends made over time show through the use of

personal websites, and social media (Schau and Gilly 2003; Siddiqui and Turley 2006), telling the story of the individual. People often change, but this lifestream is ongoing and individuals' changes can be tracked sequentially (Sheth and Solomon 2014).

Social media has opened up a new path for demonstrating the self through consumption behaviors. Digital possessions are carefully selected to display only what is desired with regard to the self, though often people feel the online persona is more in line with the "real self" (Robinson 2007; Schau and Gilly 2003; Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin 2008). These digital artifacts provide evidence about the individual as well as provide meaning within the context of the individual (Cushing 2013; Davies 2007). Individuals engage in self-presentation management in order to shape the outside view of the self (Baumeister 2010), with consumers aiming to build personas viewed positively within their frame of reference.

Consumers use attention-getting behaviors to connect themselves to a brand, by parading purchases or mentioning the brand in their posts (Ferraro, Kirmani, and Matherly 2013). This engagement in virtual conspicuous consumption through the display of envy-inducing possessions or purchases (Townsend and Sood 2012), on myriad platforms, such as personal websites, social networks, or online product reviews, clearly demonstrates the individual's connection to the brand.

While it can help the individual establish their desired identity, social media can also encourage negative behaviors (Al-Menayes 2015; Buechel 2012; Chan 2014; Sarabia and Estévez 2016), and particularly acts as a means to support and encourage narcissistic behavior. It provides the narcissist the opportunity to display favorable products and connections (Halpern, Valenzuela, and Katz 2016; Weiser 2015), supporting their imagined grandiosity and importance, often through display of aspirational and identity-linked products (Brunskill 2014).

Individuals aim to better connect themselves with their reference group; consumption behaviors seen as having a positive fit with the member group enhance the connection to the brand (Escalas and Bettman 2003; Hamilton and Hower 2010). As social media offers myriad platforms to display curated identity, narcissists may be most apt to actively display this identity when they feel a strong connection to a brand. Consumers flaunt online, with the hope that being seen with the product will boost other's opinions of them. This desire to get others to notice and look at the individual helps drive the narcissist's behavior, with narcissists often regularly broadcasting their current state through content and frequency of status updates (Bergman et al. 2011; Buffardi and Campbell 2008; Garcia and Sikström 2014; Mehdizadeh 2010).

Interactivity is defined as two or more communication parties interacting and exchanging with each other, the medium, and how such messages and influences are synchronized (Blazevic et al. 2014) and where one party must make the decision to initiate communication in some fashion to one or more other parties. *Willingness-to-communicate* is a party's likelihood to initiate interaction in a communication context to different receiving parties (Blazevic et al. 2014). A conscious decision is made on the part of the consumer to communicate with a brand on social media, as such interaction reflects upon them. A key hallmark of social media is the expectation of mutual engagement and interactivity (Croft 2013).

As interactions and relationships help develop identity and associations, these elements help define the character of the consumer for all to see. Because social media provides an avenue for the shift from one-way to two-way communication between brands and consumers, brands and consumers are able to develop a sense of engagement and identity co-creation to further drive said relationship (Sheth and Solomon 2014). Social media presents an opportunity for consumers to engage with brands and broadcast their chosen self, providing a canvas for the

individual to curate identity as it is a “communication [system] that allow[s] their social actors to communicate along dyadic ties” (Peters et al. 2013, p. 282). Consumers are more likely to continue engaging with brands they feel strongly connected (Chen 2011). This allows them to further strengthen the reflective ties when they feel the brand is a relational partner. Social media allows for greater mutual reflection between the consumer and brand (Gensler et al. 2013), strengthening the self-brand connection through such reflection, as there is greater potential for interactivity in a visible sphere. Previously offline, in-person communication, such as going into a store, was seen as richer, compared to private communication, due to instantaneous company response (Daft and Lengel 1986); however, an argument can be made that online communication offers that same instant response, while providing greater reach due to the broader visibility of online interaction. Social media communications have been shown to positively influence brand image (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, and Schäfer 2012).

Twitter acts as a vehicle for interaction, providing individuals the opportunity to connect with others and Chen (2011) found Twitter use gratified the need for a sense of camaraderie and connection between individuals. Kim and Ko (2012) found social media platforms offer paths to interact with the brand in a friendlier manner, with the resulting communication leading to positive relationship equity. Because brands appear anthropomorphized by taking on personality dimensions when communicating online, consumers interact with these brands on social networks as if they are communication partners (Fournier 1998; Xia 2011), as opposed to merely being inanimate.

As social media provides consumers an opportunity to more readily interact with brands, as opposed to being merely passive recipients, the line between producer and consumer becomes blurred (Croft 2013; Siddiqui and Turley 2006) and the relationship becomes shared. This two-

way communication between consumers and brands helps to co-develop these reflective identities, with brands most obviously aiming to market their product, and consumers looking to reflect that product and product's image on to themselves.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

As stated earlier, this dissertation used three main studies to examine how consumers use social media interaction with brands to display their self, through engagement with brands they feel a distinct self-brand connection to, and the effect of that connection, product status, and interactivity on social value and purchase intent.

Participants and Design

Three studies were used to analyze the relationships between self-brand connection, product status, interactivity, perceived brand social value, and purchase intent. Study 1 was a within-subjects design, asking participants to indicate their favorite brands to interact with on social media, and then then assess the brand on self-brand connection, purchase intent, and the consumer's level of narcissism. Study 2 used a 2 (**product status**: high, low) X 2 (**brand**: 2 high, 2 low) between-subjects design. Study 3 used a 2 (**product status**: high, low) X 2 (**interactivity**: interaction, no interaction) between-subjects design.

Participants were recruited online through Amazon Mechanical Turk, with only active social media users, defined as using social media on a minimum weekly basis, being asked to participate.

Instruments

Self-Brand Connection. Self-Brand Connection is the extent to which a consumer views a similarity and overlap between himself or herself and that of a particular brand (Escalas and Bettman 2003; Escalas 2004). It was measured using Escalas and Bettman's (2003, 2005) seven-item, seven-point Likert-type scale (“This brand reflects who I am”; “I can identify with this

brand”; “I feel a personal connection to this brand”; “I use this brand to communicate who I am to other people”; “I think this brand helps me become the type of person I want to be”; “I consider this brand to be ‘me’ (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others”; “This brand suits me well”). The scale was measured from 0-100. Previous research indicated a scale reliability of $\alpha=.96$. This instrument was used in Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3.

Consumer Likelihood to Interact. Likelihood to interact is defined as how likely a brand is to seek out and communicate with a brand on social media. A three-item, seven-point Likert type scale was developed to measure a consumer’s intent to interact with a brand on Twitter, using the three key methods of interaction on Twitter: “How likely are YOU to like BRAND’S posts on Twitter?”; “How likely are YOU to retweet BRAND’S posts on Twitter?”; “How likely are YOU to respond to BRAND’S posts on Twitter?” This scale was used on Study 2 and Study 3.

Narcissism. Narcissism is a personality trait in which an individual has an almost pathological, typically unhealthy focus on the self, with little regard for those around them (Akhtar and Thomson 1982). It was measured using the forced choice, 13-item Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-13), a shortened version of the original NPI-40. The items include: “I find it easy to manipulate people/I don’t like it when I find myself manipulating people”; “When people compliment me, I get embarrassed/I know that I am a good person because everybody keeps telling me so”; “I like having authority over other people/I don’t mind following orders”; “I insist upon getting the respect that is due me/I usually get the respect I deserve”; “I don’t particularly like to show off my body/I like to show off my body”; “I have a strong will to power/Power for its own sake doesn’t interest me”; “I expect a great deal from other people/I

like to do things for other people”; “My body is nothing special/ I like to look at my body”; “Being in authority doesn’t mean much to me/People always seem to recognize my authority”; “I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve/I will take my satisfactions as they come”; “I try not to be a show off/I will usually show off if I get the chance”; “I am a born leader/Leadership is a quality that takes a long time to develop”; “I like to look at myself in the mirror/I am not particularly interested in looking at myself in the mirror” (Gentile et al. 2013). Previous research indicated a reliability of $\alpha=.73$. This was used on Study 1.

Self-Consciousness. Utilizing Feningstein, Scheier, and Buss' (1975) five-point, seven-item scale measuring self-consciousness (public), which is the degree to which a person expresses an awareness of self as a social object with an effect on others was tested. These items included “I’m concerned about my style of doing things”; “I’m concerned about the way I present myself”; “I’m self-conscious about the way I look”; “I usually worry about making a good impression”; “One of the last things I do before leaving my house is look in the mirror”; “I’m concerned about what other people think of me”; “I’m usually aware of my appearance.” The original authors stated the scale demonstrated reliability of $\alpha=.84$. This scale was used in Study 2 and Study 3.

Social Value. Social value is the perception of the product’s ability to enhance its user’s self-concept and social approval (Zhou, Yang, and Hui 2010). Using a seven-item seven-point Likert-type scale, these items include “BRAND would help me to feel acceptable”; “BRAND would improve the way I am perceived”; “BRAND would make a good impression on other people”; “BRAND would give its owner social approval”; “Brand would help me feel trendy/up-to-date”; “I think it is particularly appropriate to use BRAND in social contexts.” Previous

research demonstrated reliability (Cronbach's α) ranging from .82 to .94 (Sweeney and Soutar 2001; Zhou, Yang, and Hui 2010). This scale was used in Study 2 and Study 3.

Purchase Intent. Purchase intent is a measure of how likely a consumer is to make a purchase of the brand in the future and was measured using Burton, Garretson, and Velliquette's (1999) four-item, seven-point scale ("How likely are you to buy the brand you engaged with", "How probably is it that you will purchase [BRAND] products on offer?", "How certain is it that you will purchase this product?," "What chance is there that you will buy this product?"). The items were measured on a bipolar, Likert-type scale, from "highly unlikely" to "highly likely," "highly improbable" to "highly probable," "highly uncertain" to "highly certain," and "no chance at all" to "very good chance," respectively. This scale was used in Study 1, 2 and 3. Previous research demonstrated reliability of $\alpha=.83$ to .97.

Study 1

The primary purpose of this study is to better understand the influence of social media and self-brand connection on purchase intent. Further, it examines the effect of narcissism on these relationships. As narcissists seek to boost their image using positively perceived status items (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, and Gruen 2005; Lee, Gregg, and Park 2013), when product status is high, narcissists are more likely to engage with those products in a public fashion. Consumers low in narcissism lack the same propensity to interact readily with brands, regardless of the product's level of stature. Narcissists, however, are more apt to boast in order to gain cachet. Interacting with high-status brands acts as a mechanism for the consumer to actively display the desired relationships.

Narcissism has shown to be a significant predictor of frequency of postings (Garcia and Sikström 2014). As narcissists engage and display relationships with brands viewed positively,

they are more likely to a) engage with brands they believe will help them to socially advance and b) purchase products. Active self-promotion of positively-reflecting possessions is often associated with narcissism (Paulhus and Williams 2002). Those with narcissistic tendencies use products in an aim to enhance their imagined grandiose identity to others (Carpenter 2012; Marshall, Lefringhausen, and Ferenczi 2015), as they feel a stronger connection to positive brands. The relationship between self-brand connection and purchase intent is influenced by a consumer's need to be seen positively by others (Kastanakis and Balabanis 2012). When consumers are more concerned with the perceptions of those around them, they will be more likely to purchase those reflective products. Additionally, no one goes on social media to display the worst parts of their life (unless seeking to obtain sympathy or support from others); instead, social media is a means to display the most enviable aspects of an individual's being and identity. Consumers are more likely to readily display those products when they are most concerned with the perceptions of others. As such,

H1: Narcissism moderates the influence of self-brand connection on purchase intent (see Figure 1.1 for the conceptual model)

H2: Narcissism moderates the influence of social media activity on purchase intent (see Figure 1.2 for the conceptual model)

Social media is a platform that allows the opportunity for the individual to explore and display the most-desired self (Croft 2013). Consumers identify brands they feel overlap with their imagined self and are more likely to attempt to form an external relationship with the brand because they feel the brand fits within their reference group (Escalas and Bettman 2003). When a brand is viewed as a relational partner, the consumer is more likely to include that brand in their social, displayed self. Social media allows consumers to fulfill the need to connect with others (Chen 2011) and because consumers feel stronger connections to those with which they interact,

they are more likely to publically discuss and display those brands they feel represent the self. Exchanges with a brand have been shown to influence the relationship investment of the brand, resulting in an enhanced view of the brand (Park and Kim 2014) and online engagement with a brand has been shown to predict purchasing behavior (Gabisch 2011; Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie 2014). As such,

H3: Self-brand connection mediates the effect on social media activity on purchase intent.

Method

Sample. A sample of 260 individuals (164 males; 90 females; average age 31.43; 74% holding at least a baccalaureate degree) were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk to participate in a study on social media usage. Participants were compensated in the form of a monetary payment for their participation.

Procedure. Implied consent was obtained at the beginning of the study. Participants were informed that the researchers were interested in their social media usage and were asked several screener questions regarding their usage, in order to eliminate individuals not actively utilizing social media, as the study focused only on individuals who actively use social media. They were then asked to list up to five favorite brands or sports teams they follow on Twitter, in order to get them in the mindset of thinking about their brand preferences. Thinking about their favorite brand of those listed, participants were asked to rate their likelihood to interact with the brand on Twitter (tweet at or tweet in response to a brand), measured using two, seven-point item, from “very unlikely” to “very likely”. Following this, participants completed the self-brand connection and purchase intent scales for their selected brand. Last, they were asked to rate themselves on narcissism and answer demographic variable questions (age, gender, education, and race).

Measures. For Study 1, the self-brand connection scale was shown to be reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha=.96$), exceeding Nunnally and Bernstein's (1978) criteria. The Narcissism Personality Inventory met acceptable scale reliability standards (Cronbach's $\alpha=.72$), though the results were slightly below those in previous research. The purchase intent scale demonstrated reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha=.90$). See Table 1.1 for Study 1 scale reliability information.

Results

Demographic variables (age, gender, education, race) were measured, however none was a significant predictor of any other variable ($p>.15$), so they will not be discussed further. Eighty-four percent of participants reported visiting Facebook daily or several times per day, while approximately 50% reported visiting Twitter daily or several times per day. This is higher than some estimates for Twitter usage, as some estimates of usage are closer to 36% (Duggan et al. 2015); however, since the study focused specifically on social media users, these participants would be expected to have greater frequency of social media use compared to that of the general population.

Using Hayes' 2012 PROCESS SPSS macro (model 1), the influence of narcissism on the relationship between self-brand connection and purchase intent was assessed. The interaction between self-brand connection and narcissism was significant ($b=.01$, $SE_b=.00$, $p<.05$), indicating the effect of self-brand connection on purchase intention depended on the level of narcissism (see Figure 1.3 for the statistical model). Results indicated greater self-brand connection ($b=.02$, $SE_b=.01$, $p<.01$) was associated with higher purchase intent, while higher narcissism ($b=-.50$, $SE_b=.28$, ns) with lower purchase intent (see Table 1.2 for the effect model). Specifically, consumers with higher levels of narcissism had significantly lower purchase intent,

compared with those lower in narcissism, when they felt a lower level of self-brand connection, whereas consumers with higher levels of narcissism had significantly higher purchase intent when they felt a higher level of self-brand connection (see Figure 1.4 for the plot of the moderating role of narcissism on the effect of self-brand connection on purchase intent). This provides support for H1.

Again PROCESS model 1, using 10,000 bootstrap samples, was used to test the hypothesized conditional effect of social media on purchase intent, through narcissism (Hayes 2012). The interaction between social media activity and narcissism was significant ($b=.13$, $SE_b=.06$, $p<.05$), indicating that the effect of social media activity on purchase intent was dependent on the level of narcissism (see Figure 1.5 for the statistical model).

