

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Understanding knowledge sharing in an online community within the context of green clothing

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Award date:
2020

Awarding institution:
Coventry University

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Understanding Knowledge Sharing in an Online Community: Within the Context of Green Clothing

By

Rebecca Louise Beech

PhD

January 2020



Understanding Knowledge Sharing in an Online Community: Within the Context of Green Clothing

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Rebecca Louise Beech

January 2020



***A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy***



Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:

Rebecca Beech

Project Title:

Understanding knowledge sharing within online communities in Twitter: Within the context of green clothing consumption

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Medium Risk

Date of approval:

21 February 2019

Project Reference Number:

P87856

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community and to understand the interplay between consumers' knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment. This research provides an exploration into the inter-relationship between consumers' motivation to share knowledge, knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment. This thesis addresses research gaps in the fields of knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment within an online community. This research contributes to the paucity of literature that explores the phenomena from a consumer perspective.

This study employed a qualitative research design, entailing focus groups followed by semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the focus groups was to provide a preliminary scoping to comprehend consumers' drive to share knowledge and consumer empowerment on social media. The latter informed the subsequent semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews delivered a further exploration into the participatory benefits that lead to consumers' knowledge sharing, the interplay of knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment, and the inter-relationship between consumers' drive to share knowledge, knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment within the #sustainablefashion online community.

The findings of this research delivered an understanding into the three participatory benefits that lead to consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community, which are social, psychological and functional. This research unveils that consumers indicate social bond experiential interactivity which entails users' desire for camaraderie and to form relationships online, which results in reciprocity followed by knowledge sharing. The study's findings evidence three aspects that lead to consumer empowerment, personal experiences, online tools and green concerns. The findings further reveal five factors that lead to a disempowered consumer, reference groups, personal experiences, scepticism, lack of confidence and profession. An empowered consumer emerges from the findings, users demonstrate that they are empowered by their ability to share their green concerns and the facilitation of online tools, which results in additional reciprocating behaviours and knowledge sharing. This study adds to previous studies understanding of an ecological citizen, who is empowered by their green concerns to champion and encourage pro-environmental behaviours amongst others.

The study's findings contribute to academic understanding and have implications for future research. This study proposes managerial implications for social media managers in industry and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in relation to how gatekeepers can harness an online community, and encourage knowledge sharing and empower consumers. Contributions for policy makers entail delivering insights into a past report that explored consumers' green clothing terminology, and provides implications for a report that examines the antecedents to consumers' pro-environmental behaviour.

Keywords: Knowledge Sharing, Online Communities, Consumer Empowerment, Disempowered Consumer, Green Clothing, Pro-Environmental Behaviour

Acknowledgements

I would like to share my appreciation to a number of people, because without them I would not have been able to have successfully completed my PhD.

I am very grateful for the support and encouragement during my PhD given to me by my supervisory team. I would like to share my gratitude for my Director of Studies, Dr. Anvita Kumar, for developing the PhD studentship within the Centre of Business In Society (CBiS) and for seeing the potential in me by offering me the position, without Anvita's confidence in me I would not have had the opportunity to have completed such an exciting research project. I would like to thank Dr. Anvita Kumar, for asking Dr. Carlos Ferreira and Prof. Lyndon Simkin to join the supervisory team, whom have made my PhD journey feel more like a research family. I would like to show my appreciation to Dr. Carlos Ferreira who has offered me many words of wisdom during my PhD and for sharing his experiences to support me during the challenging times. I am very grateful for the continuous support and uplifting meetings with Prof. Lyndon Simkin who has continually shown his confidence in me and has given me the energy to overcome the rocky times that I have endured during the PhD.

During my PhD I have been fortunate to have met many inspiring and kind people within CBiS who have generously provided me with support and words of wisdom that has contributed to the success of my PhD. I would like to show my gratitude to Prof. Glauco De Vita, I am appreciative for the academic and well-being support that he has given me and his kind words that gave me encouragement. I am thankful to Dr. Jason Begley whose humour and guidance provided me with the boost and direction that was needed during my PhD challenges. I give thanks to Prof. Sally Dibb and Prof. David Morris, my internal examiner and chair within the Progress Review Examinations during my PhD, I am grateful for their guidance and direction that has contributed to my PhD. I am appreciative for the opportunity to have been part of a handful of research projects and conference committees at CBiS, the experience and knowledge was invaluable. I give thanks to the CBiS administrative staff, who have assisted me in attending conferences, events, workshops and accessing software, all in which contributed to the success of my PhD. I would like to show my gratitude to Coventry University, whom I am indebted to for providing me with the chance to study my Undergraduate and Postgraduate studies and now PhD, and for giving me so many opportunities that are beyond my wildest dreams. In particular, I am very grateful to CBiS for funding my PhD. Coventry University will always be a part of me, as my 9 years spent studying in Coventry has made me the person that I am proud to be today. I am honoured to be an alumnus and I hope to always have a connection with Coventry University.

I am tremendously grateful to my family, I cannot thank my Nan, Grandad and Auntie Louise enough for their unrelenting love and compassion that has led to the success of my PhD. Without these three, my PhD would not have been completed. I would like to give a special thanks to my old friends and new friendships that I have made at the University and in Coventry, I am grateful for them for listening to my PhD woes and giving me the boost that I needed, alongside helping me understand and overcome complex PhD issues.

As a final point, I would like to say a big thank you to the participants and interviewees who gave up their time to participate within this study.

List of Abbreviations

CBP – Crowd-Based Power

DBP – Demand-Based Power

EC – Ecological Citizenship

FG1 – Focus Group 1

FG2 – Focus Group 2

FPB – Functional Participatory Benefit

HPB – Hedonic Participatory Benefit

IBP – Information-Based Power

ITP – Interview Twitter Participant

NBP – Network-Based Power

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

OC – Online Community

P – Participant

PPB – Psychological Participatory Benefit

RQ – Research Question

SBEI - Social Bond Experiential Interactivity

SC - Sub-Community

SPB – Social Participatory Benefit

UGC – User-Generated-Content

VC – Virtual Community

List of Key Terms

#sustainablefashion – The chosen online community for this study.

Automated system – A system which can be connected to a social media platform, and allows the user to repeatedly post content from her/his profile. The concept is also referred to as a ‘bot’.

Cross-post – The activity of cross-posting entails social media users sharing information from one social media platform to another, for example, the user may share a ‘tweet’ from Twitter to their Facebook account.

De-lurk – A user who used to ‘lurk’ (view and gather information), however, have now moved away from just lurking. Examples of de-lurking are sharing knowledge or reciprocating.

Emoji – An emoji is an icon that users can share on social media. The icon is an image of an expression such as a sad or smiley face.

Gatekeeper – An individual on a social media platform that controls users’ access to an online community and manages what is shared by users within the online medium.

Hashtag (#) – A tool on social media that users can use followed by a word or phrase related to a specific topic.

Keyboard warrior – The concept is similar to a ‘troll’, which entails an online user who intentionally ‘posts’ negative comments on other users’ content.

Like – Allows other users to support a ‘tweet’ or social media post by pressing the like button underneath the ‘post’.

Lurkers – A user within an online platform who solely views and gathers information, for the purpose of learning and aiding their decision-making.

Nudge – A social media tool that allows a user to send a message containing an ‘emoji’ of a waving hand to get another’s attention.

Offline self – The user’s life outside of social media entailing her/his everyday life.

Online self – The user’s life on social media, entailing the user displaying a different persona to the offline self.

Post – Knowledge shared by a participant as a comment or on her/his social media profile.

Retweet – A user can share other users’ ‘tweets’ onto her/his own profile, to be viewed by her/his followers.

Self-consciousness – The participant showed signs of feeling uncomfortable when sharing ‘posts’ as they do not want to be judged, and were nervous about what type of content to share.

Source – Twitter profile pages, for example, online magazine.

Thread – Conversation on Twitter between two or more Twitter users.

Trend – A ‘tweet’ on Twitter that is shared, ‘retweeted’ and ‘liked’ many times due to the popularity of the content as it aligns to a present public interest or phenomenon. The term is similar to ‘viral’.

Troll – A Twitter user who starts quarrels by posting digressive or inflammatory content on others’ ‘posts’, for either no reason or because of her/his passion for the topic of conversation. The concept aligns with a ‘keyboard warrior’.

Tweet – A post created by a user on Twitter which is shared onto her/his Twitter profile. The term is also referred to as a ‘content’ and ‘post’.

Twitter handle – Is a term to describe a Twitter user’s account. For instance, the Twitter handle starts with a @ symbol followed by the user’s name.

User – The consumer within the #sustainablefashion online community.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Abbreviations	iii
List of Key Terms	iv
List of Tables	xiii
List of Figures.....	xiv
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research Context and Rationale	4
1.2.1 Context of Knowledge Sharing: Green Clothing.....	4
1.2.2 Chosen Online Platform: Twitter.....	6
1.3 Research Aims and Questions	8
1.4 Research Design.....	10
1.5 Structure of the Thesis.....	11
Chapter 2: Literature Review	15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Growth within the Digital Era: The Emergence of an Online Community	16
2.2.1 Online Community: Collaborative Communication	17
2.2.2 Defining an Online Community	19
2.2.3 The Importance of an Online Community	20
2.3 Knowledge Sharing within the Digital Era	22
2.3.1 Defining Online Knowledge Sharing: A Multifaceted Interaction.....	22
2.3.2 Factors that Drive Consumers' Knowledge Sharing	27
2.3.3 Aspects that Influence Consumers' Reciprocity.....	31
2.4 Consumer Empowerment.....	32

2.4.1 The Evolution of Consumer Empowerment	32
2.4.2 The Empowered Online Consumer: The Power Shift	35
2.5 Green Literature	37
2.5.1 Review of Literature: Green, Ethical, Sustainable and Pro-Environmental	37
2.5.2 Green Terminologies: Green Consumer, Green Consumption and Green Product..	39
2.6 Ecological Citizenship Theory	42
2.6.1 Evolution of Ecological Citizenship from Citizenship	43
2.6.2 Consumers' Awareness of Ecological Problems: The Importance of Ecological Citizenship in the Present Day	46
2.6.3 The Role of Knowledge Sharing within Ecological Citizenship	48
2.7 Summary	50
2.7.1 Review of the Literature	50
2.7.2 Proposed Research Questions and Conceptual Framework	53
Chapter 3: Methodology	61
3.1 Introduction	61
3.2 Research Philosophies and Approaches	61
3.2.1 Ontology	61
3.2.2 Epistemology	62
3.3 Research Approach	63
3.3.1 Forms of Reasoning	63
3.4 Research Design	64
3.4.1 Multi-Method Qualitative Research Design	64
3.4.2 Nature of the Research Design	65
3.5 Data Collection	67
3.5.1 Research Strategy	67

3.5.2 Sampling	77
3.6 Data Analysis	84
3.6.1 Ensuring Validity in Qualitative Research: Credibility and Reliability	89
3.7 Consideration of Ethics	90
3.8 Summary	93
Chapter 4: Initial Scope	95
4.1 Introduction	95
4.2 Aspects that Drive Users' Knowledge Sharing.....	95
4.2.1 Professional Identity	96
4.2.2 Desire to Educate	104
4.2.3 Personal Interest.....	106
4.3 Factors that Discourage Users' Knowledge Sharing.....	108
4.3.1 Self-Consciousness	108
4.3.2 Lack of Confidence.....	116
4.4 Reflections and Conclusions	117
4.4.1 External Factors that Influence Users' Knowledge Sharing.....	117
4.4.2 Internal Factors that Influence Users' Knowledge Sharing.....	119
Chapter 5: Further Exploration.....	121
5.1 Introduction	121
5.2 Aspects that Drive users' Knowledge Sharing.....	122
5.2.1 Lobbying.....	122
5.2.2 Work Agenda.....	131
5.2.3 Scepticism.....	138
5.2.4 Belonging.....	144
5.3 Factors that Empower Users to Share Knowledge.....	150

5.3.1 Green Concerns.....	150
5.3.2 Engagement	152
5.3.3 Online Tools	153
5.4 Reflections and Conclusions	156
Chapter 6: Discussion of Findings	159
6.1 Introduction	159
6.2 Key Findings	159
6.2.1 Lobbing: Raising Awareness and a Desire for Change	159
6.2.2 Aspects that Resulted in an Empowered Consumer	161
6.2.3 Factors that Led to a Disempowered Consumer	163
6.3 Indication of the Study's Contributions	166
6.3.1 Desire to Support Others and Belong to the Online Community	166
6.3.2 Users' Empowerment and Disempowerment to Share Knowledge.....	173
6.3.3 Intention to Lobby	180
6.3.4 A Desire to Present a Perceived-Self Online	182
6.4 Reflections and Conclusions	185
Chapter 7: Conclusions.....	193
7.1 Introduction	193
7.2 Main Findings	194
7.3 Empirical Contributions	196
7.4 Theoretical Contributions.....	204
7.5 Managerial Contributions.....	212
7.6 Limitations and Future Research.....	215
7.7 Concluding Remarks	217
References	227

Appendices	280
Appendix 1: Step-By-Step Procedure of this Study Conducting the Focus Groups	280
Appendix 2: Step-By-Step Procedure of this Study Conducting the Semi-Structured Interviews	284
Appendix 3: First Focus Group Guide	288
Appendix 4: Second Focus Group Guide.....	294
Appendix 5: Pilot Semi-Structured Interview Guide	300
Appendix 6: Semi-Structured Interview Guide.....	313
Appendix 7: 5 Step Procedure of this Study Conducting the YouTube Observations prior to the Focus Groups.....	331
Appendix 8: The Purpose of the YouTube Observations	336
Appendix 9: How the YouTube Observations Informed the Focus Groups’ Guide – Stimuli	337
Appendix 10: Focus Group Stimuli: Screenshots from My Green Closet’s Video (hidden comments)	339
Appendix 11: Focus Group Stimuli: Screenshots from Use Less’s Video (hidden comments)	340
Appendix 12: Focus Group Stimuli: Screenshots from My Green Closet’s Video (revealed comments)	341
Appendix 13: Focus Group Stimuli: Screenshots from Use Less’s Video (revealed comments)	342
Appendix 14: Claim Form for £20 Amazon Voucher used in both Focus Groups.....	343
Appendix 15: ‘Call for Participants’ Leaflet for Focus Group 1 Shared Via Twitter.....	345
Appendix 16: ‘Call for Participants’ Leaflet for Focus Group 2 Shared Via Twitter.....	345
Appendix 17: Feedback Form used During Focus Group 1.....	346
Appendix 18: Original and Modified Research Questions for this Study.....	347
Appendix 19: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Selecting Focus Group Participants	348

Appendix 20: Selection Criteria for the 20 Semi-Structured Interviews	351
Appendix 21: Rationale of Screening Questions Asked to Focus Group Prospective Participants	354
Appendix 22: Rationale Behind this Study Using Twitter.....	355
Appendix 23: Procedure of the Initial Observations to Choose a Suitable Online Community	356
Appendix 24: List of 269 Search Terms for the Initial Observation to Identity a Green Clothing Online Community	357
Appendix 25: List of all Hashtag Online Communities as a Result of an Initial Observation	402
Appendix 26: All Ethical Approval Certificates	403
Appendix 27: Focus Group ‘Participant Information Form’	411
Appendix 28: Pilot Semi-Structured Interview ‘Participant Information Form’	414
Appendix 29: Semi-Structured Interview ‘Participant Information Form’	417
Appendix 30: Focus Group ‘Informed Consent Form’	420
Appendix 31: Pilot Semi-Structured Interview ‘Informed Consent Form’	422
Appendix 32: Thematic Analysis Procedure: for the Two Focus Groups	424
Appendix 33: The Key emergent Themes Derived from the Analysis of the Two Focus Groups	427
Appendix 34: Table of Green Clothing Terminology Derived from the Analysis of the Two Focus Groups and the Initial YouTube Observation.....	429
Appendix 35: Thematic Map Derived from Both Focus Groups: Participants’ Motivation to Share Knowledge on Social Media	430
Appendix 36: Definition of Aspects that Emerged from the Thematic Map ‘Participants’ Motivation to Share Knowledge on Social Media’	431
Appendix 37: Thematic Map Derived from both Focus Groups: Participants’ Discouragement to Share Knowledge on Social Media	435

Appendix 38: Definition of Aspects that Emerged from the Thematic Map ‘Participants Discouraged to Share Knowledge on Social Media’436

Appendix 39: Thematic Analysis Procedure: 20 Semi-Structured Interviews440

Appendix 40: Photographic Evidence of the Thematic Analysis of the 20 Semi-Structured Interviews443

Appendix 41: The 5-6 Emergent Themes from the Analysis of the 20 Semi-Structured Interviews444

Appendix 42: Definition of the Overarching Emergent Themes from the 20 Semi-Structured Interviews447

Appendix 43: Frequently Mentioned Themes from the 20 Semi-Structured Interviews in Ascending Order450

Appendix 44: Thematic Map of the Theme Lobbying.....451

Appendix 45: Model of Pro-Environmental Behaviour (Sourced from: European Commission, 2012)452

List of Tables

Table	Page
Table 3.1: The Research Strategies alongside the Study’s Research Questions.....	67
Table 3.2: Focus Group 1: Selected Participants and Demographics.....	80
Table 3.3: Focus Group 2: Selected Participants and Demographics.....	81
Table 3.4: Chosen Interviewees for the 20 Semi-Structured Interviews.....	82
Table 3.5: Six Steps of Thematic Analysis (Adapted from: Braun and Clarke, 2006).....	86

List of Figures

Figure	Page
Figure 2.1: The Digital Journey Map (Sourced from: Quinton and Simkin, 2016).....	18
Figure 2.2: Evolution of Consumer Power Sources (Sourced from: Labrecque et al., 2013).....	34
Figure 2.3: Research Model: Relationship between Consumer Ethical Beliefs and Green Buying Intention (Sourced from: Lu et al., 2015).....	40
Figure 2.4: Proposed Conceptual Framework (Sourced from: Author, 2016).....	58
Figure 3.1: Main Characteristics of Thematic Analysis and Qualitative Content Analysis in the Continuum of the Quality Methodology (Sourced from: Vaismoradi et al., 2013).....	89
Figure 7.1: Updated Conceptual Framework (Sourced from: Author, 2019).....	199
Figure 7.2: Originally Proposed Conceptual Framework (Sourced from: Author, 2016).....	200

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community, and to establish how and to what extent consumers are empowered when sharing knowledge. The study contributes to discussions regarding the motivations that drive consumers' knowledge sharing online, by revealing the participatory benefits that consumers evidence when sharing knowledge within a green clothing online community. The research explores consumers' motivations to share knowledge and consumer empowerment via a consumer perspective, most of the previous literature has taken a managerial viewpoint. As a result, this study provides a deeper, consumer-led understanding into why consumers are driven to share knowledge, alongside how and to what extent consumers are empowered. The theory of ecological citizenship is used to comprehend consumers' desire to share knowledge about green clothing. The thesis provides novel and significant insights that contribute to past studies' understanding of an ecological citizen who advocates and encourages green clothing concerns and pro-environmental behaviour amongst online community users.

The widespread development of the internet has led to the ubiquitous nature of communication between consumers, with the subsequent creation of online communities. As a result, online communities have become a haven of activity that encompasses the sharing of knowledge between consumers via an array of technological advancements. Previous studies determine the importance of understanding consumers' knowledge sharing online, due to a variety of advantageous outcomes that can have implications for marketers. For instance, information sharing about a product or service leads to knowledge sharing amongst users, consequently the knowledge shared assists consumers' decision-making (De Valck et al., 2009; Shen et al., 2014). Previous findings further demonstrate that knowledge sharing can result in consumers' attitude and behaviour change towards a product or service (Williams and Cothrell, 2000; Kim et al., 2008). The connectivity of the internet has allowed the rise of online communities that enable consumers to share their opinions and values, thereby facilitating a two-way conversation with organisations (Quinton, 2013; Labrecque et al., 2013; Quinton and Simkin, 2016). Such developments initiated the power shift from organisations to the consumer, resulting in consumer empowerment (Lim, 2009; Quinton, 2013). Despite the abundance of insightful conversations and behaviours displayed by consumers within an online community, there is still a limited academic and managerial

understanding about what drives consumers' knowledge sharing within an online community, the concept of consumer empowerment, and the likely interplay between the latter and knowledge sharing, warranting further research on these specific issues. Most previous literature examining knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment explored the phenomena via a managerial perspective, employing quantitative research methods to measure the constructs (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; De Valck et al., 2009; Chan and Li, 2010). The current PhD study differs from what has been done before by exploring consumers' knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment via a fresh, contemporary *consumer perspective*, and by adopting a qualitative research design that allows the researcher to gain rich data and a more comprehensive understanding of the social phenomena in question.