Results indicated increased social media engagement ($b=.27$, $SE_b=.08$, $p<.01$) was associated with higher purchase intent, while higher narcissism ($b=.70$, $SE_b=.37$, n.s.) was associated with lower purchase intent (see Table 1.3 for the effect model). Consumers with higher levels of narcissism had significantly lower purchase intent when they had lower levels of social media engagement activity, whereas consumers higher in narcissism who engaged in higher levels of social media engagement activities had significantly higher purchase intent (see Figure 1.6 for the plot of the moderating role of narcissism on the effect of consumer likelihood to interact on purchase intent). In summary, consumers with higher self-brand connection had greater purchase intent when they had a higher likelihood to interact with the brand on Twitter. This provides support for H2.

H3 proposed self-brand connection mediates the effect of social media activity on purchase intent. To test this mediational relationship analysis, Hayes' (2012) PROCESS SPSS macro (model 4) with 10,000 bootstrap samples was utilized. Results showed that consumer

likelihood to interact on Twitter was a significant predictor of self-brand connection, $b=7.93$, $SE_b=.92$, $p<.01$, and self-brand connection was a significant predictor of purchase intent, $b=.02$, $SE_b=.00$, $p<.01$. These results support the mediational hypothesis. Tweeting was still a significant predictor of purchase intent after controlling for the mediator, self-brand connection, $b=.21$, $SE_b=.05$, $p<.01$, consistent with partial mediation. Approximately 20.5% of the variance in purchase intent was accounted for by self-brand connection and social media activity ($R^2=.21$). The indirect effect of tweeting on purchase intent was significant, $b=.18$, $SE_b=.04$, 95% CI excluding zero [.11, .27]. The Sobel test for mediation was significant, $z=5.72$, $p<.01$ (see Figure 1.7 for the statistical model). Higher social media use was associated with approximately .40 increase in purchase intent scores as mediated by self-brand connection. As expected, self-brand connection and purchase intent were strongly correlated ($r=.66$, $p<.01$). Consumers who feel a strong connection to a brand are more likely to engage in behavior that would put the brand front and center in the consumer's life through their social media activity. This suggests self-brand connection grows purchase intent as consumers grow their likelihood to interact, supporting H3.

Discussion

The results of this study indicated support for the proposed hypotheses. Self-brand connection, likelihood to interact with a brand on social media, and narcissism all influence purchase intent, albeit in different ways. Narcissistic consumers have higher purchase intent when interacting on social media, which indicates a higher level of interaction may be a status signal for those consumers. Narcissists emphasize the use of status-symbol possessions, so as they feel a strong self-brand connection to brands viewed positively, they are more likely to directly engage with the brand, leading to a higher willingness to pay a premium for the brand

(Parent, Plangger, and Bal 2011). Translating this into the realm of social media, it can be posited consumers who interact with status-building entities on social media are more likely to purchase those products in their real life.

These results provide additional support for previous research on social media as a mechanism for connection with others (Chen 2011; Hamilton and Hewer 2010), narcissistic social media behavior (Buffardi and Campbell 2008; Garcia and Sikström 2014), and social media brand engagement on purchase intent (Gabisch 2011; Jin and Phua 2014). Mere engagement with a brand on social media has been shown to lead to improved brand evaluations (Beukeboom, Kerkhof, and Vries 2015), with individuals seeking to engage with those entities they prefer.

As individuals base significant portions of the self on their social identity and reference groups (Escalas and Bettman 2005; Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993), consumers desire to continue strengthening of relational ties to those they intentionally affiliate. Narcissists in particular seek associations with high status products and social media provides another public avenue for that to occur.

Study 2

As Study 1 indicated a significant relationship between narcissism, self-brand connection, and likelihood to interact on social media on purchase intent, the natural next step in the research is to examine the addition of product status to the relationships. As narcissists seek to enhance their social status through the use of higher status brands they feel a strong self-brand connection, this could bring insight into the types of brands that should most readily focus on consumers who engage publicly with their brand and products.

For consumers concerned with status, they seek out prestigious products, particularly in situations they consider threats, such as rejection by others (Mazzocco et al. 2012; Ordabayeva and Chandon 2011). For example, a new resident to Fayetteville, Arkansas might buy grilling accessories with Razorback football imagery to attempt to assimilate into the culture of those in the community and their local reference group. Not being a football fan or not being a Razorback fan may be perceived negatively by the group, which could lead to being ostracized or left out of the group. Showing off their embracing of the culture can reinforce this element of self when they received positive feedback. An online threat would be a lack of likes or comments on an image intended to provoke those responses.

It should follow that those who exhibit greater levels of narcissism will have increased purchase intent when interacting with high status brands on social media. Higher status products are viewed as exclusive, customizable, and personalized (Lee, Gregg, and Park 2013), distinguishing the owner by their mere ownership, making the individual appear special and inimitable. Consumers concerned with their public persona feel a stronger connection to brands when those brands have positive reflective value.

H1: Product social value moderates the relationship between self-consciousness (narcissism) and self-brand connection (see Figure 2.1 for the conceptual model)

Moreover, social networks provide the opportunity to widely broadcast a self-brand connection to a valuable brand (McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips 2013) and display preferences for (or against) a particular brand. Individuals seek to boost status through use of high value products and when they feel a connection to an entity, the individual wants to be seen having an association. While consumers view many brands positively, it is the self-brand connection which triggers the drive to connect with said brand.

H2: Self-brand connection mediates the relationship between brand social value and a consumers' likelihood to interact with a brand.

Mere exposure to high status goods triggers the desire for ownership (Bauer et al. 2012). Research has demonstrated higher status brands are correlated with consumers having a stronger intention to build a relationship between the consumer and brand, as well as positively influence purchase intent (Jin and Phua 2014). When consumers interact with a brand, they are more likely to continue that relationship with the brand through purchases; however, they only are likely to make that purchase when they feel the brand has positive social value.

H3: Product status (high vs. low) moderates the relationship between consumers' likelihood to interact and purchase intent (see Figure 2.2 for the conceptual model)

While product status, narcissism, self-brand connection and likelihood to interact all have demonstrated predictive relationships to social value and purchase intent, their collective and comparative value has not been examined. Narcissists showcase their relationships with prominent status symbols, while still avoiding negatively perceived products (Thomas, Trump, and Price 2015); however it is common for any individual to emphasize their relationships to positively perceived products (White, Argo, and Sengupta 2012), particularly when they feel the product is representative of their internally idealized image of self. By engaging with a brand and broadcasting their opinions (McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips 2013), narcissists can boost their self-perceived grandiosity by building a following of brand fans (Carpenter 2012), which acts to trigger a desire for a greater relationship through purchasing behavior.

H4: Product status, narcissism, and self-brand connection predict (*a*) perceived social value and (*b*) purchase intent.

H5: Product status, self-brand connection, and consumer likelihood to tweet predict (*a*) perceived social value and (*b*) purchase intent.

Pretests

Pretest 1. To set up the next experiments, a pretest to further develop and select appropriate measurement scales was performed. While the NPI-13 met acceptable reliability standards ($\alpha=.72$), which aligned with previous research for measuring *narcissism*, a new scale measuring *self-consciousness* as a proxy for the narcissistic personality trait was tested. As self-enhancement and self-image are major concerns for narcissists, self-consciousness measures a similar construct. While the NPI-13 demonstrated acceptable reliability, the results were just barely above Nunnally and Bernstein's (1978) basic criteria. Feningstein, Scheier, and Buss' (1975) scale measuring self-consciousness (public) was instead selected. This scale had a significantly improved reliability ($\alpha=.86$) over the NPI-13.

Perceived social value was the next construct that was measured. Across all four categories, the scales provided good reliability, with Cronbach's α ranging from .88 to .93 (with an average Cronbach's $\alpha=.91$). However, on each scale, excluding item 6 ("I think it is particularly appropriate to use the _____ brand in social contexts") increased reliability, with the average α improving from .91 to .92. Thus, in future studies, item six was excluded from analysis.

To further assess the reliability of the self-brand connection scale, Escalas and Bettman's (2003, 2005) seven-item scale was again utilized. Across all four categories, excellent reliability was demonstrated (average $\alpha=.94$) (see Table 2.1 for scale reliability information). Using a sample of 52 mTurk participants (26 males; average age=36.8), participants were presented with four product categories (cheese, grocery store, beer, chocolate) and two products within each category (anticipated to be categorized as high or low status). The participants were asked to select one of the two products in each category that they would choose to purchase for a social

event, ignoring product costs. They proceeded to rate the product's social value and self-brand connection. Last, they rated themselves using the social consciousness scale. Additional social media usage measures were collected, with 96.2% of participants indicating they were active on social media, with 53.8% reporting following of brands, 34.6% reporting communicating directly to brands ('liking' on Facebook, tweeting at or responding to a tweet on Twitter, etc.), and 44.2% reporting talking about brands on social media.

For each of the four categories, the expected higher-status product (Alouette Brie cheese, Whole Foods Market, craft beer, and Godiva chocolates) was rated significantly higher than the lower-status product (Velveeta, Walmart Neighborhood Market, Bud Light, M&Ms) on social value. On the self-brand connection measures, the higher-status items did have a higher mean on self-brand connection, compared with those in the lower-status category. The cheese category was the only category that this pattern did not hold (consumers had a stronger connection to Velveeta than to Alouette brie). This is most likely due to the small size of the sample and possible unfamiliarity with the brand. The pattern would be expected to gain significance if the sample size were to increase.

Independent-samples t-tests were performed to evaluate differences in social media behavior. Consumers who talked about brands had higher narcissism scores, however, the difference was not significant. That pattern followed for consumers who directly communicate with brands. While these preliminary results were positive indicators, because the study was small, the focus was on examining the scales and determining if they warranted further use. The sample size simply did not allow for more advanced analysis, but, it provided a stepping stone to the next studies.

Pretest 2. To determine high and low status brands for future studies, a pretest was conducted using 131 participants (76 men; average age=26.46) recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk. Participants were compensated in the form of a monetary payment for participation. 21 participants were eliminated prior to analysis for failing to correctly answer items assessing attention.

Participants were asked to rate 12 different consumer brands on their perceived status. These brands were selected based on previous research analyzing product perception differences between high and low status products (Mazzocco et al. 2012; Sundie et al. 2011). The brands selected were Rolex watches, Timex watches, Lululemon Athletica clothing, Old Navy clothing, MAC cosmetics, Maybelline cosmetics, Nike athletic wear, Keds shoes, Apple, Blackberry, Tide laundry detergent, and Glad trash bags.

First, participants assessed their familiarity with the brand (single item, seven-point scale, “extremely unfamiliar” to “extremely familiar”). Next they were asked to rate the brand on its social prestige using a four-item, seven-point Likert-type scale (Aggarwal, Jun, and Huh 2011). The scale reliabilities ranged from $\alpha=.82$ to $.96$. Last, they answered basic demographic questions, as well as two different attention check measures (“Which of the following brands were you NOT shown?”).

A one-sample t-test was used to analyze differences in products. Based on the results, four products had the strongest difference in status. Nike and Lululemon were selected as the high status products, while Tide and Old Navy were selected as low status products. These four brands were used in successive studies.

Main Study

Experimental design. A 2 (product type: high, low) between-subjects experiment was performed to better understand the effect of product type on the relationships between self-brand connection, narcissism, a consumer's likelihood to interact and purchase intent for a product. In order to attenuate for brand bias, two products in the high category (Nike, Lululemon Athletica) and two products in the low category (Old Navy, Tide) were selected for analysis.

Sample. 236 individuals (138 males; 98 females; average age 34.02) were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk to participate in a study on social media usage. Participants were compensated for their participation in the form of a monetary payment.

Procedure. Implied consent was obtained at the beginning of the study. Participants were told the researchers were interested in their social media usage and were asked several qualifier questions regarding their frequency of social media use. As the focus of the study was social media brand engagement on Twitter, only participants considered regular Twitter users, defined as those using Twitter at least once a week, were invited to continue their participation in the study.

The study began by asking participants to answer some questions about themselves (self-consciousness). Next, they were randomly assigned to one of four brands (Nike, Lululemon Athletica, Old Navy, Tide) and provided information about the brand's Twitter account (see Appendix 1 for stimuli). They were then asked to rate the brand's social status, their self-brand connection, purchase intent, and their likelihood to interact with the brand on social media (three items). Last, they were asked demographic questions (age, gender, race, education). The self-consciousness and brand social value scales came from Pretest 1, while self-brand connection,

purchase intent, and the consumer's likelihood to interact with a brand were used previously in Study 1.

The reliability of the scales was assessed, with each demonstrating an acceptable level of reliability ($\alpha > .70$, Nunnally and Bernstein 1978) [social value ($\alpha = .95$); self-brand connection ($\alpha = .97$); purchase intent ($\alpha = .98$); consumer's likelihood to interact ($\alpha = .95$)]. While self-consciousness ($\alpha = .86$) demonstrated an acceptable level of reliability, results show indicated dropping one item would improve the scale's reliability, and thus the item was subsequently dropped ("I'm usually aware of my appearance"), improving the reliability to $\alpha = .87$ (see Table 2.2 for scale reliability information).

Results

Manipulation & Attention Checks. To assess the manipulation, participants were asked "did the brand you were shown interact with you on social media (i.e., follow you, respond to a tweet, etc.)?" 85.1% of participants correctly assessed that the brand interacted with them.

Three items were included in the study to assess careful attention was paid to the study. Two items were embedded in the body of the study ("select 'somewhat uncharacteristic'"; "select 'agree'") and one item was asked at the end of the study ("What brand were you shown?"). This led to 17 participants eliminated before data analysis.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to analyze within-subject variable differences across the four levels. No significant differences across groups were found for frequency of Facebook use, frequency of Twitter use, self-consciousness, or demographic data (all $p > .40$), so those variables were not considered for group differences going forward. A t-test was performed to analyze if there were significant differences between each of the two high and low status

products. There were no significant differences (all $p > .13$) on the previous variables. Based on initial analyses, eight participants were eliminated for being outlying data.

To ensure the results from Study 1 were replicated, each of the hypotheses were retested. H1, H2, and H3 results all held, indicating the reliability of the previous results and model. Additionally, all results were analyzed using 5,000 bootstrapped samples, unless otherwise stated.

Using Hayes' (2012) PROCESS SPSS macro (model 1), the influence of perceived product social value on the relationship between self-consciousness and self-brand connection was measured. Results indicated greater self-consciousness ($b = -.31$, $SE_b = .12$, $p < .01$) was associated with lower levels of self-brand connection, while higher product social value was associated with higher self-brand connection ($b = .61$, $SE_b = .16$, $p < .01$) (see Table 2.3 for the effect model). The interaction between self-consciousness and social value was significant ($b = .01$, $SE_b = .01$, $p < .01$), indicating that the effect of self-consciousness on self-brand connection was dependent on the level of product social value (Figure 2.3 for the statistical model). For products with high social value, increasing levels of self-consciousness were associated with increasing levels of self-brand connection and, for low social value products, increased self-consciousness was associated with a decreased self-brand connection (see Figure 2.4 for the plot of the moderating role of social value on the effect of narcissism on self-brand connection). This model accounted for approximately 69.5% of variance in self-brand connection ($R^2 = .70$, $p < .01$). These results indicated support for H1.

Again, Hayes' PROCESS SPSS macro (model 4) was used to test for mediation. Social value significantly predicted the consumer's likelihood to interact, $b = 1.07$, $SE_b = .05$, $p < .01$. Self-brand connection significantly predicts consumer's likelihood to interact, $b = .29$, $SE_b = .04$, $p < .01$.