Considering the advanced technological landscape that has led to prolific knowledge sharing between consumers within online communities, this study explores the phenomenon via a current context that has been gaining traction and importance within academia and industry alike: *green clothing*. Prior literature stresses the importance of consumers' knowledge sharing about green clothing. For instance, eco-fashion-related information supports consumers in selecting alternative consumption behaviour to traditional consumption such as fast fashion (Joergens, 2006). Eco-fashion-related information also assists consumers' adoption of a 'greener' conscience (Anson, 2012). Thus, this study has implications for future work exploring the interplay between knowledge sharing and the positive impacts on consumers' green conscience and behaviour. Recent global events have heightened consumers' awareness towards climate change as well as their own ecological footprint, leading to the emergence of activist groups and environmental campaigners taking the world's stage to demand change amongst governments, companies and policy makers. The general public too have developed an enhanced awareness and sensitivity to issues related to their environmental impact and the need to adopt pro-environmental behaviours. Such current trends have been met by policy measures and industry wide initiatives that include, for example, plastic bag charges enforced by supermarkets, 'bag for life' schemes, a smart home that controls the outgoings of electric, water and gas, 'climate strike', 'veganism', and 'the slow fashion movement'. Green clothing is the focus of this study, since it is at the forefront of current debates within government, industry and academia, concerning the impact on the environment and the demand for change.

In recent years the UK government has shown some recognition towards the catastrophic impact of clothing on the environment, with respect to aspects pertaining to manufacturing, consumer demand, care of the apparel and disposal of garments. A “Sustainability of the Fashion Industry Inquiry” was launched by the Commons Select Committee on 22 June 2018 (UK Parliament, 2018), which was later rejected in June 2019. However, the latter has made small steps towards consumers’ awareness towards the environmental impact of their clothes and has led to additional reports published by the European Commission and UK Parliament that discuss the environmental impact of clothing and the demand for action. A proliferation of clothing movements has gained traction since the advancement of an enhanced ‘consumer consciousness’, including ‘Love Your Clothes’, ‘Fashion Revolution’, ‘The Slow Fashion Movement’, ‘Ethical Hour’, and ‘Who Made My Clothes’. UK newspapers and broadcasters as well as fashion magazines reported a slump in clothing purchases on boxing day, due to consumers growing environmental conscience (Bazar, 2019; I-news, 2019; Sky News, 2019; The Guardian, 2019). Experts predict that the coming decade will see a rise of the sustainable wardrobe and an acceleration of consumers’ pro-environmental behaviour. Trends forecasted as part of these imminent developments include ‘Swapping’, also known as ‘Swishing’, and the advent of more workshops to learn how to mend textiles and to repair garments (The Guardian, 2018; The Guardian, 2020; Wise Up to Waste, 2020; WRAP, 2020). This evidence demonstrates consumers’ mounting interest towards their environmental impact, and an increasingly positive outlook on pro-environmental behaviour towards clothing; suggesting that the green clothing movement is here to stay. Hence, as one of the most significant, contemporary consumer trends, one likely to lead the future of fashion down a more sustainable runway, green clothing makes for a very interesting context for this study to explore knowledge sharing via a consumer perspective.

This chapter discusses the context of the study in greater depth within Section 1.2, highlighting the importance of green clothing (Section 1.2.1), alongside the use of Twitter as a platform to identify a green clothing online community to explore consumers’ knowledge sharing (Section 1.2.2). Section 1.3 presents the study’s aims and specific research questions that were informed by the literature review. Section 1.4 elaborates on the research design that this study employed. Section 1.5 concludes the chapter by outlining the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Research Context and Rationale

1.2.1 Context of Knowledge Sharing: Green Clothing

The chosen context of this study is green clothing. The discussion below demonstrates the importance of the topic within the present day and highlights the calls by prior studies to explore emerging pro-environmental perspectives.

Fashion is big business. The industry plays a major role in the growth of global Gross Domestic Product, with huge annual worldwide revenues exceeding £1 trillion (Ellen MacArthur, 2017). But all this success comes at a high environmental cost. The present-day clothing system of production is extremely pollutant and wasteful, thereby forcing the fashion industry to consider a break-away from fast fashion and an overall re-think of the industry (Ellen MacArthur, 2017). There is a large and growing body of literature that explores the negative impacts of the clothing industry on the environment, focusing on the fast fashion phenomenon (Claudio, 2007; Bianchi and Birtwistle, 2012; Chan and Wong, 2012; Fletcher, 2013; Harris et al., 2016; Hole and Hole, 2018; Thorisdottir and Johannsdottir, 2019). The growing academic debate examines potential alternative clothing processes, the shift to sustainable materials, and consumer consumption habits to reduce clothing's environmental footprint, alongside wider industry attitudes towards the environment and sustainability agendas introduced by governments (Thorisdottir and Johannsdottir, 2019). A recent strand of literature also explores consumers increasing demand for environmentally produced garments and sustainable clothing (Carrigan and Atalla, 2001; Goworek et al., 2012). This study explores knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community, both to gain a deeper academic and managerial understanding in relation to consumer perspectives towards green clothing within an online community and to offer a rich insight into consumers' views and consumption habits in relation to green clothing.

The literature surrounding green clothing that is relevant to this study includes the life-cycle of a garment. There are four stages of a garment; the production, the consumption, the care, and the disposal of the apparel (Claudio, 2007). The significant rising demand for clothing has resulted in the production of man-made, synthetic fibers such as polyester, which is often used to produce the garments at a faster and cheaper rate (Claudio, 2007; Fletcher, 2013). The negative environmental impacts of polyester stem from the fact that the material or fabric (one of the world's most popular textiles) is derived from petroleum, which results in various occupational and environmental hazards during manufacturing (Claudio, 2007).

Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that non-man-made fiber, cotton, can also have a negative impact on the environment. The environmental footprint of cotton is significant due to the use of pesticides used when growing the crop, and the prolific amount of water that equates to 20,000 litres to produce one kilogram of cotton; the latter correlates to one single t-shirt and a pair of jeans (Claudio, 2007; WWF, 2020). A current report by the European Parliament (2019) highlights the severe impact of clothing dye on the environment, stating that 165 chemicals out of the 19,000 that are used within production, are EU classified as hazardous to the environment or human health. Moreover, the intensive energy and water process of clothing production equates to 150 litres of water used per kilogram of fabric (Pulse, 2017), and an energy usage of 132 million metric tons of coal used to manufacture 60 billion kilograms of textiles each year (Ted research, 2019). Collectively, these studies outline the damaging environmental impacts of the first phase of the clothing life-cycle.

According to Claudio (2007), the rise of clothing consumption, which has had a devastating impact on the environment, is due to globalisation. Globally the fashion industry is worth 1.3 trillion USD, and over the past two decades consumption has approximately doubled as a result of the fast fashion phenomenon (Ellen MacArthur, 2017). Since 2009 alone, there has been a 40% increase of clothing consumption for each EU person (European Parliament, 2019). Thus, recent literature and supra-national reports evidence the drastic increase in consumer consumption and the associated negative impacts on the environment (Chan and Wong, 2012; Rhee and Johnson, 2019; Hole and Hole, 2019; House of Commons, 2019). Consequently, alternative forms of consumption of new apparel is recommended to consumers to reduce the environmental impact of clothing. These include purchasing second-hand clothes, upcycling old garments, and repairing or altering previously loved clothes (UK Parliament, 2019). A recent report by the UK Parliament (2019) states that a 10% increase in consuming second-hand clothes would cut carbon emissions of clothing by 3% and reduce water usage by 4%, thus evidencing how an alternative method of consumption can help minimise a consumer's environmental footprint. A current report by WRAP (2019) also indicates that the projected life span of a garment in the UK is 2.2 years. The report also suggests that simply extending the life of the apparel by 9 months, would significantly lower the item's environmental footprint. A consumer could prolong the life of a garment by repeatedly wearing the outfit and purchasing classic items that stay in fashion (WRAP, 2019).

According to Harris et al. (2016), it is the ‘care stage’ of the clothing’s life-cycle that generates the most detrimental impact on the environment. In the same vein, Bly et al. (2015) discuss the “care phase” as the most damaging and harmful life-cycle stage of a garment on the environment, due to consumers’ limited understanding of this stage. Reports by WRAP (2016; 2020) offer advice to consumers on the ‘care phase’ of the garment, including encouraging less frequent washing of clothing to increase the sustainability of a garment, fully loading the washing machine, and using an adequate amount of detergent to wash clothes within a cold wash. These tips have the potential to at least alleviate the consumer’s environmental footprint during the ‘care phase’ of the garment’s life-cycle.

The ‘disposal stage’ has a damaging impact on the environment due to several factors, including clothes being sent to landfill, a small percentage of clothes being recycled and the production of a large amount of textile material that is not recyclable (European Parliament, 2019). A recent report by the Textile Recycling Association states that only 15 to 20% of textiles are recycled, which leaves the majority of clothes disposed of, having to be incinerated or sent to landfill, subsequently producing methane gas (European Parliament, 2019). WRAP (2016) highlights the significance of clothing waste that is sent to landfill, stating that the UK population throws away 350,000 tons of clothing as part of household waste, which ends up in landfill. Alternative disposal methods of clothing to reduce a consumer’s environmental footprint include: i) re-using the garment; ii) giving the garment to a charity shop; and iii) arranging for the garment to be sent to a third-world country (Claudio, 2007; Bianchi and Birtwistle, 2012).

Having reviewed the literature that considers the distinct environmental impact of each phase of the life-cycle of a garment, the ‘care phase’ emerges consistently as the most harmful stage.

This study aims to explore the drivers that motivate consumers’ knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community in order to comprehend why consumers disseminate information about how they reduce the environmental impact of their clothing consumption. Additionally, this study examines users’ empowerment to disseminate information about green clothing in relation to the four phases that ‘green’ apparel.

1.2.2 Chosen Online Platform: Twitter

This study chose Twitter as an online platform to identify a green clothing online community. Twitter has contributed to the mushrooming of multiple movements spreading

awareness about pro-environmental behaviours in relation to green clothing via a multitude of online community ‘hashtags’, such as #fashionrevolution, #ethicalhour, #whomademyclothes and #sustainablefashion. Twitter distinguishes itself from alternative social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and WhatsApp, due to its distinctive ability to close the communication gap between the consumer and organisations, celebrities and experts (Maireder and Ausserhofer, 2014; Williams et al., 2015). It can be suggested that the latter has provided an environment for such movements towards anti-fast fashion and pro-second hand to transpire (Romani et al., 2015). Henceforth, Twitter is a pivotal social media platform that fosters online communities via a hashtag, that are talking about green clothing and are shaping into online movements that champion consumers’ concerns and their demand for change.

Past studies that have explored the concept of knowledge sharing and/or pro-environmental behaviour, demonstrate the suitability of Twitter as an online community due to the rich amount of information it holds as a result of the masses of ‘tweets’ shared by users (Bly et al., 2015). Recent studies also highlight Twitter as an ideal data platform to explore consumers’ behaviour within online communities with respect to a wide variety of current phenomena within the politics, user-generated-content, and health related fields (Smith et al., 2012; Moorley and Chinn, 2014; Maireder and Ausserhofer, 2014). Moreover, many academic papers that explore online communities use Twitter ‘hashtags’ to examine the topic of interest (see, among others, Kouloumpis et al., 2011; Moorley and Chinn, 2014; Arvidsson and Caliandro, 2015; Williams et al. 2015). The above evidence reassures as to the proven usefulness and validity of using a Twitter ‘hashtag’ to explore a green clothing online community, as chosen by the present study. Specifically, this study will explore consumers’ knowledge sharing within the #sustainablefashion online community on Twitter that comprises of conversations that relate to all four phases of green clothing, which are, production, consumption, care and disposal. More widely, the study contributes to previous literature by exploring knowledge sharing via a ‘hashtag’ online community within an alternative context to that of prior studies; green clothing.

Twitter was formed 13 years ago and is still a thriving medium that has a flourishing network that comprises of 126 million daily active users (The Washington Post, 2019). Online communities are prevalent on the online platform and can be sought by users via a ‘hashtag’. ‘Hashtags’ are accessed by users through the ‘#’ symbol for the purpose of flagging keywords or concepts on Twitter, so that users who ‘tweet’ about the topic can find each

other (Moorley and Chinn, 2014). Advantages of a Twitter online community include the absence of a need to ask for permission from a gatekeeper to enter the community since the online platform is public. Also, 'hashtags' have the capacity to 'trend' on Twitter, which allows the discussion to generate a 'buzz' (Twitter, 2019). Previous literature underlines that Twitter is an online platform that enables widespread, fast and immediate distribution of information as a result of the various Twitter tools, such as 'retweets', 'likes' and 'hashtags' (Boyd et al., 2010; Maireder and Ausserhofer, 2014). The aspect of conversation is pivotal on Twitter, which entails users creating and sharing 'tweets' that fit the 280 character-count, previously 'tweets' were limited to a 140 character-count due to Twitter's original design that planned for information to be sent via SMS (Boyd et al., 2010). The extended word count enables the user to share more knowledge alongside the ability to insert links or attach photographs. The former demonstrates that Twitter is a suitable online platform to locate a thriving consumer-led green clothing online community, due to the public nature and popularity of the platform as well as its technological virtues. This study selects an online community by identifying a 'hashtag' that is related to green clothing, one that entails current knowledge sharing amongst consumers.

1.3 Research Aims and Questions

The critical review of relevant literature exploring online communities, knowledge sharing, consumer empowerment, green terminology and pro-environmental behaviour, led to the specification of a series of research aims and attendant research questions to be addressed by this thesis. The overall, guiding research aims are:

- To investigate consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community, and understand what factors drive their knowledge sharing about their pro-environmental behaviour and green concerns.
- To explore how consumer empowerment and consumers' knowledge sharing interplay, and gauge the factors that influence the two concepts within a green clothing online community.
- To establish how and to what extent consumers are empowered when sharing knowledge within a green clothing online community, and gain an appreciation of how consumers' drive to share knowledge influences their empowerment in doing so.

The first aim is to ascertain a consumer perspective as to why consumers share knowledge within a green clothing online community. The study builds upon Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) and Chan and Li (2010) to determine what participatory benefits drive consumers' knowledge sharing, and to gain insights as to why consumers are driven by certain participatory benefits. This research considers previous studies that explore knowledge sharing within an online community to ascertain what determines the concept of knowledge sharing (Ardichvili et al., 2009; Qu and Lee, 2011; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Shen et al., 2014). This thesis also takes into consideration previous literature that discusses green terminology and concepts related to clothing, for the purpose of understanding the type of green clothing knowledge that is shared by consumers (Moisander, 2007; Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Moraes et al., 2012; Johnstone and Tan, 2015).

The second research aim is to examine the concept of knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment and the inter-relationship between the two since previous work has highlighted a significant association between the process of consumer empowerment and consumers' knowledge sharing (Quinton, 2013). Existing literature further demonstrates that knowledge sharing within an online community may also result in consumer empowerment (Quinton and Simkin, 2016). Thus, this study aims to better understand the relationship between the two constructs and provide valuable implications for future studies that explore both concepts. A better understanding of the interplay between consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing, will help determine how and to what extent the two concepts influence each other and the consequences of the association.

Regarding the third and final aim, this study investigates how and to what extent consumers are empowered, and the influencing factors that lead to empowerment. The proposed analysis of consumer empowerment advances on previous studies' lack of a clear identification of which aspects most empower the present consumer within an online community (Labrecque et al., 2013).

The research draws on the theory of ecological citizenship to understand the behaviour of a consumer who have an environmental conscience and share knowledge in order to raise awareness amongst others, since it is perceived that the latter is a duty (van Steenbergen, 1994; Dobson et al., 2005). On this front, this study builds upon Dobson's (2000; 2003) reviews of prior literature that discussed ecological citizenship, alongside examining the pioneering paper by van Steenbergen (1994), who developed the concept from Marshall's

(1950) theory of citizenship. Subsequent literature has validated Dobson's rationale as a reliable and accurate record of ecological citizenship within the present day as well as prior studies' interpretation of ecological citizenship (Sáiz, 2005; Gabrielson, 2008).

The following three research questions intend to address the above-stated aims of this study. The specific research questions (RQs), are the following:

1. What roles do hedonic, social, functional participatory benefits play within consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community?
2. How do consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing inter-relate, within consumers' narrative of a green clothing online community?
3. What is the relationship between the participatory benefits in RQ 1, consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing?

The examination of prior literature informed the study's research questions and contributed to the proposed conceptual framework, which is shown in Figure 2.4.

1.4 Research Design

In order to address the aims and three research questions of the thesis, the study employed a qualitative research design. The approach enabled the researcher to gain a rich and in-depth understanding of consumers' drive to share knowledge, and the factors that affected the interplay between consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing. The approach also allowed the unveiling of aspects regarding the dynamic inter-relationship between consumers' participatory benefits, consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing. Consistent with the aims of the present study, a social constructivist ontological position was undertaken to understand consumers' shared realities and meaning within the #sustainablefashion online community (in line with the broad guidelines suggested by Saunders et al., 2012). Specifically, this study used Stetsenko and Arievitch's (1997) understanding of social constructivism that draws on Vygotsky's (1962) original conception. The two concepts raised by Stetsenko and Arievitch (1997) were built upon, due to the study considering consumers' shared meaning-making practices alongside sociocultural interactivities, and the functional aspect of the consumer's creation of self. Accordingly, an interpretivist epistemological position was adopted, which enabled the researcher to gather a comprehensive understanding about users' knowledge sharing within the #sustainablefashion online community. An inductive approach was ideally suited, consistent with the adopted qualitative research design. A qualitative analysis tool was used to analyse

the data, which aligned with the study's philosophical underpinning; the author used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps to thematic analysis.

This study employed two research methods to address this study's aims and three research questions. Two focus groups were initially conducted to gather an understanding into consumers' green clothing terminology and behaviour on social media focusing on consumers' knowledge sharing and sense of empowerment. The intention of the latter was to deliver a preliminary insight into RQ 1 and RQ 2. This was followed by 20 semi-structured interviews with users from the #sustainablefashion online community, for the purpose of addressing all three research questions. Chapters 4 and 5 deliver the findings that derived from the two research methods.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organised into seven chapters. This Introduction chapter discussed the context of the study and provided a clear rationale for the importance of exploring knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community on Twitter. Chapter 1 also presented the research aims and questions of this study, alongside the research design this study employed to address the three research questions. Chapter 2 presents a critical review of the literature germane to online communities, knowledge sharing, consumer empowerment, green terminology and ecological citizenship. The chapter concludes with the three research questions that were informed by the identified gaps within the literature, followed by a proposed conceptual framework.

Chapter 3 provides the research philosophies and approaches, alongside the research design that the study employed. The chapter delivers a rationale towards the chosen research methods and the analysis tool, and describes the data collection process undertaken to address the research questions. Within the concluding section, the chapter discusses the consideration of ethics when conducting the chosen research methods within an offline and online environment.