These results supported the mediational hypothesis (see Figure 2.5 for the statistical model). Product social value was no longer a significant predictor of purchase intent after controlling for the mediator, self-brand connection, $b=.08$, $SE_b=.05$, $p=.11$. The indirect effect of social value on consumer's likelihood to tweet was significant, $b=.32$, $SE_b=.04$, 95% CI excluding zero [.24, .40]. This provided support for full mediation. Approximately 40% of the variance in consumer's likelihood to interact was accounted for by product social value and self-brand connection, $R^2=.40$. These results indicate support for H2.

The influence of product status on the relationship between likelihood to tweet and purchase intent was assessed using Hayes' (2012) PROCESS SPSS macro (model 1). Results indicated greater likelihood to tweet was associated with higher purchase intent ($b=.67$, $SE_b=.10$, $p<.01$), while high product status was associated with lower levels of purchase intent ($b=-3.41$, $SE_b=.77$, $p<.01$) (see Figure 2.6 for the statistical model). The interaction between likelihood to tweet and status was significant ($b=.27$, $SE_b=.14$, $p<.01$), indicating that the effect of likelihood to tweet on purchase intent was dependent on the product's status (see Table 2.4 for the effect model). For high status products, higher likelihood to tweet was positively correlated with higher purchase intent, however with low likelihood to tweet, there was a significantly lower purchase intent. This model accounted for approximately 40% of the variance in purchase intent ($R^2=.403$, $p<.01$) (see Figure 2.7 for the plot of the moderating role of product status on the effect of likelihood to interact on purchase intent). These results indicate support for H3.

A regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the combined predictive effect of self-brand connection, narcissism, and product status (high, low) of a brand's social value. The linear combination of measures was significantly related to the brand's perceived social value, $F(3, 224)=264.20$, $p<.01$ (see Table 2.5 for the effect model). VIF (1.01-1.11), tolerance (.90-.99),

skewness (.17), and kurtosis (.41) statistics were all within acceptable limits (Hair, Jr. et al. 2009).

The sample's multiple correlation coefficient was .88, indicating approximately 78% of the variance of social value was accounted for by the linear combination of measures (see Figure 2.8 for the statistical model). Each variable was a positive and significant predictor of social value. Narcissistic consumers with a strong connection to a high status brand viewed the brand as having greater social value. This indicated support for H4a.

Similarly, a regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the combined predictive strength of self-brand connection, narcissism, and product status (high, low) on purchase intent. The measures were significantly related to consumer purchase intent, $F(3, 224)=111.54, p<.01$ (see Table 2.5 for the effect model). The sample's multiple correlation coefficient was .77, indicating approximately 60% of the variance of perceived social value was accounted for by the linear combination of measures (see Figure 2.9 for the statistical model). VIF (1.02-1.11), tolerance (.90-.99), skewness (1.04), and kurtosis (-.65) statistics were all within acceptable limits. Self-brand connection and product status were significant predictors of purchase intent; however consumers with a stronger self-brand connection had greater purchase intent in the low status condition, compared with those in the high status condition. While self-brand connection and product status were significant predictors of purchase intent, narcissism was not, indicating partial support for H4b.

A regression analysis evaluated the combined predictive effect of self-brand connection, consumer likelihood to interact, and product status as predictors of social value. The model was significant, $F(3, 224)=236.06, p<.01$ (see Table 2.6 for the effect model). The sample's multiple correlation coefficient was .87, indicating approximately 76% of the variance of perceived social

value was accounted for by the linear combination of measures. VIF (1.02-2.06), tolerance (.49-.98), skewness (1.68), and kurtosis (.59) statistics were all within acceptable limits. Self-brand connection and product status were significant predictors of social value, however consumer likelihood to interact was not (see Figure 2.10 for the statistical model). Consumers with a stronger self-brand connection perceived low status products as having higher social value. This indicates partial support for H5a.

The linear combination of self-brand connection, consumer likelihood to interact, and product status significantly predicted purchase intent, $F(3,224)=115.97, p<.01$ (see Table 2.6 for the effect model). The multiple correlation coefficient was .78, indicating approximately 61% of the variance in purchase intent was explained by these variables (see Figure 2.11 for the statistical model). VIF (1.02-2.06), tolerance (.49-.98), skewness (1.04), and kurtosis (-.90) statistics were all within acceptable limits. Self-brand connection, likelihood to tweet, and product status all positively and significantly predicted purchase intent. Consumers with a strong self-brand connection and high likelihood to tweet at a brand had greater purchase intent for high status products, compared to low status products. This indicates support for H5b.

Discussion

Following Study 1, as expected in Study 2, intent to interact with a brand on social media is a positive and significant predictor of purchase intent. This interaction is indicative of the consumer's internal connection to the brand as self-brand connection predicts likelihood to interact. Self-brand connection was a strong predictor of both perceived social value. This relationship indicates that when individuals identify with a brand, they perceive that brand as being more prestigious, thus boosting their social standing. Consumers desire to communicate

with brands they feel have strong social value in the hopes that the brand will reflect back positively on the individual, which follows research indicating social value is essential when consumers are most concerned with status (Hennigs et al. 2012).

When consumers see a brand as having social value, they will seek to communicate with that brand for the positive reflective value on their identity. This positive relationship outcome supports previous research (Labrecque 2014). When consumers indicate a strong likelihood to publicize their relationship through social media interaction, it points to a continued interest in aligning with the brand. Narcissism predicts stronger interest in products seen as exclusive (Lee, Gregg, and Park 2013). As exclusive products are viewed with having greater social value, narcissists are more likely to be drawn to such products in order to boost their power and elevate their self above others.

When consumers perceive a brand as representing positive external image, consumers typically have greater identification with the brand. Compared to social consciousness and product status, self-brand connection was the strongest predictor of both purchase intent and social value. This indicates that while concern for appearances and product status are important predictors, self-brand connection most effectively drives these two outcome variables. The need to proffer a positively viewed self only serves to strengthen the effect of self-brand connection.

Following that, results indicated likelihood to tweet became the strongest predictor of the dependent variables of social value and purchase intent, compared with product status and self-brand connection. Again, self-brand connection indicates a positive opinion of a product, while intent to interact strengthens the relationship on the outcome. When consumers feel a connection to a product and they are apt to interact with that brand, it indicates they feel the product is a

positive reflection on them, because, again, individuals want to be associated with positively perceived products, which aligns with that notion.

Study 3

As previous results indicated, product status, self-brand condition, and likelihood to interact are predictors of social value and purchase intent. Consumers want to own products which elevate their status and improve their social roles from the viewpoint of others (Mead 1934). The consumer and brand reflect upon one another, with characteristics reflecting back on one another.

When consumers feel a product more readily connects with consumers, they are less driven to develop a relationship because the exclusivity is decreased and exclusive products act as a way to positively differentiate the consumer (Lee, Gregg, and Park 2013). When a product maintains its exclusivity through a lack of interaction, it sees an increase in the value (Lee and Shrum 2012).

H1: Product status will significantly predict social value. However, when consumers interact with a brand, the effect of product status will be decreased, such that, high status products that interact will see a lesser increase in perceived social value.

Online interactions and relationships are visible elements of self, helping to shape the individual's persona online. When a consumer engages with a brand, the interaction positively influences the perceived benefits of the brand to the consumer (Gummerus et al. 2012), leading to higher brand and product evaluations. Consumers engage with brands to elevate their social status. These greater social benefits of brand interaction can reflect positively on the consumer, as public interaction makes visible the relationship between the consumer and brand.

H2: Product status will significantly predict self-brand connection, however, when consumers interact with a brand, the effect of product status will be increased, such that, high status products that interact will see a greater increase in self-brand connection compared to brands that do not interact with the consumer.

Consumers aim to construct their external self through product usage and activities they feel contribute to their coherent identity, with those products representing ideals or the best elements to reflect upon them (Ahuvia 2005). Previous research indicates self-brand connection helps drive positive outcomes toward the brand when there is interactivity (Labrecque 2014). The interaction between consumer and brand is reflective of the self, with the brand functioning as an aspirational marker for the individual.

H3: Self-brand connection positively mediates the relationship between interactivity and social value.

Consumers work to positively distinguish themselves from others (Berger and Heath 2007; Lee, Gregg, and Park 2013), often through the use of status-building products as a way to accomplish this. These symbolic products allow the consumer to display individual characteristics, with the goods acting as a source of power to elevate them from others in the crowd (Frank 1985). Goods seen as difficult to acquire or possess are viewed as being better quality (Cialdini and Griskevicius 2010), so when consumers compare themselves to others, owning goods which are more difficult to possess help to elevate the individual's status. Conversely, when consumers are seen as having widely available products, there is no status elevation.

H4: While self-brand connection mediates the relationship between product status and purchase intent, that relationship is also moderated by perceived product social value (see Figure 3.1 for conceptual model).

Again, as consumers actively seek products that can be customized for the product's ability to positively differentiate, interaction with a brand can be seen as a way to customize a relationship with the brand. Product status helps to predict purchase intent, as consumers often want to purchase items seen as having high social value to reflect positively (Kastanakis and Balabanis 2012; Mazzocco et al. 2012; Perez-Truglia 2013). Interaction with brands encourages and strengthens the positive relationship between the consumer and brand, leading to a stronger relationship and connection between consumer and brand (Park and Kim 2014). However, for status brands, when ignored, consumers see an increase in purchase intent (Lee and Shrum 2012). This indicates that a lack of interaction makes the brand more challenging to acquire and acquisition by a "normal" person takes away from some of the prestige of the product. As such,

H5: While the relationship between product status and purchase intent is mediated by self-brand connection, the relationship is moderated by interaction with the brand (see Figure 3.2 for conceptual model).

Method

Sample. 207 individuals (115 male; average age 34.35) were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk to participate in a study on social media usage and consumer brands.

Participants were compensated in the form of a monetary payment for their participation.

Procedure. Participants were informed researchers were interested in their social media use and opinions of consumer brands on social media. To screen out non-or irregular users of social media, several screening questions were asked at the beginning of the study regarding frequency of social media use. Only participants using Twitter at least once per week (deemed regular users) were asked to continue with the study. Next participants were asked to assess some items in relation to themselves (self-consciousness).

Participants were then told the researchers were looking to gather information regarding consumer brands on social media. They were provided basic information about the brand's social media account, using the same stimuli from Study 2 (see Appendix 1).

Next they were informed they would be assessing some of the brand's social media behaviors. Regardless of previous personal online experience with the brand, they were asked to consider their response to the study as though they had not previously interacted with the brand to which they had been assigned. For the purposes of the scenario, they were informed their Twitter handle was @brandfan123. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (**product status**: high, low) x 2 (**interactivity**: interaction, no interaction) between-subjects study. In the interaction condition, the participants were informed that they followed the brand and the brand reciprocated by following them back. They were also told they tweeted at the brand and the brand responded to their tweet. In the no interaction condition, participants were told they followed the brand, but there was no reciprocal behavior on the part of the brand. They were then told they tweeted at the brand, but the brand did not respond (see Appendix 2 for stimuli framework). To help alleviate potential brand bias, two high status (Lululemon Athletica, Nike) and two low status (Old Navy, Tide) brands were selected for analysis from the previous study (see Appendix 3 for individual brand stimuli).

Last, they were asked to assess the brand's social value ($\alpha=.93$), their self-brand connection ($\alpha=.96$), their likelihood to interact with the brand ($\alpha=.93$), and their purchase intent for the brand ($\alpha=.97$) (see Table 3.1 for scale reliability information).

Results

Manipulation & Attention Checks. As in Study 2, participants were asked “did the brand you were shown interact with you on social media (i.e., follow you, respond to a tweet, etc.)?” 87% of participants correctly assessed that the brand interacted with them. As in Study 2, three items were included in the study to assess attention, with two items directly embedded in the scales (“select ‘somewhat uncharacteristic’”; “select ‘agree’”) and one item asked at the end (“What brand were you shown?”). Prior to data analysis, 27 respondents were eliminated for failing attention checks or failing to complete the study and thus were not included in the analysis.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to analyze differences across the four brands. No significant differences existed on frequency of Twitter use, brand familiarity, brand liking, self-consciousness, or demographic variables ($p > .32$), and thus will not be considered for further analysis.

T-tests were performed to analyze differences between high status (Lululemon Athletica, Nike) and low status (Old Navy, Tide) brands. Results indicated no significant differences existed between the two brands within each level on the dependent variables. As such, the conditions were collapsed.

A 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effects of product status (high status, low status) and interactivity (interaction, no interaction) on social value. The means and standard deviations for social value as a function of product status and interactivity are presented in Table 3.2. The ANOVA indicated no significant interaction between product status and interactivity, $F(1, 176) = .02$, $p = .88$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$, but significant main effects for product status, $F(1, 176) = 16.92$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$, and interactivity, $F(1,$

176)=48.23, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .22$ (see Figure 3.3 for the plot of the interaction between status and interactivity on social value). The overall results of the ANOVA are presented in Table 3.3. As expected, the product status effect indicated high status products had greater social value ($M_{\text{high}} = 28.19$, $se = .844$; $M_{\text{low}} = 23.46$, $se = .78$); however this was not the main focus of the study. The primary purpose of the study was to determine the effect of interactivity on social value. The results of this analysis indicated consumers who interact with brands on social media perceive the brand to have a higher social value than those brands that do not ($M_{\text{interact}} = 29.82$, $se = .83$; $M_{\text{no interact}} = 21.83$, $se = .80$). This provided partial support for H1.

A 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial ANOVA was performed to evaluate the effects of product status and interactivity on self-brand connection. The means and standard deviations for self-brand connection as a function of product status and interactivity are presented in Table 3.4. The ANOVA indicated no significant interaction between product status and interactivity on self-brand connection, $F(1, 176) = .09$, n.s., partial $\eta^2 = .00$, but significant main effects for product status, $F(1, 176) = 4.22$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, and interactivity, $F(1, 176) = 11.79$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$ (see Figure 3.4 for the plot of the interaction between status and interactivity on self-brand connection). The overall results of the ANOVA are presented in Table 3.5. The product status effect indicated higher status products were associated with higher self-brand connection ($M_{\text{high}} = 27.36$, $se = 1.09$; $M_{\text{low}} = 24.30$, $se = 1.01$), but these results were not the focus of the main analysis. The primary purpose of this analysis was to analyze the effect of interactivity, with interaction being associated with higher self-brand connection, compared to no interaction. Overall, the results indicated the superiority of interaction with brands on self-brand connection ($M_{\text{interact}} = 28.29$, $se = 1.07$; $M_{\text{no interact}} = 23.27$, $se = 1.04$), which provided partial support for H2.

To examine the influence of self-brand connection on the relationship between interactivity and social value, Hayes' (2012) PROCESS SPSS macro (model 4) was used to test mediation (5,000 bootstrapped samples). Interactivity significantly predicted self-brand connection, $b=5.15$, $SE_b=1.50$, $p<.01$. Self-brand connection significantly predicted social value, $b=.52$, $SE_b=.05$, $p<.01$. These results supported the mediational hypothesis. Interactivity was still a significant predictor of social value after controlling for the mediator, self-brand connection, $b=8.10$, $SE_b=1.19$, $p<.01$. The indirect effect of interactivity on social value was significant, $b=2.68$, $SE_b=.80$, 95% CI excluding zero [1.18, 4.28] (see Figure 3.5 for the statistical model). This provided partial support for mediation. Approximately 20.5% of the variance in social value was accounted for by interactivity and self-brand connection, $R^2=.21$. These results indicated partial support for H3.