Chapter 4 evaluates the initial scope of findings that emerged from the two focus groups. The chapter provides an insight into the three aspects that drive consumers' knowledge sharing on social media, a professional identity, a desire to educate, and a personal interest. The concept of disempowerment emerged strongly from the analysis, as a result of consumers' self-consciousness and lack of confidence. The chapter concludes by examining the internal and external influences on consumers' knowledge sharing. The analysis revealed

that the key external influences are professional regulations that place constraints on participants' online identity, job roles within academia or medicine, and advice from friends and family. Internal influences comprise consumers' personal knowledge acquired on social media, lack of self-belief, a desire to help others, and consumers' attitudes consistent with risk-avoidance.

Chapter 5 delivers a further exploration of the findings that stem from the 20 semi-structured interviews. The chapter presents a comprehension of four factors that drive consumers' knowledge sharing within the #sustainablefashion online community. The four principles drivers are, lobbying, work agenda, scepticism and belonging. The analysis evidenced that consumers were empowered by three aspects, that entailed, green concerns, desire for engagement and the facilitation of Twitter's online tools. The chapter's final reflection and conclusions determined that consumers environmental conscience was a pivotal factor that empowered their knowledge sharing. The concept of an echo-chamber was discussed as an important aspect that emerged from the analysis, that encompassed users' activity of monitoring and filtering information alongside sharing content to reduce repercussion, and because of the users' desire to share knowledge with like-minded others. The aspect of belonging was presented within the analysis, which stemmed from an echo-chamber and from the concept of a safe-space. The analysis evidenced that users indicated a sense of belonging as a result of sharing knowledge within like-minded others within the online community to avoid criticism, for the purpose of sharing their opinions and thoughts within a safe-space. Furthermore, the concept of disempowerment was evidenced, which comprised of users becoming deterred from sharing knowledge due to their apprehension towards fake news and superficial information, and unreliable 'sources' that distribute content.

Chapter 6 presents a critical evaluation of the findings. The chapter begins with a discussion of the key findings from the initial scoping and the further exploration (lobbying, aspects that resulted in an empowered consumer and factors that led to a disempowered consumer). Next, it examines the findings in the context of the literature review and additional studies in order to emphasise the findings' novelty value and significance. Finally, the chapter highlights the theoretical and managerial contributions of the study, and attendant implications for industry, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and policy makers.

Chapter 7 concludes, summarising the empirical and theoretical contributions. Implications to industry, NGOs and policy makers are further discussed within the managerial

contributions. The subsequent section details the limitations of the study and profitable directions for future research. The authors reflections on the PhD process are discussed in the concluding section.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to deliver a critical discussion surrounding the following areas of literature, online communities (OCs), knowledge sharing, consumer empowerment, green terminology and ecological citizenship. The chapter proposes to explore the key issues which have arose within the relevant areas of literature. Firstly, the participatory benefits that drive consumers to share knowledge within an OC. Secondly, the inter-relationship between consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing within an OC. Thirdly, the relationship between the participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing, consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing. The chapter also identifies and discusses the research gaps within the literature, which indicates a justification to the research questions (RQs) mentioned.

This chapter encompasses the following structure. Section 2.2 sheds light on the growth of the internet which has led to the ubiquitous growth of OCs. The section discusses the progression of online communication within the digital era (Section 2.2.1). Followed by a definition of the term OC which is synthesised from prior literature, this study intends to use the latter as an understanding for the thesis (Section 2.2.2). The succeeding section explores the prominence of an OC influencing consumers' knowledge sharing (Section 2.2.3).

Knowledge sharing literature is explored within this chapter (Section 2.3), the section starts by defining the concept and examines prior literature that discusses the concept of knowledge sharing online (Section 2.3.1). The latter section further illuminates the types of knowledge sharing. The subsequent section analyses prior literature that discusses the drivers that lead to knowledge sharing (Section 2.3.2). The ensuing section explores reciprocity within an OC and the aspects that lead to reciprocating behaviours, alongside understanding the interplay between reciprocity and knowledge sharing (Section 2.3.3).

The consumer empowerment literature is discussed within this chapter (Section 2.4). The initial section examines the evolution of the empowered consumer as a result of the developed digital era (Section 2.4.1). The following section reviews literature that discusses the origins of the empowered consumer, subsequently highlighting the power shift from an organisation to a consumer (Section 2.4.2).

Section 2.5 presents an exploration of green literature. The section starts with an examination of literature that discusses the term green alongside the following concepts,

ethical, sustainable and pro-environmental (Section 2.5.1). The ensuing section discusses the green terminologies that entail a green consumer, green consumption and a green product (Section 2.5.2). Both former sections provide a definition of the term green for this study's understanding, the definition is synthesised from the exploration of prior green literature.

Section 2.6 examines literature that reviewed the theory of ecological citizenship, as this study intends to understand consumers' knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment via the theory. The section explores the evolution of ecological citizenship, alongside the originating theory of citizenship (Section 2.6.1). The prior section reviews recent literature that criticizes ecological citizenship. The following section discusses the importance of the ecological citizenship theory within the present day due to consumers growing environmental conscience (Section 2.6.2). The subsequent section examines the role of the knowledge sharing concept with ecological citizenship literature, in order to understand how the theory adds to the understanding of this study's online phenomenon (Section 2.6.3).

The chapter is concluded within section 2.7. The section presents a review of the literature examined (Section 2.7.1). The following section discusses this study's proposed research aims and questions alongside a proposed conceptual framework, the latter are informed by the examination of the bodies of literature that are reviewed in this chapter (Section 2.7.2).

2.2 Growth within the Digital Era: The Emergence of an Online Community

The significant growth of the internet has resulted in an online platform which allows consumers and organisations to obtain and share information (Shen et al., 2014). The vast growth of the internet has paved the way for an abundance of online communication between consumers, which has shaped into OCs. Within the digital era there are many facets, in particular, this study explores OCs. The ubiquitous growth of OCs, has resulted in the power shift from an organisation to a consumer, subsequently leading to the empowered consumer (Quinton, 2013). The research to date has tended to focus on the individual behaviours within an OC (Moisander, 2007; Rokka and Uusitalo, 2008), rather than a collective comprehension regarding how consumers interact with one-another. Whilst a small body of literature has explored collective communication within a green OC (Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012), there is still a lack of understanding concerning what factors drive consumers' knowledge sharing within an OC.

2.2.1 Online Community: Collaborative Communication

In recent years, studies have started to explore collective communication between consumers, and have identified how an OC assists consumers interaction. A longitudinal study by Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) examined consumers' social interactions and shared content, in regards to the sustainable supply chain of fashion within an OC. The study found that users' knowledge sharing was influenced by the communal setting of the community, in particular, the members' role evolved over time depending on the duration spent within an OC (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). Similarly, an observational study by Rokka and Moisander (2009) analysed consumers' perceptions towards environmental issues within an OC. The findings revealed that the community accentuated consumers socially shared understanding of environmental behaviours, in particular, green consumption behaviours (Rokka and Moisander, 2009). Together these studies indicate that the communal aspect of an OC encourages consumers to share knowledge about their perceptions and views, concerning a green conscience. Both studies reveal an exploration of knowledge sharing within a green context, hence, contributing to this study's understanding of OC interaction through a green lens. However, such studies remain narrow in focus dealing only with the content shared rather than consumers' intentions to share. Therefore, this study aims to examine the drivers of consumers' knowledge sharing, in order to contribute to the paucity of literature that explores the phenomenon.

A recent study by Quinton and Simkin (2016) sheds light on the developing stages of the internet and highlights the growing social communication within OCs, labelling the phases as the evolution of a "Digital Journey Map". Figure 2.1 illustrates the latter, the study demonstrates that there was a starting point to the rapid expansion of the digital era, however, there is no confirmed final destination. The model which comprises of four stages, was informed by an in-depth examination of literature to-date that explored digitisation within the marketing field, from an organisational perspective.

Figure 2.1: The Digital Journey Map

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. Pages where material has been removed are clearly marked in the electronic version. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

(Sourced from: Quinton and Simkin, 2016)

Quinton and Simkin's (2016) study reveal the evolvement of a solitary journey online to a flourishing platform of interaction with individuals and communities, this passage is indicated in the first three stages of the model presented in Figure 2.1. The study emphasises an outcome of the interactions between individuals within an OC. For instance, indicating that the online social communication can lead to a long-term or transitory relationship between consumers (Quinton and Simkin, 2016). The model illustrated within Figure 2.1 demonstrates the flurry of content creation and a collective interface in an OC as the third stage of the development of the internet, labelled as “Travelling Companions and Communities” (Quinton and Simkin, 2016). This study intends to examine the factors that drive consumers’ knowledge sharing within an OC, in order to understand the reasons that lead to users’ content creation and a hypothetical long-term relationship between users. Hence, this study intends to contribute to Quinton and Simkin’s (2016) understanding of the third stage that is discussed within the model. Furthermore, Figure 2.1 clearly depicts the digital stages of OCs, therefore, this study uses this model as a skeleton to understand the growth of OCs and the evolution of knowledge sharing.

The following sub-section proposes a definition of an OC for the purpose of this study’s understanding.

2.2.2 Defining an Online Community

As a result of the growing body of literature that has explored behaviour in the digital era, recent attention has focused on the area of OCs. Previous studies that define an OC have demonstrated an array of explanations that describe the concept. The latter is due to prior research simultaneously stating the terms OC and virtual community (VC) without indicating the distinction or similarity between the concepts. This section examines prior literature that explores online behaviour and the use of the terms 'OC' and 'VC', in order to present a definition that is synthesised from prior findings to indicate a better understanding of the term OC.

To date several studies suggest that an OC can be defined as a group of people online who share defining practices and norms of behaviour, and actively promote their moral standards (Komito, 1998; Kozinets, 1999; Cheung et al., 2015). In the same vein, an OC is defined as a group of consumers who have assembled within an online platform and exchange information about their similar and common interests engaging in many virtual interactions (Kozinets, 1999; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Kumi and Sabherwal, 2019). Similarly, Preece (2000) proposes that an OC entails four factors, consumers who socially interact, a shared purpose, consumer interaction and computer systems which mediate and support online communication. Nevertheless, an OC is often termed as a VC (Kozinets, 1999; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Ridings and Gefen, 2004). A prior study by Ridings and Gefen (2004) discuss the essence of a VC which is similar to an OC definition. For instance, the study states that a VC consists of a group of people with similar interests who interact regularly in an organised way within a common location (Ridings and Gefen, 2004). Correspondingly, a VC is defined as a computer-mediated social group in which consumers can exchange information and freely communicate with one-another about their shared interests, ideas, advice and beliefs (Rheingold, 1993; Rheingold, 2000; Chan and Li, 2010; Chen et al., 2012; Chou et al., 2016; Kang et al., 2018). Additionally, a VC is expressed in prior literature as an online platform where consumers visit to gather information when making a purchase intention about a product (De Valck et al., 2009). Thus, the latter evidences the similarities between literature that defines an OC and a VC.