To test the indirect effect of product status on purchase intent, operating through self-brand connection, and dependent on social value, Hayes' (2012) PROCESS SPSS macro (model 5) was utilized (5,000 bootstrapped samples). This was intended to test the contingent nature of the effect of product status (high, low) on purchase intent through self-brand connection, depending on interactivity. Evidence suggested that enhancing social value moderated the indirect effect, as there was a significant interaction between product status and purchase intent (see Figure 3.6 for the statistical model).

Consumers exposed to low status products had higher purchase intent when the product had higher social value, compared to high status products; however the indirect effect was conditional on the social value variable, so mediational pathways for levels of social value were analyzed (Hayes 2012). When social value was low, the indirect effect of product status on purchase intent was negative and significant, meaning for low status products seen as having a

low social value, purchase intent significantly decreased. The effect also held for products with moderate social value, as, again, the indirect effect was negative and significant. For high social value products, while the effect of social value as negative, it was not significant. For the interaction condition, a 95% bootstrap CI for the conditional indirect effect was negative and did not contain zero (see Table 3.6 for the conditional effects bootstrapping analyses testing for an indirect effect of product status on purchase intent operating through self-brand connection and is dependent on product social value).

Self-brand connection mediated the effect of product status on purchase intent, as indicated by a 95% CI excluding zero [.17, 3.33]. When social value was increased, the indirect effect was no longer significant, indicating that self-brand connection was a more important predictor for purchase intent, regardless of product status. These results provided support for H4.

Hayes' (2012) PROCESS SPSS macro (model 5) was used to test the conditional process model for the effect of product status on purchase intent, through self-brand connection, depending on the interactivity manipulation. Interacting with a brand moderated the indirect effect as there was a significant interaction between the brand status and interactivity in the model for self-brand connection (see Figure 3.7 for the statistical model). The indirect effect was conditional on the interactivity manipulation, leading to separate mediational pathways for interactivity. When a brand interacted with a consumer on social media, the indirect effect for brand status on purchase intent through self-brand connection was negative and significant. Low status brands that interact with consumers saw a greater increase in purchase intent compared to high status products that interacted with consumers. When the brand did not interact with the consumer on social media, the effect was negative and significant, however the effect was stronger compared to brands that interacted. Low status brands that did not interact with

consumers saw a much steeper drop off from low to high status brand purchase intent. For both conditions, a 95% bootstrap CI for the conditional indirect effects did not contain zero [no interaction=-7.23, -2.40; interaction=-5.39, -.36] (see Table 3.7 for the conditional effects bootstrapping analyses testing for an indirect effect of product status on purchase intent operating through self-brand connection, dependent on interactivity). These results indicated support for H5.

Discussion

The major finding for this study was the effect of interactivity. Brands that interacted with the consumer saw an increase in purchase intent compared to those brands that did not, however it was dependent on other variables. Interactivity predicts social value because of the self-brand connection. Consumers viewing a brand as representative of themselves will lead to the consumer seeing the brand as being more socially valuable. Individuals seek association to higher status products in order to elevate their status.

From a basic standpoint, consumers want to feel a connection with a brand and interactivity makes the consumer feel like the brand cares about furthering the relationship with the consumer. Interactivity with followers appears to flatter the brand in such a way as to enhance the social value of the brand. Consumers actively seek products which help social standing (Mead 1934), and those brands who interact will be seen in a positive manner. Further, interactivity positively influences self-brand connection, leading to a greater perceived social value of a brand. People tend to feel a closer relationship to those with which they interact, which then leads to a better positive perception, as people want to be surrounded by identity-enhancing entities.

H4 and H5 had the most interesting results. The relationship between product status and purchase intent is positively mediated by self-brand connection, following earlier results and previous research. Product status is indicative of purchase intent because of the consumer's self-brand connection. However, that effect changes when social value is taken into account. When social value is higher, it actually decreases purchase intent. The effect of self-brand connection is lessened as social value increases, however the effect is still positive and significant. Consumers want to purchase high status brands, however, if the brand also has a high social value, they may view the brand as being "out of their league" or purchasing capability.

Similarly, interactivity actually weakens the effect of self-brand connection on purchase intent. High status brands that interact with the consumer actually saw a smaller effect of self-brand connection in purchase intent. This interactivity may be seen as lessening the exclusivity of the product. While they still feel a strong connection, when the brand interacts, it lessens the positive effect.

Consumers' intent to purchase grows based on the level of overlap between the self and brand. However, that relationship is actually weakened when social value moderates the relationship. Higher social value actually leads to lower purchase intent, which indicates that while self-brand connection is important, when the brand is of higher social value, it loses some of its power. Self-brand connection mediates the relationship between status and purchase intent, as a stronger connection with a brand enhances the value of what would normally be deemed a lower status brand (Paharia et al. 2011)

As for H5, product status predicted purchase intent because of the self-brand connection. Again, there was a negative effect of interaction, such that when the brand interacted with the consumer, it decreased purchase intent when there was a high self-brand connection. This might

indicate that consumers feel a strong self-brand connection to higher status products, but feel the value of the product is lower when the product is more accessible.

DISCUSSION

As a whole, the results of the three studies support the overall notion that brands should be interacting with consumers on social media. Consumers are gratified by connecting online and engaging with their favorite brands only serves to support and grow that relationship. Self-brand connection positively influences social value of brands. Because people avoid identifying and associating with products which could be viewed negatively, those entities with which they choose to interact and display are represented as having a higher social value to the individual (Wooten and Reed II 2004; Yajin and Griskevicius 2014). This provides support for certain brands to spend their marketing dollars online.

Implications

For consumers, this results of these studies can guide brands to better develop relationships with their customers. Consumer-brand interaction can be used to display identity and provide the consumer an outlet for displaying their inner identity. Consumers seek out brands they want to feel represent them. As interaction allows for mutual reflection, consumers can use that interaction with positive brands to positively support the desired identity and sense of self. As brands focus on best serving the needs of the consumer, consumers actively engaging with brands can help to enhance that relationship (Berry 2002).

For managers, understanding the relationship between consumer-brand interaction and purchase intent continues growing in importance. Online interaction is shown to influence brand perceptions (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, and Schäfer 2012). Not all brands will experience the same growth in purchase behavior when consumers seek out interaction, which indicates that not all brands and product types should be emphasizing consumer-brand interactivity.

The link between perceived social value and likelihood to interact is a function of self-brand connection, indicating that when consumers feel a stronger connection to the brand, their propensity to interact with the brand increases. However, lower status brands will see a greater return on investment when interacting with their consumers who perceive a high self-brand connection. This supports the notion that interaction on social media is an area marketers should be putting time and effort towards, especially for consumer packaged goods. A brand such as The Honest Company, a brand devoted to non-toxic, ethically sourced products household and cleaning products, would typically be seen as a lower status good with higher social value. A stay-at-home mom may purchase their products so other moms perceive her in a positive light. If a consumer were to interact with The Honest Company, the reflective value would be caring about the environment and caring about the health of children. Other moms would see the mom as having a relationship with The Honest Company, which helps to tell her story. Higher status brands see a lower in purchase intent when interacting with consumers, which could be seen as lessening of the exclusivity and power of the product. It becomes more easily accessible to the general public, making it less differentiable. If a designer brand like Givenchy were to actively tweet at the average consumer on a regular basis, it would seem too accessible.

The results support the notion and practice of devoting funds to social media marketing communications. Results indicate funds should be allocated toward online interaction, but not every brand should expect to see the same return in their online investment, meaning not all brands should allocate their resources equally. Consumer products should focus their energy toward driving that consumer-brand relationship. Businesses won't have the same impetus to interact or engage with business to business products. While it is important to connect with other high status brands, the same psychological building of self does not occur with brand to brand

communication. While consumers may view a brand positively when it interacts with other brands they like, it does not have the same direct reflection on the consumer.

Additionally, these studies provide a better understanding of how online interaction encourages purchase behavior and perceptions of brand. Brands that interact and have a higher social value will see the greatest improvement in both self-brand connection and purchase intent, but only when they are low status. These higher status brands lose some of their exclusivity when they are seen as engaging with more “normal” individuals.

As previously discussed, self-brand connection is a strong indicator for purchase intent, so ensuring high status brands are seeking out opportunities to engage with customers in the right manner is critical. High status brands should consider focusing on posting content, as opposed to interacting directly with consumers. One way to grow the relationship with consumers, while still maintaining an air of exclusivity may be to campaign using celebrities viewed as relatable, but still seen as prestigious.

Brands will continually shift increasing amounts of their marketing budgets toward social media as consumer social media use grows. This research can help practitioners better focus their online efforts, from beyond mere sales promotion communication to more long-term relationship management (Schultz and Peltier 2013). Focusing on consumers who communicate identity through the display of products online, either via posting photos on sites like Instagram or by publically mentioning the brand in their posts, can help strengthen the relationships with consumers more interested in actually making those purchases. Building of a rapport with the consumer helps to protect that relationship, by ensuring the consumer sees the brand as a relational partner who actively values the opinion and connection to the individual.

The results of this study further connect the idea of social media as a channel for interaction. Understanding social media as a vehicle to extend self-brand connection can help understand the influence of two-way communication on self-brand connection on purchase intent. Social media allows the consumer to develop and display an identity built on interactions with others, including and, perhaps more importantly, brands.

The idea of consumption as a visible element of self is nothing new (Veblen 1899). However, the results of this study indicate that consumers who display their relationship to a brand online feel a stronger connection to the brand. The key theoretical results of these studies extend previous research into the self-brand connection, taking the understanding into the online realm. Consumers are able to build their self-narrative through use of the brand (Escalas 2004), however by putting the connection into the online world, the consumer is able to more fully form the way in which they want to be seen and how they view themselves (Labrecque, Markos, and Milne 2011).

Limitations

There are elements within this research inhibiting the generalizability of the findings. While there exist myriad social media platforms, the focus of this study was on Twitter. This ignores the potential impact of interacting with the brand on other platforms or by interacting with the brand on multiple sites. The study also did not ask about the nature of the interaction between the consumer and brand. Interaction can be intended to flaunt the relationship or to report a brand failure to incite service failure recovery (Ford et al. 2014). These studies used positive responses in the interactivity condition and what could be seen as brand failures in the no interaction condition (if the consumer expected an interaction with the brand).

Consumers were also put in a position where they were forced to see a random brand, which they may have no intent to interact with online or offline. Participants were instructed to stay on the page, which may take away from their real-world experience (i.e., they may tweet at a brand, while simultaneously be looking at the brand's website; their attention may be distracted by other webpages which may lessen the sting of not being followed or lessen the excitement of interacting with the brand).

On another issue related to brand selection, while the brands are generally well-known brands, as evidenced by the large numbers of Twitter followers, it is possible that participants were unfamiliar with the brand they were shown. While that unfamiliarity with the brand will show up to an extent in the participant's self-brand connection and purchase intent, it may not capture the full effect of familiarity, or lack thereof. Further, as the study took place online, as opposed to being a true field study, purchase intent may not directly translate to purchase behavior. The consumer may want to make purchases from the brand, but may not have the means or opportunity to make said purchases.

This study is limited to social media users actively using Twitter. Consumers were recruited based on their social media usage, however they were asked exclusively to discuss their interaction with brands via Twitter, ignoring other platforms. Consumers build a sense of friendship through interaction (Jin and Phua 2014), with Twitter usage fulfilling a higher need to connect with others (Chen 2011).

This study is also restricted to participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk. While Mechanical Turk studies have been widely used, there is the possibility participants only sought to answer questions in a manner supportive of the research or to merely be paid. Additionally, as consumers answered questions online, the results may differ if asked in person, but as the focus

of the study is social media, answering questions online may be more indicative of a consumer's behavior due to the match in medium. Results of these specifically utilized brands and product types and may not hold to brands outside of the four chosen brands or product types. Further, the study is delimited to regular Twitter users, again leaving open the idea that the results may not hold on a) other social media platforms or b) less regular Twitter users. These limitations and delimitations suggest multiple avenues for future research.

Future Research

As social media is has become a more dedicated area of specialization for marketers, understanding what a consumer gains from actual interaction on social media, as opposed to just passive perception, becomes a greater priority, as understanding the consumer's needs can help to shape and determine the brand's future behavior and decision making. The results of this research provide ample directions for future research.

As the research was limited to Twitter, the next step should be to extend the research into other social networking platforms. As platform are constantly emerging and morphing, brands should assess the most effective methods of communication across these different platforms. As platforms are ever-changing, based on user behavior and shifting demographics of users (Croft 2013), there is a consistent need to continually research this area and understand how the fluid nature of the platforms influence consumer behavior with regard to brands.

It would also be advisable to examine the research in additional product categories on social media. Expanding further studies to encompass a broader variety of brand and product types may lead to more robust results or provide a greater understanding of product types which would benefit most readily from directly engaging with consumers.

Additionally, another area of potential study is sports. Research on sport in social media indicates increasing opportunities to interact and communicate with fans can lead to enhanced connections between teams and college students (Witkemper, Lim, and Waldburger 2012). Examining how both actual interaction, and beyond that, different types of interaction between teams and fans can help to demonstrate the managerial implications, helping to guide teams to best utilize their social media channels. While research has looked at interactivity as a driver for fan-team gratification (Clavio, Burch, and Frederick 2012; Clavio and Kian 2010; Watanabe, Yan, and Soebbing 2016), the research has focused past interactions, as opposed to experimentation. This research could be particularly useful for college sports teams for two reasons. The majority of college students are social media users, but students also represent thought-leaders on the value of an institution. Maintaining lifelong relationships and a positive view of the university can lead to greater purchase and donation intent for alumni (McClung 2015; Tsao and Coll 2004). Similarly, professional sports teams also seek to build lifelong fans, but professional sports teams have significantly more competition for both fandom and entertainment dollars, from other professional teams in their sport to other professional sports, underscoring the relationship between team and fan can help to strengthen that relationship.

CONCLUSION

Digital and social media marketing spending will overtake television spending by 2018 (Ember 2015). The relationship between consumers and brands is ongoing and ever changing and as the world shifts into the digital era, understanding how to best allocate resources online is essential for firms in the long run.

The results of these studies indicate the necessity of understanding your consumer's self-brand connection as an important predictor of future brand-related behavior. Study 1 indicated that the relationship between self-brand connection and purchase intent, along with likelihood to interact and purchase intent, are both moderated by narcissism. This indicates that this concern for self-presentation enhances the relationship between how a consumer views themselves and their likelihood to make a purchase of a product. Results also indicated that social value predicts a consumer's likelihood to interact because of self-brand connection. Consumers who view a brand positively are more likely to interact, however the reason they interact is because they feel the brand connects to them. Individuals want to interact with those they feel enhance their status, and when they feel a stronger connection, the relationship is enhanced.

Study 2 extended the results of Study 1 by taking into account the social status of a product. Narcissism predicted self-brand connection when the relationship was positively modified by social value. Consumers feel a stronger connection to those products they perceive as being of higher social value. This supports the idea that narcissists are concerned with social status, which determines how connected they feel to the brand.

The consumer's likelihood to interact with a product predicts purchase intent when the product is higher status. Consumers seek a connection with higher status brands and buying those products positively influences how others may view the individual. Self-brand connection

was the strongest predictor of both social value and purchase intent. This indicates that the more strongly a consumer feels a connection to a brand, the more likely they are to view it positively.

Study 3 moved a step beyond the first two studies by adding the variable of interactivity. While interactivity, as a solo variable, positively influences purchase intent, there was no significant interaction with product status. This means that while interacting with a brand increases purchase intent, there was no added effect of brand status. From an overarching point of view, it means that both types of brands should be interacting. However, there was no greater effect for one brand status over another.

Additionally, as self-brand connection mediated the relationship between interactivity and social value, the results indicated that self-brand connection is, again, the key driver for purchase intent.

These studies can assist marketers in developing a better understanding of how to invest their time and money into social media to get the best return on investment for their brand. Consumers are spending increasing amounts of time on social media (Perrin 2015), so it is critical to understand the effect of the medium on their identity, as identity drives purchase behavior.

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TABLE 1.1
Study 1: Scales, Scale Items, Cronbach's Alpha, and Corrected Item-Total Correlations

Scale	Corrected Item- Total Correlation
Narcissism ($\alpha=.72$)	
I find it easy to manipulate people/ I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people	.37 ^R
When people compliment me I get embarrassed/I know that I am a good person because everybody keeps telling me so	.29
I like having authority over other people/I don't mind following orders	.40 ^R
I insist upon getting the respect that is due me/I usually get the respect I deserve	.23 ^R
I don't particularly like to show off my body/I like to show off my body	.40
I have a strong will to power/Power for its own sake doesn't interest me	.39 ^R
I expect a great deal from other people/I like to do things for other people	.31 ^R
My body is nothing special/I like to look at my body	.29
Being in authority doesn't mean much to me/People always seem to recognize my authority	.30
I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve/I will take my satisfactions as they come	.37 ^R
I try not to be a show off/I will usually show off if I get the chance	.37
I am a born leader/Leadership is a quality that takes a long time to develop	.29
I like to look at myself in the mirror/I am not particularly interested in looking at myself in the mirror	.39
Self-Brand Connection ($\alpha=.96$)	
BRAND reflects who I am.	.88
I can identify with BRAND.	.89
I feel a personal connection to BRAND.	.84
I could use BRAND to communicate who I am to other people.	.86
I think BRAND could help me become the type of person I want to be.	.83
I consider BRAND to be me (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others).	.88
BRAND suits me well.	.85

TABLE 1.1 (cont.)
Study 1: Scales, Scale Items, Cronbach's Alpha, and Corrected Item-Total Correlations

Scale	Corrected Item- Total Correlation
Purchase Intent ($\alpha=.90$)	
How likely are you to buy BRAND?	.72
How probable is it you will purchase BRAND's products if offered?	.77
How certain is it that you will purchase BRAND?	.77
What chance is there that you will buy BRAND?	.83

^R indicates reverse coded item; n=260

TABLE 1.2
Study 1:
Effect Of Narcissism On The Influence Of Self-Brand Connection On Purchase Intent

Predictors	Coefficient	SE	<i>t</i>	95% CI	
				LLCI	ULCI
constant	4.30	.34	12.79**	3.64	4.96
Narcissism (M)	-.50	.2	-1.77	-1.05	.06
Self-Brand Connection (X)	.02	.01	4.62**	.01	.03
M x X	.01	.00	1.98*	.00	.02

$R^2=.32$
 $F(3, 251)=39.65^{**}$

Note: CI= confidence interval; LL=lower limit; UL=upper limit
 * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$

TABLE 1.3
Study 1:
Effect Of Narcissism On The Influence Of Social Media Activity On Purchase Intent

Predictors	Coefficient	SE	<i>t</i>	95% CI	
				LLCI	ULCI
constant	4.26	.43	9.82**	3.40	5.12
Narcissism (M)	-.70	.37	-1.90	-1.42	.02
Likelihood to Tweet (X)	.27	.08	3.54**	.12	.42
M x X	.13	.06	2.20*	.00	.25

$R^2=.21$
 $F(3, 251)= 22.09^{**}$

Note: CI= confidence interval; LL=lower limit; UL=upper limit
 * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$

TABLE 2.1
Pretest 1: Scales, Scale Items, Cronbach's Alpha, and Corrected Item-Total Correlations

Scale	Corrected Item- Total Correlation
Self-Consciousness ($\alpha=.86$)	
I'm concerned about my style of doing things.	.53
I'm concerned about the way I present myself.	.67
I'm self-conscious about the way I look.	.61
I usually worry about making a good impression.	.69
One of the last things I do before leaving my house is look in the mirror.	.62
I'm concerned about what other people think of me.	.72
I'm usually aware of my appearance.	.63
Social Value ($\alpha=.95$)	
BRAND would help me to feel acceptable.	.81
BRAND would improve the way I am perceived.	.87
BRAND would make a good impression on other people.	.85
BRAND would give its owner social approval.	.83
BRAND would help me feel trendy/up-to-date.	.86
I think it is particularly appropriate to use BRAND in social contexts.	.87
Self-Brand Connection ($\alpha=.98$)	
BRAND reflects who I am.	.93
I can identify with BRAND.	.91
I feel a personal connection to BRAND.	.91
I could use BRAND to communicate who I am to other people.	.92
I think BRAND could help me become the type of person I want to be.	.93
I consider BRAND to be me (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others).	.94
BRAND suits me well.	.86

Note: n=52

TABLE 2.2
Study 2: Scales, Scale Items, Cronbach's Alpha, And Corrected Item-Total Correlations

Scale	Corrected Item- Total Correlation
Self-Consciousness ($\alpha=.87$)	
I'm concerned about my style of doing things.	.63
I'm concerned about the way I present myself.	.72
I'm self-conscious about the way I look.	.73
I usually worry about making a good impression.	.73
One of the last things I do before leaving my house is look in the mirror.	.56
I'm concerned about what other people think of me.	.67
Social Value ($\alpha=.98$)	
BRAND would help me to feel acceptable.	.80
BRAND would improve the way I am perceived.	.86
BRAND would make a good impression on other people.	.86
BRAND would give its owner social approval.	.86
Brand would help me feel trendy/up-to-date.	.86
I think it is particularly appropriate to use BRAND in social contexts.	.83
Self-Brand Connection ($\alpha=.97$)	
BRAND reflects who I am.	.91
I can identify with BRAND.	.88
I feel a personal connection to BRAND.	.90
I could use BRAND to communicate who I am to other people.	.88
I think BRAND could help me become the type of person I want to be.	.90
I consider BRAND to be me (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others).	.92
BRAND suits me well.	.82
Consumers' Likelihood To Interact ($\alpha=.95$)	
How likely are YOU to like BRAND'S posts on Twitter?	.87
How likely are YOU to retweet BRAND'S posts on Twitter?	.92
How likely are YOU to respond to BRAND'S posts on Twitter?	.89

TABLE 2.2 (cont.)

Study 2: Scales, Scale Items, Cronbach's Alpha, And Corrected Item-Total Correlations

Scale	Corrected Item- Total Correlation
<hr/>	
Purchase Intent ($\alpha=.98$)	
How likely are you to buy BRAND?	.96
How probable is it you will purchase BRAND's products if offered?	.93
How certain is it that you will purchase BRAND?	.93
What chance is there that you will buy BRAND?	.95

Note: n=236

TABLE 2.3
Study 2: Effect Of Product Social Value On The Influence Of Self-Consciousness On Self-Brand Connection

Predictors	Coefficient	SE	<i>t</i>	95% CI	
				LL	UL
constant	8.13	3.85	2.11*	.54	15.72
Social Value (M)	.61	.16	3.82**	.30	.16
Self-Consciousness (X)	-.31	.12	-2.53*	-.55	-.07
M x X	.01	.01	3.01**	.01	.02

$R^2=.70$
 $F(3, 232)=176.69^{**}$

Note: CI= confidence interval; LL=lower limit; UL=upper limit; n=236
 * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$

TABLE 2.4
Study 2: Effect Of Product Status On The Influence Of Consumer Likelihood To Tweet On Purchase Intent

Predictors	Coefficient	SE	<i>t</i>	95%	
				LL	UL
constant	20.06	.55	36.49**	18.98	21.15
Product Status (M)	-3.41	.77	-4.41**	-4.94	-1.89
Consumer Likelihood to Tweet (X)	.67	.10	6.51**	.46	.87
M x X	.27	.14	1.97*	.01	.02

$R^2=.40$
 $F(3, 232)=52.25^{**}$

Note: CI= confidence interval; LL=lower limit; UL=upper limit; n=236
 * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$

TABLE 2.5
Study 2: Product Status, Self-Consciousness, and Self-Brand Connection as Predictors of Social Value and Purchase Intent

Predictor	<u>Social Value</u>			<u>Purchase Intent</u>		
	b	SE	β	b	SE	β
Self-Brand Connection	.63**	.03	.07	.49**	.03	.77
Self-Consciousness	.16**	.04	.15	-.01	.04	-.01
Product Status	1.17*	.57	.07	-3.31**	.63	-.22

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Social Value: $R^2 = .78^{**}$; Purchase Intent: $R^2 = .60^{**}$

TABLE 2.6
Study 2: Product Status, Consumer Likelihood To Interact, And Self-Brand Connection As Predictors Of Social Value And Purchase Intent

Predictor	<u>Social Value</u>			<u>Purchase Intent</u>		
	b	SE	β	b	SE	β
Self-Brand Connection	.64**	.04	.83	.43**	.04	.67
Likelihood to Interact	.08	.07	.05	.18*	.08	.14
Product Status	1.21*	.60	.07	-3.43**	.63	-.23

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Social Value: $R^2 = .76^{**}$; Purchase Intent: $R^2 = .61^{**}$

TABLE 3.1
Study 3: Scales, Scale Items, Cronbach's Alpha, And Corrected Item-Total Correlations

Scale	Corrected Item- Total Correlation
Self-Consciousness ($\alpha = .86$)	
I'm concerned about my style of doing things.	.67
I'm concerned about the way I present myself.	.75
I'm self-conscious about the way I look.	.66
I usually worry about making a good impression.	.69
One of the last things I do before leaving my house is look in the mirror.	.48
I'm concerned about what other people think of me.	.67
Social Value ($\alpha = .93$)	
BRAND would help me to feel acceptable.	.78
BRAND would improve the way I am perceived.	.86
BRAND would make a good impression on other people.	.84
BRAND would give its owner social approval.	.83
Brand would help me feel trendy/up-to-date.	.75
I think it is particularly appropriate to use BRAND in social contexts.	.72
Self-Brand Connection ($\alpha = .96$)	
BRAND reflects who I am.	.90
I can identify with BRAND.	.86
I feel a personal connection to BRAND.	.89
I could use BRAND to communicate who I am to other people.	.79
I think BRAND could help me become the type of person I want to be.	.83
I consider BRAND to be me (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others).	.90
BRAND suits me well.	.79
Consumers' Likelihood To Tweet ($\alpha = .93$)	
How likely are YOU to like BRAND'S posts on twitter?	.85
How likely are YOU to retweet BRAND'S posts on twitter?	.87
How likely are YOU to respond to BRAND'S posts on twitter?	.84

TABLE 3.1 (cont.)
Study 3: Scales, Scale Items, Cronbach's Alpha, And Corrected Item-Total Correlations

Scale	Corrected Item- Total Correlation
Purchase Intent ($\alpha = .97$)	
How likely are you to buy BRAND?	.92
How probable is it you will purchase BRAND's products if offered?	.91
How certain is it that you will purchase BRAND?	.91
What chance is there that you will buy BRAND?	.92

Note: n=180

TABLE 3.2
Study 3: Means and Standard Deviations for Group Differences on Social Value

Product Status	Interactivity	Mean	SD
Low	<i>No Interaction (n=51)</i>	19.37	7.43
	<i>Interaction (n=46)</i>	27.54	9.26
High	<i>No Interaction (n=42)</i>	24.29	7.36
	<i>Interaction (n=41)</i>	32.10	6.28

TABLE 3.3
Study 3: Effects of Product Status and Interactivity on Social Value

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Interactivity (A)	1	2852.69	2852.69	48.23**
Status (B)	1	1000.92	1000.92	16.92**
Interaction (A*B)	1	1.44	1.44	.02
Error	176	10409.52	59.15	
Total	179	14362.99		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

TABLE 3.4
Study 3: Means and Standard Deviations for Group Differences on Self-Brand Connection

Product Status	Interactivity	Mean	SD
Low	<i>No Interaction</i> (n=51)	21.96	9.53
	<i>Interaction</i> (n=46)	26.63	10.60
High	<i>No Interaction</i> (n=42)	24.57	9.91
	<i>Interaction</i> (n=41)	30.15	9.84

TABLE 3.5
Study 3: Effects of Product Status and Interactivity on Self-Brand Connection

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Interactivity (A)	1	1172.03	1172.03	11.79**
Status (B)	1	419.16	419.16	4.22*
Interaction (A*B)	1	9.15	9.15	.09
Error	176	17492.05	99.39	
Total	179	19108.06		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

TABLE 3.6
Study 3: Conditional Effects Bootstrapping Analyses Testing For An Indirect Effect Of Product Status On Purchase Intent Operating Through Self-Brand Connection And Is Dependent On Product Social Value

Variable Relationship	b (SE)	95% CI	
		LL	UL
Product Status→ Self-Brand Connection	3.15 (1.53)*	.13	6.17
Self-Brand Connection → Purchase Intent	.48 (.057)**	.37	.59
Product Status→ Purchase Intention	-12.42 (2.85)**	-18.04	-6.79
Social Value → Purchase Intent	-.20 (.08)*	-.347	-.04
Product Status X Social Value → Purchase Intent	.33 (.10)	.13	.54

Conditional Direct Effects Of X On Y When Social Value Was Low, Moderate, And High

Low (16.55)	-6.88 (1.35)**	-9.54	-4.23
Moderate (25.51)	-3.89 (.90)**	-5.67	-2.11
High (34.46)	-.90 (1.23)	-3.32	1.53

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

TABLE 3.7
Study 3: Conditional Effects Bootstrapping Analyses Testing For An Indirect Effect Of Interactivity On Purchase Intent Operating Through Self-Brand Connection And Is Dependent On Product Social Value

Variable Relationship	b (SE)	95% CI	
		LL	UL
Product Status→ Self-Brand Connection	3.15 (1.53)*	.13	6.17
Self-Brand Connection → Purchase Intent	.47 (.04)**	.38	.55
Product Status→ Purchase Intention	-4.83 (1.23)**	-7.26	-2.40
Interactivity → Purchase Intent	-2.48 (1.21)*	-4.88	-.09
Product Status X Interactivity → Purchase Intent	1.96 (1.76)	-1.51	5.43

Conditional Direct Effects Of X On Y When Brand Did/Did Not Interact with the Consumer