Considering the exploration of existing literature that interchangeably uses the concepts OC and VC, this study adopts a definition that encompasses the meaning of both terms. It can be suggested, that the simultaneous use of the concepts is due to the overlapping similarities which are evidenced within prior definitions. For instance, the likeness between the concepts

entail an online platform where consumers congregate to share common interests, interact regularly, communicate on a specific platform, and gather information that they are interested in. This study uses the term OC throughout the thesis for consistency. This research proposes a definition of an OC, which is as follows:

An online platform which is used as a social environment consisting of people who gather together, based upon their shared practices and norms of behaviour. The communal atmosphere provides a space for people to interact and share information, ideas, advice and common interests.

This definition has been chosen, as it comprises of various aspects that are related to an OC and VC. These are a communal environmental, consumers shared interests and norms related to an OC topic, and a platform that allows consumers to distribute their alike thoughts and information alongside providing support to others.

The following sub-section discusses the importance of an OC, which entails the benefits of an OC and the consequences of the online platform on consumers' and organisations' behaviour.

2.2.3 The Importance of an Online Community

Prior studies have highlighted the significant increase of OCs changing the way consumers interact and communicate with each other (Mathwick et al., 2007; Labrecque et al., 2013; Quinton, 2013). Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) shed light on four ways that the internet has transformed how society functions, these are, affecting the modes of products, the modes of learning, the modes of communication, and the modes of commerce. Additionally, the significant growth of OCs has contributed towards the rapid shift of consumers using OCs to inform their decision-making when purchasing a product or service (Kozinets et al., 2010). An industrial report emphasises the importance of the impact of consumer's decisions making, claiming that 1-in-2 consumers use the internet to search for information to make a choice in regards to purchasing a product or service (McKinsey, 2013). Furthermore, a recent report reveals that 55% of consumers conduct online research prior to consuming a product or service (KPMG, 2017). The market research data indicates that the majority of consumers choose to search online reviews and recommendations, rather than visit the company website, visit a store or speak to family and friends (KPMG, 2017). Therefore, the influence of online interaction on consumers' rationale advocates the potential benefits that an organisation could incur if a product or service was visible within an OC. McKinsey

(2013) state that the current trend for organisations is to align their marketing strategies towards an online environment presence by immersing the marketing resources within social networks alongside brand enthusiasts (McKinsey, 2013). The integration conjures the aspect of brand trust which is associated with the brand enthusiast's relationship with the brand that they are enthralled with (McKinsey, 2013). Thus, the latter demonstrates the managerial implications of this study, as a result of understanding users' drive to share knowledge which contributes to others' decision-making towards a product or service.

The internet is also changing the way consumers communicate to one another within an online platform. The evolution of communication within the internet started with a few simple benefits, which included no geographical boundaries or time limitations (Kozinets, 1999). As a result, there has been a rapid growth of computer-mediated communication, in particular, consisting of groups of interest and social affiliations which started to gather within online platforms (Kozinets and Handelman, 1998). Therefore, leading to the crucial social change towards the consumer collective within OCs. Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) state that an enormous advantage of the internet is the cost savings, due to consumer's interacting with one another or with organisations within a free online platform. Interactions within an online platform consist of online communication that commences within real time, and a lack of set-up costs that are associated with offline exchanges, such as, journey charges, staff overheads and setting up expenses which are not related to an OC (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Chan and Li, 2010). Furthermore, an OC is often created within an online public space which is inherently free, an OC is either created by the organisation or by consumers who have an interest towards the consumption of interest (Shen et al., 2014).

Recent studies have stressed the benefits of OCs for consumers and their growing empowerment, as a result of ubiquitous social interaction and content creation between consumers (Birtwistle and Moore, 2007; Shen et al., 2014; McNeill and Moore, 2015). In particular, Stokburger-Sauer and Wiertz's (2015) study indicates that OCs are a detrimental factor that influences consumer empowerment online. Consumer empowerment is revealed within an OC when users voice their opinions and views in relation to a subject that they are passionate about (Quinton, 2013; Labrecque et al., 2013). An example of consumer empowerment is demonstrated by a study that discusses the proliferation of green communities that have rose in the recent decade (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). The former is a consequence of consumers increasing demand for green alternatives and a green lifestyle (Griskevicius et al., 2010). Thus, prior studies demonstrate that an OC enables the

consumer to express themselves about a particular interest, which contributes to their sense of empowerment. Despite the rising growth of green communities and previous literature demonstrating the benefits of communal interaction within OCs, few studies have explored a green context online in relation to exploring consumers' drive to share knowledge (Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). Therefore, this study aims to address the gap by exploring consumers' knowledge sharing within the context of a green clothing OC. The literature reviewed in this section evidences the importance of this research examining the concepts within an OC, due to consumer empowerment being encouraged within the online platform.

The following section explores the concept of knowledges sharing, which entails the shift in content being shared within the present day, types of knowledge sharing, what drives consumers to exchange knowledge and factors that impact on reciprocity.

2.3 Knowledge Sharing within the Digital Era

2.3.1 Defining Online Knowledge Sharing: A Multifaceted Interaction

The concept of knowledge sharing is a phenomenon which is gaining traction within literature that discusses the emergence of online communication within the digital era, consumer empowerment and consumers' social interaction within an OC. According to Ardichvili et al. (2009), knowledge sharing is defined as presenting people with the opportunity to distribute and internalise their knowledge via experiences, and to share knowledge to help others overcome a problem. Furthermore, the aspect of information sharing is discussed as a prior activity to knowledge sharing, in relation to consumers who share information about a product or service which leads to knowledge sharing about the characteristics of the product or service (Shen et al., 2014). Prior research reveals that the process of information sharing that results in knowledge sharing, can inform consumer's decision-making and influences consumption choice or consumer attitude (Williams and Cothrell, 2000; Kim et al., 2008; De Valck et al., 2009; Shen et al., 2014). In consideration of prior studies definition of the term knowledge sharing, this research intends to use the following definition as an underlying understanding for this thesis. This study proposes to use the ensuing definition by Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) that discusses knowledge sharing as a content creation or social interaction by a consumer within an OC. The reasoning of this study using this definition, is due to the commonality that this thesis has with Cervellon and Wernerfelt's (2012) research. For instance, Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) explore content type of knowledge sharing within a green fashion OC and examines

consumers' knowledge distribution from a consumer perspective. Thus, evidencing similarities with this study's context and intended viewpoint of exploring knowledge sharing. Moreover, the longitudinal study reveals a comprehensive discussion about knowledge sharing within a green OC over time and delivers a current rationale into what the concept knowledge sharing entails. Hence, the definition by Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) is a valid explanation of the online phenomena knowledge sharing, which is used for this study's understanding.

To date, several studies have examined online knowledge sharing within OCs. A considerable amount of literature has been published on individuals sharing knowledge within travel OCs (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Cox et al., 2009; Shaw et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2014; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014). However, there is a relatively small body of literature that is concerned with consumers' intentions to share knowledge within a green OC (Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Shen et al., 2014). Much of the current literature exploring consumers' drive to share knowledge within a green community examines the phenomena from an organisational perspective (Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). Thus, a consumer perspective is warranted to reveal the processes of consumer participation and empowerment when sharing knowledge within a green OC (Rokka and Moisander, 2009). This study intends to explore consumers' knowledge sharing within the context of green clothing from a consumer perspective and to contribute to current literature.

Thus far, several studies have indicated that knowledge sharing is an important online feature, because an OC's success originates from consumers distribution of information with one-another (Hsu et al., 2007; Shen et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2014; Pai and Tsai, 2016). According to Qu and Lee (2011), the accumulation of information and knowledge distributed by consumers reveals a successful OC. Furthermore, Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) highlight how knowledge sharing within an OC enables the consumer to extract more value from the consumption of interest or particular organisation or brand. Within the context of this study having a green clothing perspective, sharing of green knowledge has a significant role on consumer's green judgements (Shen et al., 2012). Joergens (2006) stresses the importance of knowledge sharing within the context of green clothing, suggesting that eco-fashion-related information assists consumers in choosing green fashion alternatives compared to traditional fashion. A previous study discusses consumer's

preference towards receiving useful information in regards to information which adds to their sustainable conscience (Anson, 2012).

Moreover, knowledge sharing literature demonstrates a variety of types of consumers' knowledge sharing within an OC. Firstly, the shift of knowledge content being shared within an OC. Past studies evidence the evolution of consumers initially shared their beliefs and perceptions in an OC, in later years studies reveal that consumers share factual and concrete knowledge. Secondly, two overall forms of knowledge sharing are discussed, co-consumption and co-production, which entail consumers sharing knowledge with either consumers or with organisations.

Previous research reveals that the content that consumers share within a green OC has changed in recent years. For instance, literature evidences that consumers initially shared their beliefs and thoughts about green products or their behaviour, however, in more recent year's consumers distribute factual and objective knowledge (Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). A longitudinal study that examined knowledge sharing within a green fashion OC, evidences a shift from belief-based information to factual knowledge being distributed (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). The study finds that consumers observed within an OC between the years of 2007 and 2008, based their sharing of knowledge on their own perceptions, beliefs and feelings, rather than being based on objective knowledge (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). In the same vein, Wagner's (1997) study that explores consumers' green behaviour reveals that the initial stages of knowledge entail the sharing of content that is built on stereotypes. Furthermore, a prior study conducted by Rokka and Moisander (2009) express similar findings, the study explored consumers' knowledge sharing within an OC. The findings demonstrate that the majority of consumers reveal their personal views and beliefs, however, Rokka and Moisander (2009) found that a minority of consumers conveyed factual information when sharing knowledge within an OC. Knowledge shared that entails users' beliefs and views towards sustainability is defined as "social knowledge" by Kong et al. (2016), the research further states that the former comprises of users sharing their pro-environmental behaviour alongside their thoughts. Social knowledge is regarded as being associated to users shared social expectations and social norms in regards to sustainability (Kaiser and Fuhrer, 2003).