No Interaction	-4.83 (1.23)**	-7.26	-2.40
Interaction	-2.87 (1.27)*	-5.39	-.36

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

FIGURE 1.1
Study 1: H1 Conceptual Model

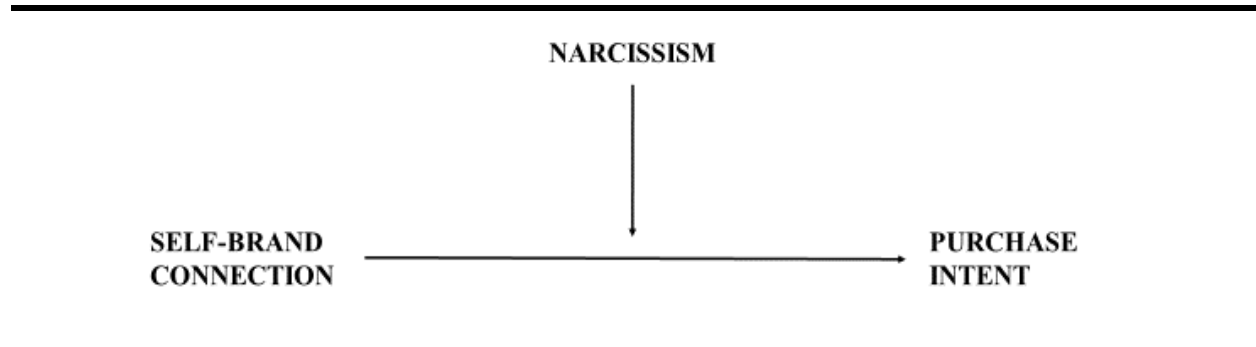


FIGURE 1.2
Study 1: H2 Conceptual Model

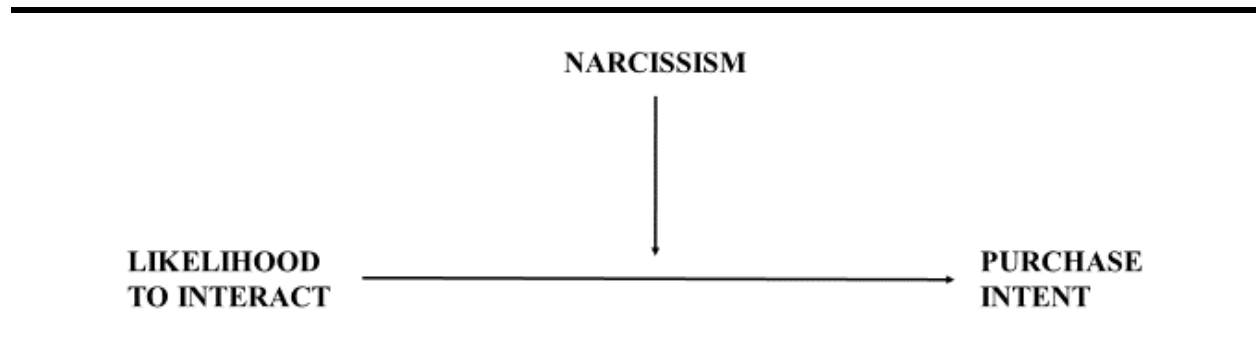


FIGURE 1.3
Study 1: H1 Statistical Model

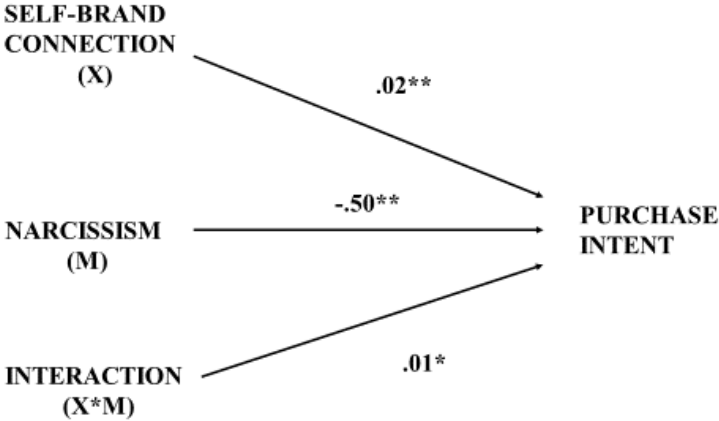


FIGURE 1.4
Study 1: Plot of the Moderating Role of Narcissism on the Effect of Self-Brand Connection on Purchase Intent

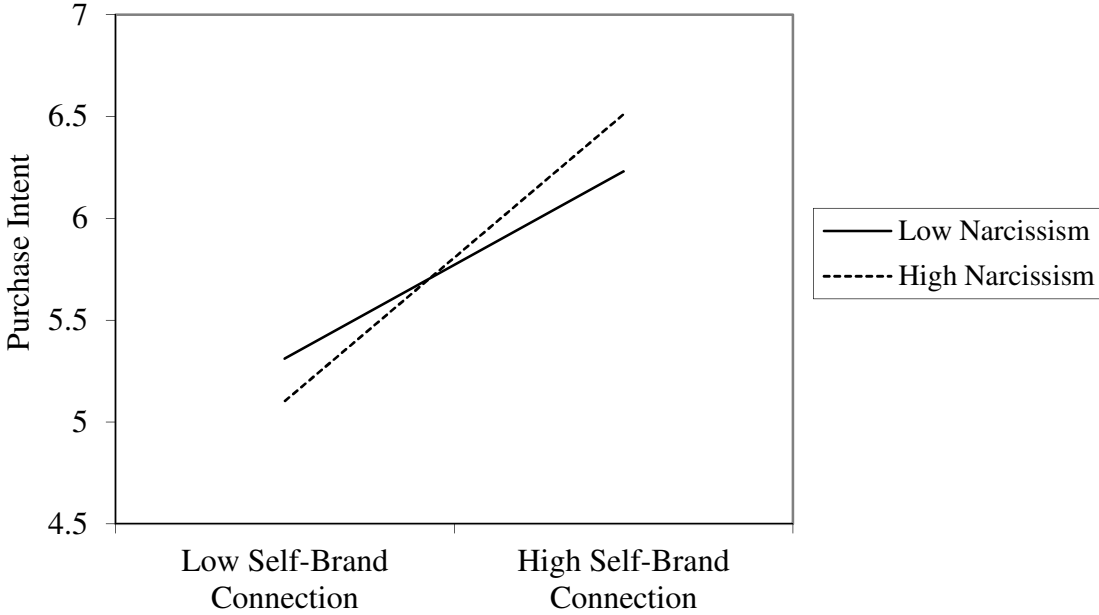


FIGURE 1.5
Study 1: H2 Statistical Model

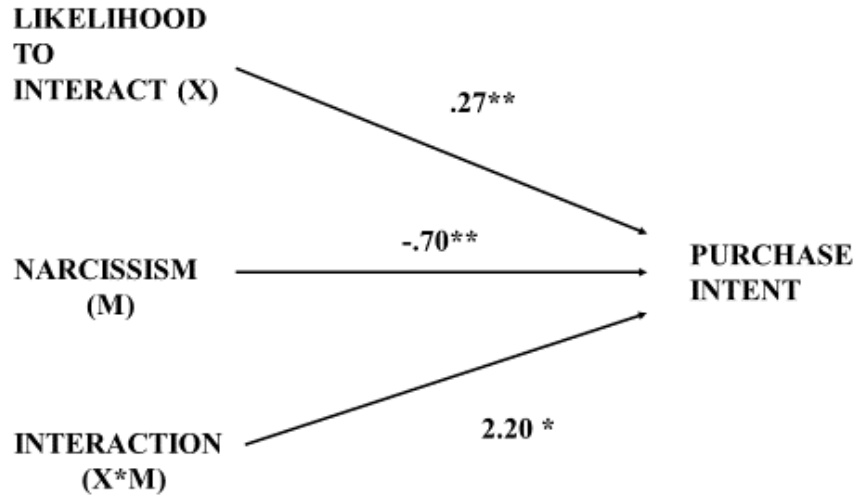


FIGURE 1.6
Study 1: Plot of the Moderating Role of Narcissism on the Effect of Consumer Likelihood to Interact on Purchase Intent

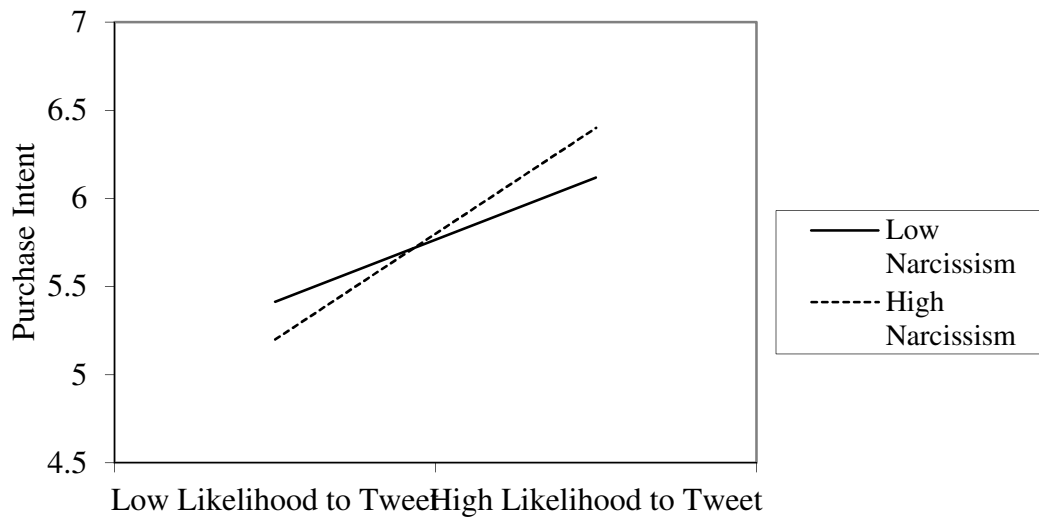
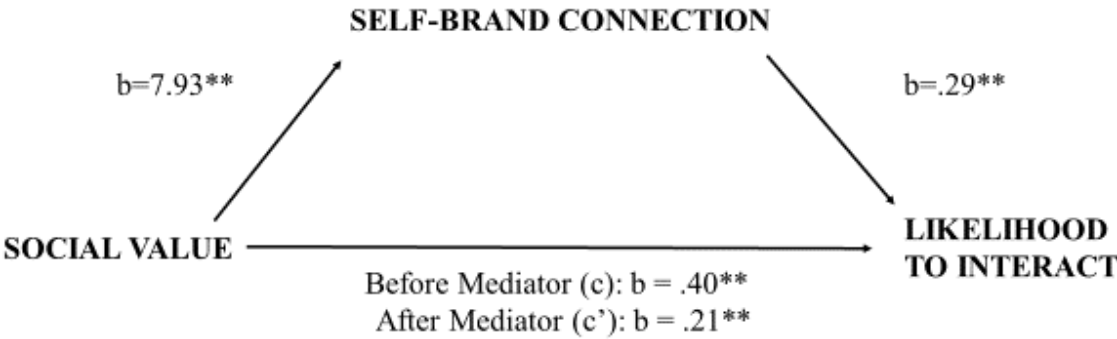


FIGURE 1.7
Study 1: H3 Statistical Model



Sobel test for mediation: $z = 5.72, p < .01$
Indirect Effect: $b = .18, se = .04; CI [.11, .27]$

FIGURE 2.1
Study 2: H1 Conceptual Model

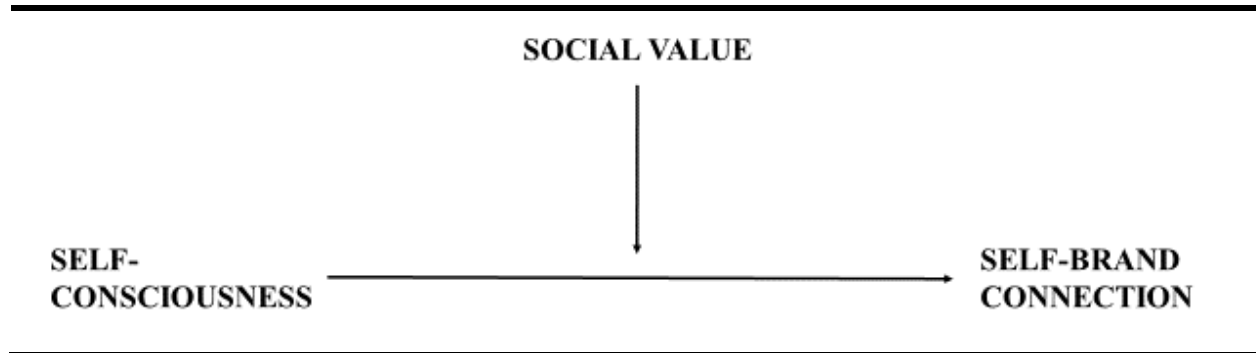


FIGURE 2.2
Study 2: H3 Conceptual Model

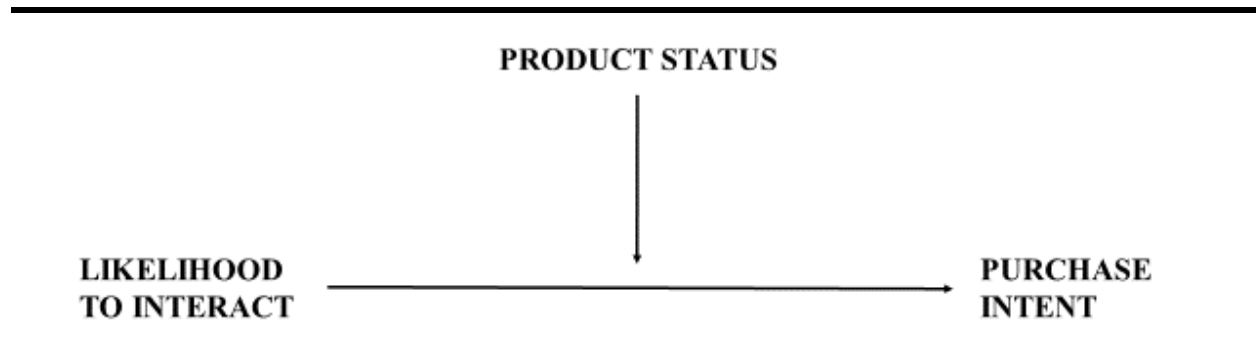


FIGURE 2.3
Study 2: H1 Statistical Model

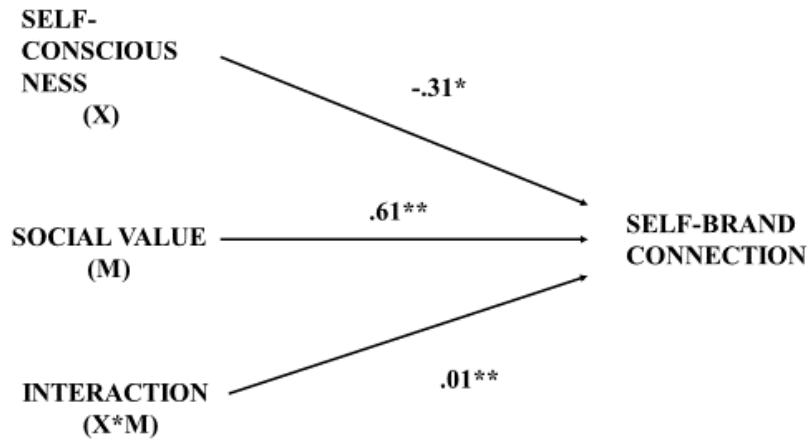


FIGURE 2.4
Study 2: Plot of the Moderating Role of Social Value on the Effect of Narcissism on Self-Brand Connection