Moreover, Cervellon and Wernerfelt's (2012) study found that in recent years between 2010 and 2011, consumers expressed objective and factual knowledge when sharing knowledge

within an OC. It can be suggested, that the latter is due to consumers gaining more expertise knowledge within recent years, due to their rising awareness towards the environment (Ewing, 2008). As a result of consumers heightened environmental consciousness, prior studies evidence that consumers consequently distribute their knowledge into an OC (Ewing, 2008). Factual knowledge that is shared about sustainability, is also termed as “declarative” and “procedural” knowledge (Kaiser and Fuhrer, 2003). A current study by Kong et al. (2016) found that online users rely on “declarative” knowledge in order to educate themselves about sustainability. “Effectiveness” knowledge is an additional type of objective information that consumers share, which entails content that is related to the financial benefits of being sustainable (Gardner and Stern, 1996; Kong et al., 2016).

Underlying motivations to consumers’ knowledge sharing are discussed within Cervellon and Wernerfelt’s (2012) study, the findings show that consumers indicate a desire for objective knowledge. For instance, consumers were found to be driven by a desire to become competent and knowledgeable about the study’s context regarding environmental issues (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). In contrast, consumers between the years of 2007 and 2008 evidenced a motivation to discuss shared interests with other users. The latter motivations are not reflected in the years of 2010 and 2011. Overall, prior studies demonstrate the current consumer’s motivation to share knowledge within an OC, which entails the need to become knowledgeable and gain expertise (Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). Overall, the studies evidence the evolution of the empowered voice within an OC, and demonstrate the progression of consumers’ knowledge sharing from perceptions and beliefs to factual knowledge (Wagner, 1997; Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Ewing, 2009; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). However, such studies exploring consumers’ motivations to share knowledge and evidencing the type of content that the consumer shares remains narrow. Therefore, this study proposes to consider the prior literature when examining consumers’ drive to share knowledge within a green clothing OC.

Furthermore, the former exploration of the literature that discusses consumers shift in knowledge content, provide important insights into the changing mindset of the consumer, in regards to their green awareness and environmental conscience. According to Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012), the change of content being shared indicates that consumers are becoming more knowledgeable about green activities and are mindful about their environmental impact, hence, they distribute authentic knowledge. Similarly, a past paper

indicates that the objectivity of information shared within an OC, is due to community members gaining expertise about the subject matter (Ewing, 2008). To date, several studies have revealed that both subjective and objective knowledge that is distributed within an OC influences consumers' attitudes and behaviours (Williams and Cothrell, 2000; Kim et al., 2008; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). Nevertheless, Kong et al. (2016) argue that a variety of knowledge types are needed to encourage a progression in sustainable behaviours, such knowledge forms include, social, declarative, procedural and effectiveness. Hence, the latter study evidences that a mixture of content that entails beliefs and objective knowledge is needed to result in consumers progression towards pro-environmental behaviours. Thus, this study intends to explore if consumers' knowledge sharing about green clothing within an OC, does have an impact on consumers' attitude or behaviour towards greening their clothing consumption.

Furthermore, previous literature indicates that there are two forms of knowledge that is shared by consumers, co-consumed and co-produced (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). Both manners of knowledge exchange evidence consumers different drives to share knowledge within an OC, and reveal an intention to share information. Both concepts of knowledge sharing result in a OC with a strong sense of activity between members, and a trusting online platform which consists of consumer's ideas and perceptions (Ewing, 2008).

Co-consumption consists of consumers within an OC sharing knowledge with other consumers, the exchanging of information can potentially influence other consumers' attitudes and behaviours towards the topic of conversation (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). Online community users evidence co-consumption when sharing ideas, sharing knowledge to solve problems and discussing issues, subsequently the knowledge shared accumulates into an online repository (Pitta and Fowler, 2005). Similarly, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) and Füller et al. (2008) state that consumers evidence co-creation with other OC users via shared experiences and a forum of conversation. Existing literature indicates that consumers indicate a sense of duty and commitment to exchange knowledge with OC members in order to 'give back' (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2009). The role of educating other consumers is an element of co-consumption, this persona is often taken on by a member who has been within an OC for some time. A consumer who educates others is termed as a "market maven", who adopts the role of educating newcomers to an OC (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012: 189). The qualitative study undertaken by Cervellon and Wernerfelt

(2012) indicate that consumers who partake in co-consumption within a green forum consider themselves as a major actor in the development of sustainable initiatives.

In contrast, co-production of knowledge entails consumers sharing knowledge within an OC, in turn providing feedback and information back to producers and industry (Libert and Spector, 2007; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). A recent study reveals that co-production is a sign of the brand manager embracing an OC and recognising the shift of the potential of brands within OCs (Quinton, 2013). Subsequently, if brand managers fail to recognise the shift of the opportunity of brands inhabiting within the digital era consequences would follow, such as, isolating their marketing tools and limiting their brands' performance (Martin and Todorov, 2010). In the same vein, consumers who co-produce with brands and organisations can deliver genuine sources of innovation and production ideas (Ewing, 2008; Procaci et al., 2015). Prior literature evidences that organisations have created a direct route of delivering what the consumer wants, by discarding former marketing research via focus groups and surveys, instead organisations join OCs and ask consumers about their desires and needs related to a product or service (Thomke and Von Hippel, 2002; Pitta and Fowler, 2005). The following concepts that entail value creation and value extraction are present during co-consumption, which entails the company creating dialogue with a consumer and listening to their expectations followed by acting on their conversation to create a better experience for the consumer (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Brodie et al., 2013). Furthermore, the aspect of organisations feeding information back into an OC can provide a potential value for organisations, as this provides consumers with precise and concrete knowledge (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012).

This study considers the variety of knowledge sharing types when examining consumers' drive to share knowledge within a green clothing OC. This research aims to deliver a comprehensive understanding into what factors drive consumers' knowledge sharing alongside their desire to share a particular type of knowledge.

The following sub-section examines the factors that drive consumers' knowledge sharing.

2.3.2 Factors that Drive Consumers' Knowledge Sharing

Academic literature that introduced OC research in the early 1990s primarily discussed the concept within an evolving digital era, the benefits of an OC for organisations and consumers, and the emerging member roles (Rheingold, 1993; Komito, 1998; Kozinets, 1999; Fox and Roberts, 1999). Recent research has shifted towards the examination of what

drives consumers to share knowledge within an OC, and what factors impact on consumers' reciprocation with others (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2002a; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2002b; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Chan and Li, 2010). However, current literature particularly focuses on measuring consumers' intention to share knowledge and the impacts of reciprocity in a quantitative manner and from a managerial perspective. Thus, this study intends to undertake a qualitative research design to deliver a richer understanding towards consumers' drive to share knowledge within a green clothing OC, from a consumer viewpoint. This research aims to deliver a comprehensive insight into why and how consumers share knowledge within an OC, and determine aspects that influence their drive to share knowledge. A large body of literature indicates that knowledge sharing is a fundamental aspect that builds a successful OC (Hsu et al., 2007; Shen et al., 2010; Qu and Lee 2011; Lee et al., 2014). Hence, prior literature evidences the importance of this study examining what drives consumers to share knowledge, in order to understand the aspects that foster a thriving OC.

This section examines previous literature that explores consumers' drive to share knowledge. This study builds upon two well-known and reputable studies by Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) and Chan and Li (2010), to comprehend what factors drive consumers to share knowledge within an OC. Additionally, this section discusses the concept of reciprocity which is an aspect of knowledge sharing, and what factors encourage engagement within an OC.

A previous study by Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) explored what participatory benefits drove consumers' knowledge sharing within a travel OC. The research found that both social and hedonic participatory benefits were the most important drivers that explained why consumers shared knowledge. A social participatory benefit indicated that consumers were driven by a desire to provide support and help to others, form relationships, share ideas and share experiences as a result of trusting others (Preece, 2000; Wang et al., 2002; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). Also, users' drive via a hedonic participatory benefit meant that users shared knowledge for enjoyment purposes, entertainment, amusement and for fun (Wang et al., 2002; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). The remaining participatory benefits that comprised of psychological and functional were found to be insignificant factors that led to consumers' knowledge sharing within an OC. The latter revealed that, users were not driven by a psychological participatory benefit that entailed a drive to fulfil basic psychological benefits, such as, a sense of belonging and an affiliation to an OC and self-expression within the

community (Rheingold, 1993; Walther, 1996; Bressler and Grantham, 2000). Alongside, members hope to share specialised language, concepts and cultural norms related to the topic of an OC (Kozinets, 1999). A functional participatory benefit meant that users were not driven by a need to partake in transactions such as buying and selling a product via the exchange of information (Armstrong and Hagel, 1996; Preece, 2000). Alongside, users were not driven by a hope to pursue knowledge exchange by asking for information from others for convenience and efficiency, and gathering knowledge to aid their own decision-making and learning (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). In particular, the findings reveal that members do not wish to satisfy functional benefits, because they have no desire for task-orientated deeds, rather they want to partake in social activities (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). A rationale was delivered by Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) regarding why the findings did not identify a psychological participatory benefit as an important driver to consumers' knowledge sharing. The latter was due to the study investigating consumers' drive to share knowledge within an online travel community that did not entail a sense of belonging and affiliation, Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) suggested that future studies exploring an OC with a supportive milieu could reveal consumers' drive to share due to a psychological participatory benefit.

The findings presented by Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) are supported by Chan and Li's (2010) study, that concludes consumers seek hedonic and social benefits in the hope to reciprocate with OC members. The study finds that a hedonic and social relationship and enjoyment lead to greater engagement within an OC (Chan and Li, 2010). In particular, the construct of enjoyment is revealed as a pivotal factor that results in consumers' reciprocity, when both concepts of enjoyment and an emotion concept are present, engagement is further heightened. The latter indicates both hedonic and social participatory benefits that are discussed within Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) study.