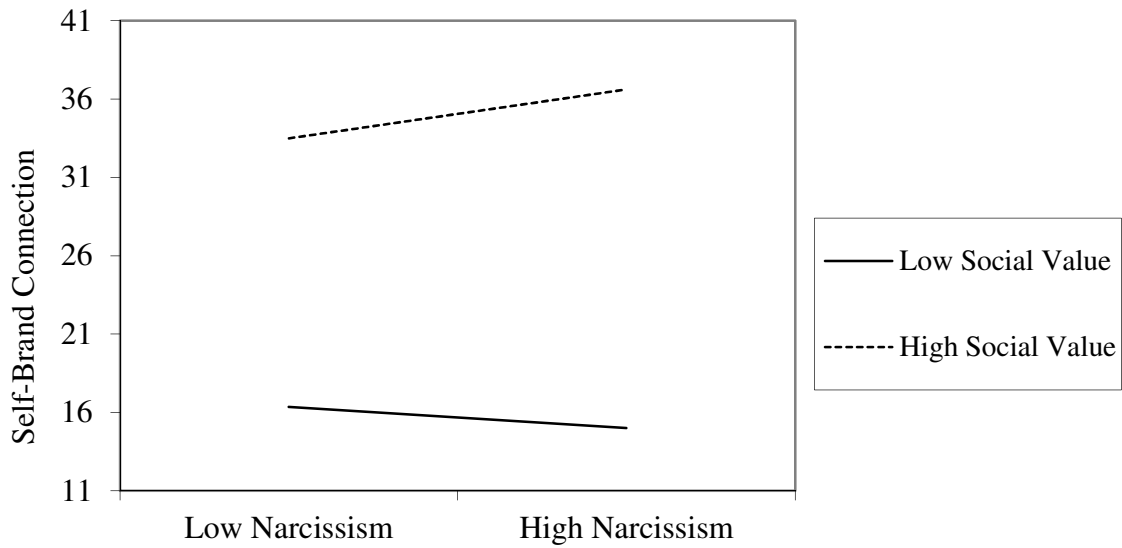
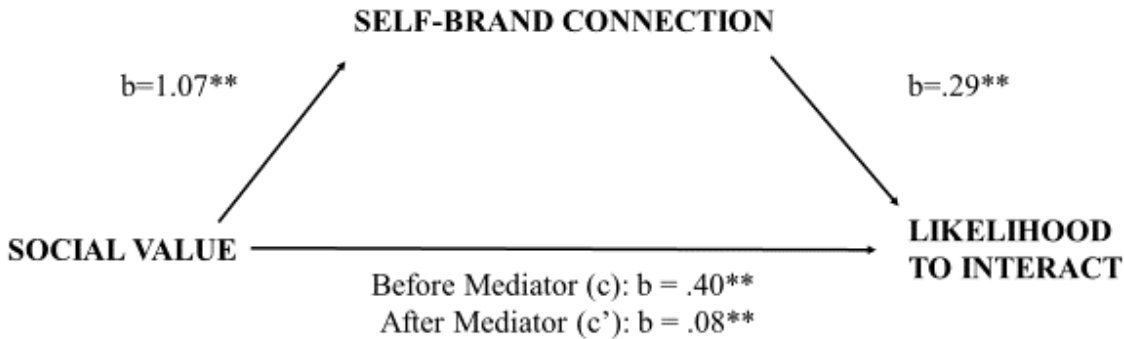


FIGURE 2.5
Study 2: H2 Statistical Model



Sobel test for mediation: $z = 7.17, p < .01$
Indirect Effect: $b = .32, se = .04; CI [.24, .40]$

FIGURE 2.6
Study 2: H3 Statistical Model

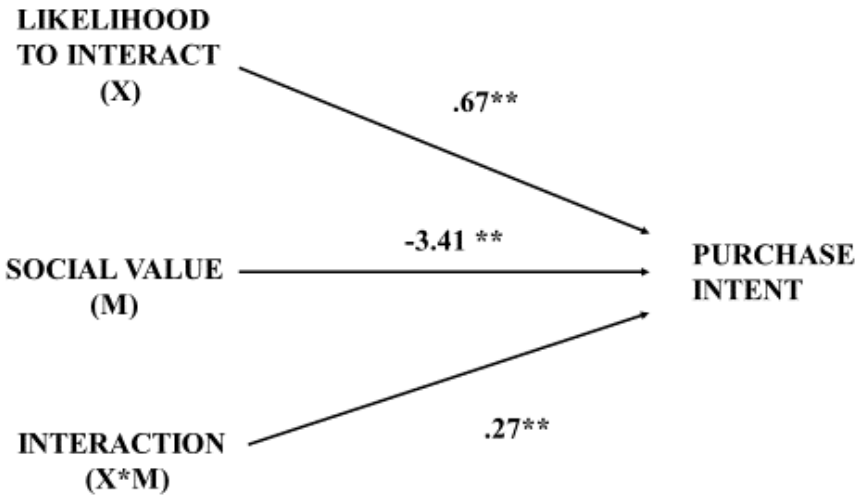


FIGURE 2.7
Study 2: Plot of the Moderating Role of Product Status on the Effect of Consumer Likelihood to Interact on Purchase Intent

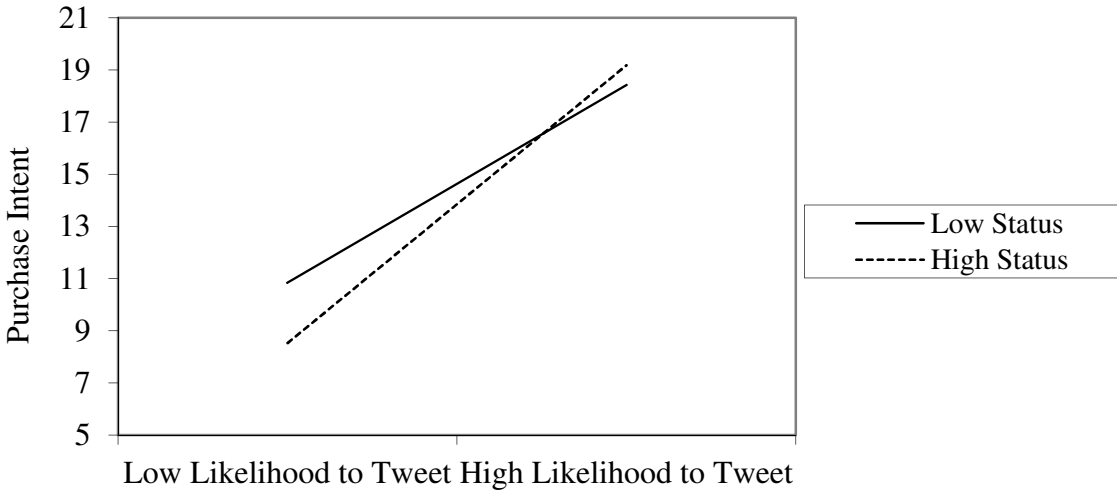


FIGURE 2.8
Study 2: H4a Statistical Model

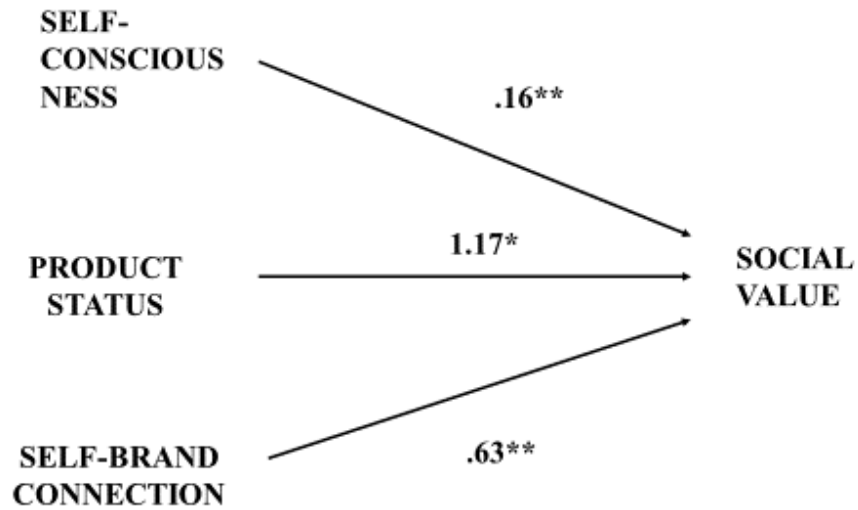


FIGURE 2.9
Study 2: H4b Statistical Model

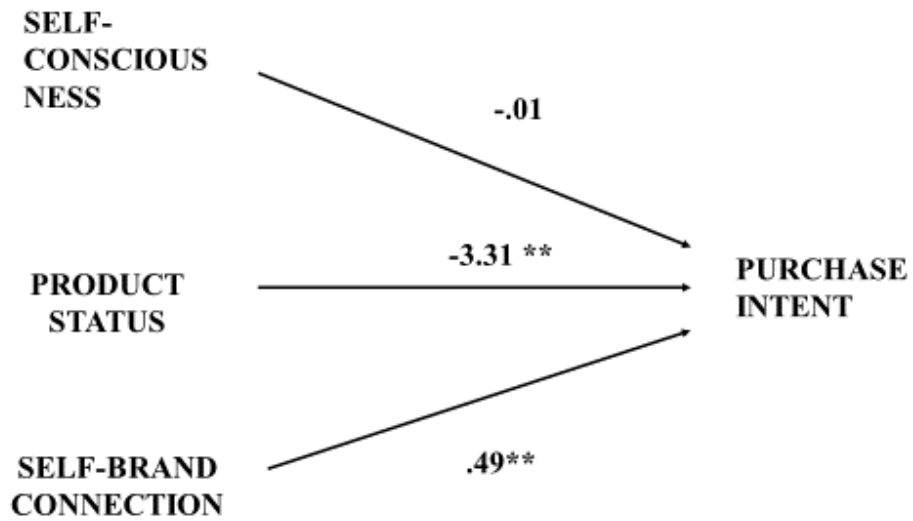


FIGURE 2.10
Study 2: H5a Statistical Model

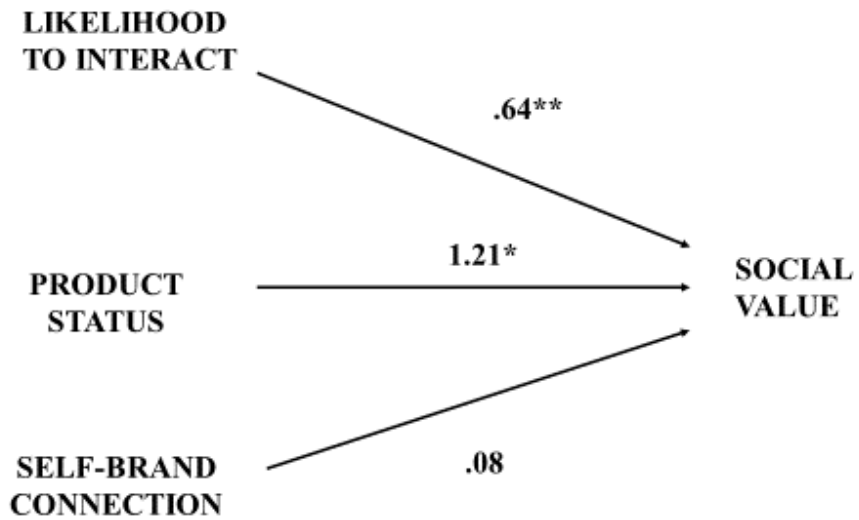


FIGURE 2.11
Study 2: H5b Statistical Model

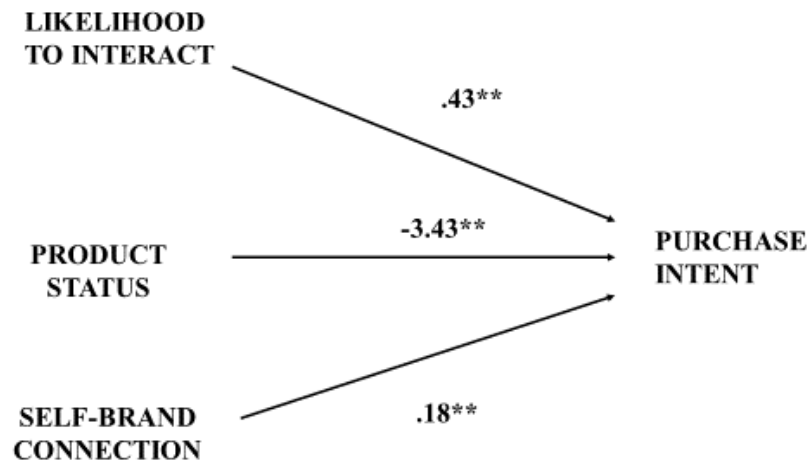


FIGURE 3.1
Study 3: H4 Conceptual Model

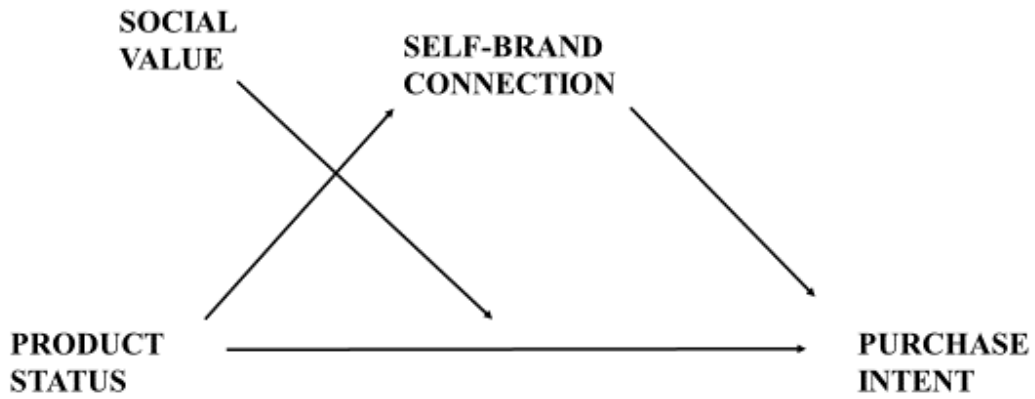


FIGURE 3.2
Study 3: H5 Conceptual Model

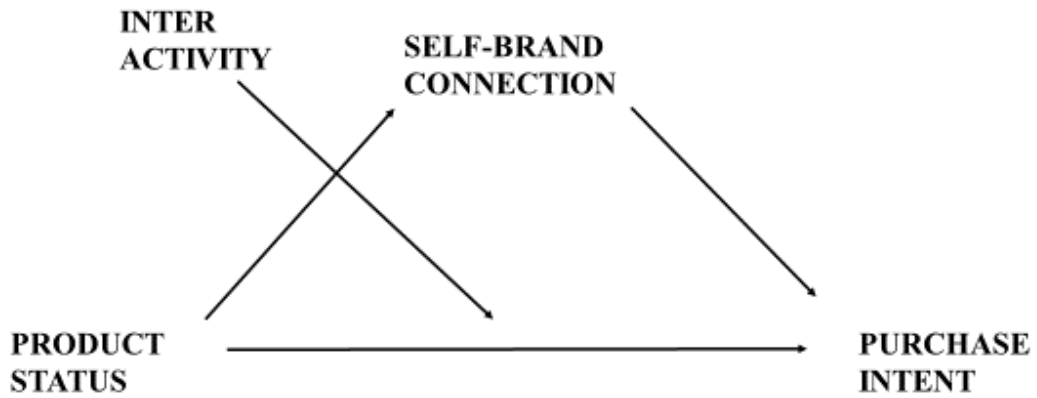


FIGURE 3.3
Study 3: Plot of the Interaction Between Status and Interactivity on Social Value

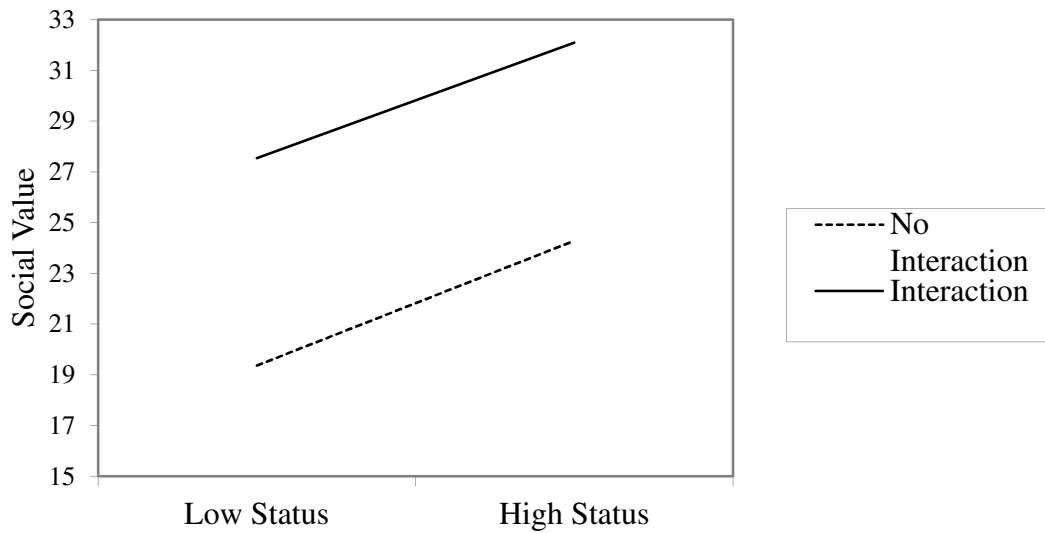


FIGURE 3.4
Study 3: Plot of the Interaction Between Status and Interactivity on Self-Brand Connection

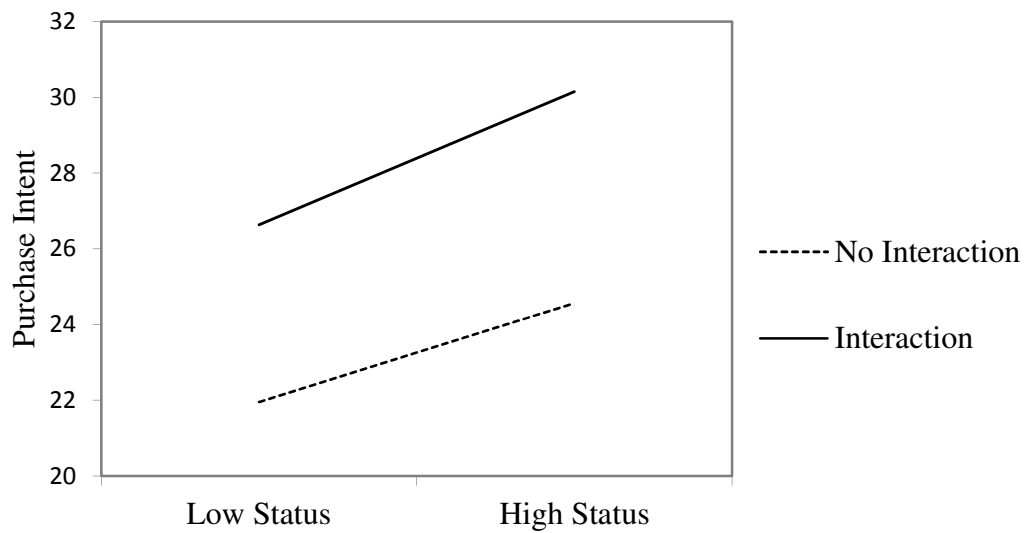
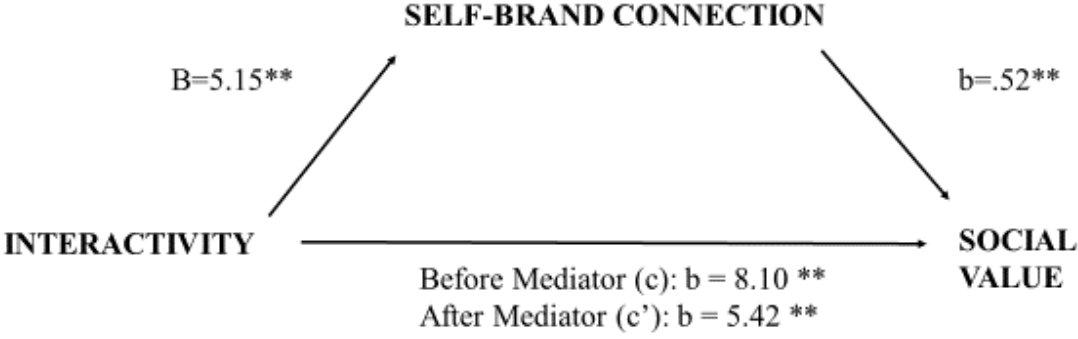


FIGURE 3.5
Study 3: H3 Statistical Model



Sobel test for mediation: $z= 3.28, p<.01$
Indirect Effect: $b= 2.68, se=.80; CI [1.18, 4.28]$

FIGURE 3.6
Study 3: H4 Statistical Model

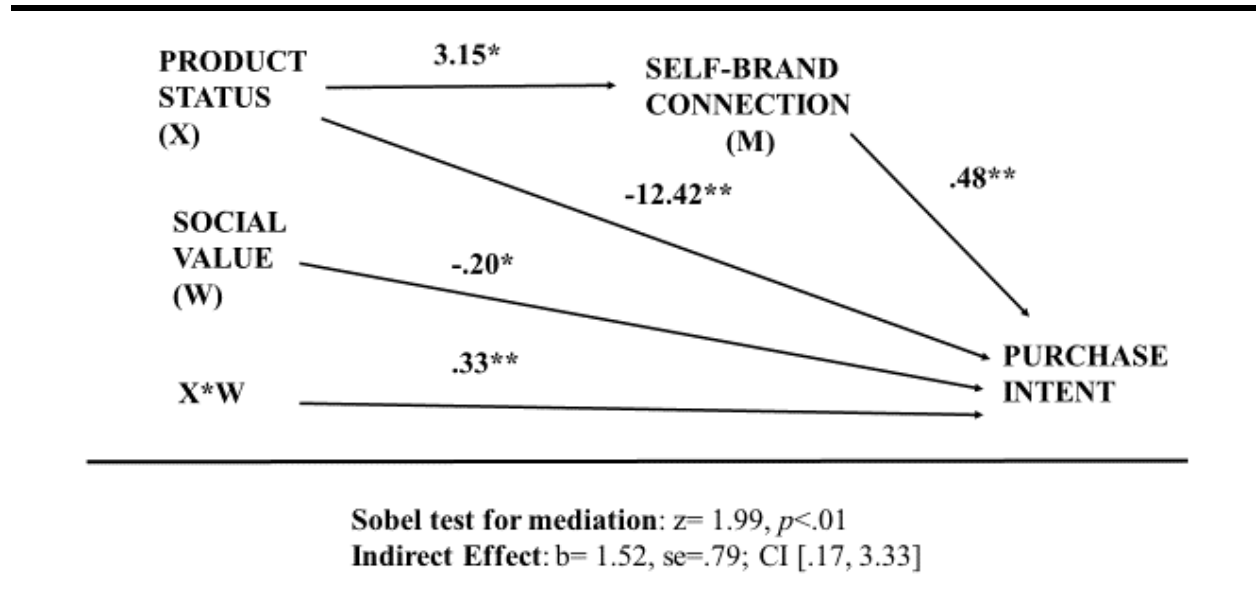
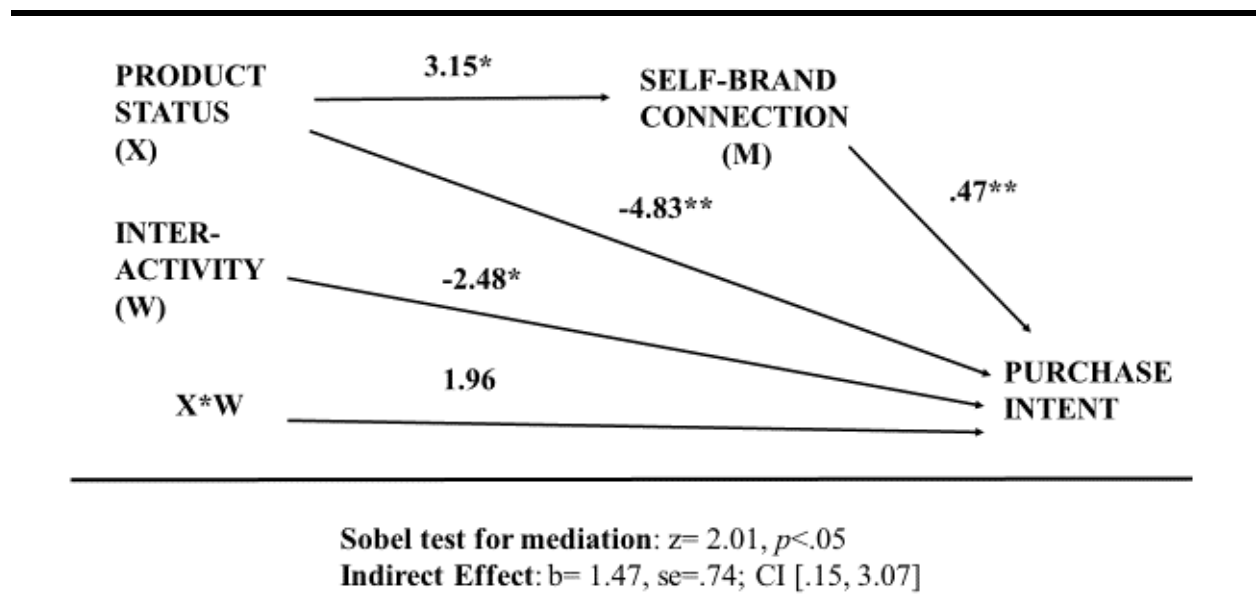




FIGURE 3.7
Study 3: H5 Statistical Model





APPENDIX 1
Study 2: Brand Stimuli*

Brand	Stimuli
<i>Lululemon Athletica</i>	<p data-bbox="877 407 1528 516">The logo for Lululemon Athletica, featuring the word "lululemon" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, followed by a red circular icon containing a white stylized figure, and then the word "athletica" in a lowercase, sans-serif font.</p> <p data-bbox="537 597 1892 808">Lululemon Athletica is a very popular, high-end yoga-inspired athletic apparel and designer of technical athletic apparel. Their women’s yoga pants range in cost from \$88 to \$128. According to their twitter bio, Lululemon is “Creating components for people to live long, healthy and fun lives. Tweeting from the Lululemon Store Support Centre in Vancouver BC and living #thesweatlife.” Lululemon follows only 301 Twitter users but is followed by over 830,000 Twitter users. Lululemon has tweeted 136,000 times but has only liked 10,000 tweets.</p>
<i>Nike</i>	<p data-bbox="1003 902 1430 1141">The Nike logo, consisting of the word "NIKE" in a bold, italicized, sans-serif font, with a large, black, swoosh-like shape underneath it.</p> <p data-bbox="537 1162 1892 1341">Nike is a popular, high-end athletic apparel and footwear brand also known for pioneering athletic footwear technology. Their athletic apparel ranges from \$50 to \$130, with technical running shoes starting at \$115. Nike’s twitter bio is simply their widely recognizable slogan “#justdoit”. Nike follows only 156 people on twitter, but is followed by over 5.9 million people. Nike has tweeted over 22,000 times, but has only liked 2,000 tweets.</p>

**Note: These stimuli were subsequently used in Study 3.*

APPENDIX 1 (cont.)
Study 2: Brand Stimuli

Brand	Stimuli
<i>Tide</i>	 <p>Tide is a producer of laundry detergent and fabric care products. Tide products start at \$2.99. Tide’s twitter bio states “Here to chat with you about how to keep everything bright and clean – your clothes, your fabrics and even your life. #TidePower.” Tide follows 2,365 twitter users, and is followed by 171,000 accounts. They’ve tweeted over 12,000 times and have “liked” over 6,000 posts.</p>
<i>Old Navy</i>	 <p>Old Navy is a popular clothing and accessories retailer owned by Gap Inc. Old Navy has the lowest price point of all Gap Inc. brands (Banana Republic, Athleta, Gap, and Old Navy). According to their twitter bio, Old Navy is “Fashion for the people. Need customer service? Please tweet @ONCustServ or call 1-800-OLD-NAVY.” Old Navy follows 3,079 and is followed by 326,000. Old Navy has tweeted over 17,000 times and has liked almost 10,000 posts.</p>

**Note: These stimuli were subsequently used in Study 3.*

APPENDIX 2
Study 3 Framework

Condition	Interaction	No Interaction
Follow (all conditions)	Imagine that you are a fan of [BRAND], so you decide to follow them on Twitter.	
Follow Response	About 15 minutes after you follow [BRAND] on Twitter, you realize that [BRAND] has followed you back.	After a few days of following [BRAND] on Twitter, you notice they have not followed you back.
Tweet (all conditions)	Imagine that you are a fan of [BRAND], so you decide to tweet at them on Twitter. [CONSUMER TWEET TO BRAND ABOUT PURCHASE]	
Tweet Response	About 15 minutes after you tweet to [BRAND] on Twitter, you realize that [BRAND] has responded to your tweet. [BRAND RESPONSE].	You check back on Twitter the next day and see that [BRAND] has not responded to you, but they have been tweeting.


APPENDIX 3
Study 3: Brand Stimuli

Lululemon Athletica	Interaction	No Interaction
Follow (all conditions)	Imagine that you are a fan of Lululemon Athletica, so you decide to follow them on Twitter.	
Response	About 15 minutes after you follow Lululemon Athletica on Twitter, you realize that Lululemon Athletica has followed you back.	After a few days of following Lululemon Athletica on Twitter, you notice they have not followed you back.
Now imagine you bought a new pair of Lululemon workout pants and decide to tweet at Lululemon. You tweet:		
Tweet (all conditions)		
Response	<p>An hour later, you check back on Twitter and notice that Lululemon has responded:</p>	You check back on Twitter the next day and see that Lululemon has not responded to you, but they have been tweeting.

**APPENDIX 3 (cont.)
Study 3: Brand Stimuli**

Nike	Interaction	No Interaction
Follow (all conditions)	Imagine that you are a fan of Nike, so you decide to follow them on Twitter.	
Response	About 15 minutes after you follow Nike on Twitter, you realize that Nike has followed you back.	After a few days of following Nike on Twitter, you notice they have not followed you back.
Tweet (all conditions)	Now imagine you bought a new pair of Nike shoes and decide to tweet at Nike. You tweet to Nike:	
Response	<p>An hour later, you check back on Twitter and notice that Nike has responded:</p>	<p>You check back on Twitter the next day and see that Nike has not responded to you, but they have been tweeting.</p>

APPENDIX 3 (cont.)
Study 3: Brand Stimuli

Old Navy	Interaction Response	No Interaction
Follow (all conditions)	Imagine that you are a fan of Old Navy, so you decide to follow them on Twitter.	
Response	About 15 minutes after you follow Old Navy on Twitter, you realize that BRAND has followed you back.	After a few days of following Old Navy on Twitter, you notice they have not followed you back.
Tweet (all conditions)	Now imagine you bought a new pair of Old Navy workout pants and decide to tweet at Old Navy. You tweet:	
Response	<p>An hour later, you check back on Twitter and notice that Old Navy has responded:</p> 	You check back on Twitter the next day and see that Old Navy has not responded to you, but they have been tweeting.

**APPENDIX 3 (cont.)
Study 3: Brand Stimuli**

Tide	Interaction Response	No Interaction
Follow (all conditions)	Imagine that you are a fan of Tide, so you decide to follow them on Twitter.	
Response	About 15 minutes after you follow Tide on Twitter, you realize that BRAND has followed you back.	After a few days of following Tide on Twitter, you notice they have not followed you back.
Tweet (all conditions)	Now imagine you bought a new version of Tide's discount detergent which is unscented and sulfate free and decide to tweet at Tide. You tweet:	
Response	An hour later, you check back on Twitter and notice that Tide has responded:	You check back on Twitter the next day and see that Tide has not responded to you, but they have been tweeting.

APPENDIX 4: Research Compliance



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board

May 5, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: Shannon McCarthy
Elizabeth Howlett

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 16-04-709

Protocol Title: *It's All About Me: Predicting Purchase Intent from Social Media Behavior*

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 05/05/2016 Expiration Date: 05/04/2017

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rsdp/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 2,000 participants. If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.