Nevertheless, a recent study by Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) evidence that users are driven by a functional participatory benefit to share knowledge. For instance, the study's findings reveal that users are driven to share knowledge because of their desire to become knowledgeable and gain expertise about sustainable fashion (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). The latter is due to users demonstrating that they share objective knowledge that entails factual and expertise content (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). Similarly, prior literature that explores consumers' drive to share knowledge within an OC related to sustainability, indicate that consumers are driven by a desire to share accurate information

alongside collecting factual content to educate themselves about sustainability and to seek advice (Kaiser and Fuhrer, 2003; Kong et al., 2016; Kang et al., 2018; Kumi and Sabherwal, 2019). Likewise, previous studies that explore consumers' intention to share knowledge within a travel and restaurant review OC, evidence that users are driven by a desire to gather knowledge that is credible due to their need to be informed by trustworthy content and to consume products or services (Ayeh et al., 2013; Bilgihan et al., 2014; Agag and El-Masry, 2016). Consumers are driven by a desire to gather information because they want to learn and aid their decision-making about a product or service (Clark and Goldsmith, 2006). The former findings align with Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) definition of a functional participatory benefit. Thus, current literature demonstrates that a functional participatory benefit is an additional driver alongside social and hedonic participatory benefits, that encourage consumers to share knowledge within an OC.

Considering the previous discussion that reviews prior literatures' findings regarding consumers' drive to share knowledge via participatory benefits. This study intends to examine the following participatory benefits that are indicated by previous literature, these are, social, hedonic and functional participatory benefits. This research will also consider the remaining psychological participatory benefit due to the possible relevancy within this study's findings. This study aims to comprehend the interplay between the three participatory benefits, alongside examining how and why consumers are driven by each individual participatory benefit. Considering Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) call for future studies to explore consumers' drive to share knowledge within a supportive OC that entails alternative contexts to travel. This study aims to build upon the study's warrant for additional research, by exploring the participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing OC. Recent studies have examined knowledge sharing within an environmental phenomena or from a green clothing aspect, however, the small body of literature warrants further exploration into consumers' drivers to share knowledge within the context (Rokka and Uusitalo, 2008; Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Shen et al., 2014). Moreover, considering the two papers that this study builds upon in regards to the participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing, both studies used a mixed method or quantitative research design to measure the participatory benefits (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Chan and Li, 2010). This study intends to undertake a qualitative research design to gain a rich insight into why consumers are driven by the participatory benefits to share knowledge. Alongside, gaining insights into

additional factors that may impede or facilitate consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing OC.

The next sub-section discusses reciprocity within an OC to identify what factors influence consumers' engagement.

2.3.3 Aspects that Influence Consumers' Reciprocity

Prior literature demonstrates the importance of reciprocity within an OC. For instance, reciprocity supports and sustains relationships and members collective actions within an OC, alongside, encouraging voluntary collaboration, resource sharing and cooperation (Shumaker and Brownell, 1984; Chan and Li, 2010). Reciprocity is defined as a moral responsibility by consumers within an OC who portray a sense of duty to members within an OC, in regards to sharing information for the purpose of helping and supporting others (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Attitude and behaviour change are further indicated as outcomes of reciprocating behaviours within an OC (Mangleburg et al., 2004; Chan and Li, 2010). Due to the aspect of willingness that reciprocation entails, which is found to be a factor that drives consumers' relationships which can proceed in a behaviour change, in the case of Chan and Li's (2010) study reciprocity leads to consumers co-shopping behaviour.

A past study explores the routes of interactivity within a cosmetic context OC and how consumer communication is influenced by reciprocity (Chan and Li, 2010). The findings of the study demonstrate that an "experiential route of interactivity" leads to reciprocity, in particular, the "social bond experiential interactivity" (SBEI) construct was found to be a significant driver compared to the alternative "enjoyment" (Chan and Li, 2010). However, the study demonstrated the factor enjoyment closely followed SBEI aspect, thus, it can be suggested that further research is warranted to confirm the most important factor within an "experiential route of interactivity". The SBEI concept entails OC members engaging in order to encourage camaraderie and closeness with one-another (Mathwick et al., 2007; Chan and Li, 2010), and support one another (Rheingold, 1993; Wikström et al., 2002; Wasko and Fargo, 2005). Compared to the enjoyment concept that comprises consumers' drive to reciprocate for an enjoyable interaction experience with consumers (Webster and Martocchio, 1992; Pai and Tsai, 2016). This study aims to examine if consumers are driven by an experiential route of interactivity which results in reciprocating behaviours within an OC. In particular, this study aims to confirm if SBEI or enjoyment factor is the most important aspect that leads to reciprocity. Additionally, this study builds upon Chan and Li's (2010) findings that reveal potential attitude and behaviour change that results from

reciprocating behaviours. The research aims to comprehend how reciprocity impacts on consumers' attitude and behaviour change in relation to green concerns and pro-environmental behaviour.

The following section discusses consumer empowerment within an OC and examines previous literature that indicates the factors that led to an empowered consumer online.

2.4 Consumer Empowerment

2.4.1 The Evolution of Consumer Empowerment

Online communities that entail consumers sharing knowledge about a collective interest, have led to increasing social interaction and the empowered consumer voice (Stokburger-Sauer and Wiertz, 2015; Li, 2016). A few pioneering studies that discuss OC literature within their study, anticipated a power shift from an organisation to a consumer (Bakos, 1991; Kozinets, 1999; Levine et al., 2000). Labrecque et al. (2013) argue that the plethora of information within OCs is easily accessed by consumers via the internet, which has in turn substantially influenced the consumers' life offline and online. For instance, consequent to the emergence of consumer empowerment, this has led to a consumer-firm relationship (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Akhavannasab et al., 2018). A consumer-firm relationship incorporates the concept of co-production, which consists of the consumer sharing information about a new product with the organisation, in turn co-producing with the organisation (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012).

The evolution of consumer empowerment is evidenced within Quinton and Simkin's (2016) study that discusses four stages ranging from "Wake Up and Starting Out" to "Early Reflections", the latter is illustrated within Figure 2.1. Quinton and Simkin (2016) suggest that the letter home at the end of the evolutionary stages comprises of reflecting back, and acknowledges the power shift from brands to consumers. The recent study further elaborates on consumers' knowledge sharing within an OC within the third stage of the model labelled as "Travelling Companions and Communities", and indicates a relationship between knowledge sharing which leads to consumer empowerment (Quinton and Simkin, 2016). Further research is warranted to understand the connection between the two latter concepts. Thus, this study aims to examine the interplay between consumers' knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment, to deliver a comprehension towards which concept is an antecedent alongside what concept is a consequence of another.

According to Labrecque et al.'s (2013) study, the momentous shift that empowered the online consumer has resulted in an evolution of four distinct power sources within an online platform. Labrecque et al. (2013) conducted a systematic literature review of high-quality managerial and academic journals, as a result the study identified four sources of consumer power. In ascending order, the following power sources that originate from Labrecque et al.'s (2013) examination entail, two individual-based sources which include, “demand-based power” and “information-based power”, that advance to, two network-based sources comprising, “network-based power” and “crowd-based power”. Thus, the study’s proposed power sources indicate the progression of an individualistic interaction to a community centric social interaction. Labrecque et al.’s (2013) findings corroborate with a recent study by Quinton and Simkin (2016), that indicate a consumers’ solitary journey online to a collective and communal interaction within an OC. Quinton and Simkin (2016) argue that as a result of the social interaction this empowers the consumer online, the study further reflects on the power shift online from an organisation to a consumer. Thus, aligning with Labrecque et al.’s (2013) findings. Hence, it can be suggested that Figure 2.1 derived from Quinton and Simkin (2016) which illustrates the “Digital Journey Map”, portrays a similar passage to Labrecque et al.’s (2013) evolution of four consumer power sources. Figure 2.2 below illustrates the “Evolution of Consumer Power Sources”.

Figure 2.2: Evolution of Consumer Power Sources

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. Pages where material has been removed are clearly marked in the electronic version. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

(Sourced from: Labrecque et al., 2013)

The model illustrates consumer empowerment which has evolved across four sources of consumer power. Firstly, via individual-based sources which entails “demand-based power” and “information-based power”, which later progresses into two network-based sources which are “network-based power” and “crowd-based power” (Labrecque et al., 2013). The momentous growth of the internet is demonstrated within the initial stage of the evolution which is labelled demand-based power (Day, 2011). The preliminary stage signifies the growth of consumption and purchase behaviour that has arose within the internet. The ubiquitous growth of information about products is demonstrated within the second process, labelled as information-based power. Labrecque et al. (2013) propose that the second stage enables the great expansion of information, which has subsequently led to the shortened product lifecycle. The second stage depicts the consumer’s empowerment, via the significant access that the consumer has within the online environment. Alongside, consumers sense of empowerment as a result of the ability to praise or compliment others (Grégoire et al., 2010), and advocate social causes that they are passionate about (Schau and Gilly, 2003; Li, 2018).

The third stage of the evolution entails the content dissemination between consumers which consists of knowledge sharing and interactivity, for instance, commenting on ‘posts’. Labrecque et al. (2013) claims that the third stage demonstrates the consumer’s power in terms of actions, for instance, social interactivity and knowledge sharing. In consideration of this study, the third stage network-based power demonstrates how knowledge sharing empowers the consumer’s voice within an OC. The stage further entails consumers’ empowerment as a result of a sense of influencing others (Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson, 2012), and using social media tools such as ‘hashtags’, ‘likes’, ‘retweets’ and sharing blogs (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; James et al., 2011; Goldenberg et al., 2012). Finally, the last stage comprises of the structuring of resources between consumers, which benefits the grouping of members, this signifies crowd-based power which entails crowd-creation, crowd-selling, crowd-support and crowd-funding (Mathwick et al., 2007; Seog and Hyun, 2009; Labrecque et al., 2013).

The studies presented thus far provide evidence of the empowered consumer which has resulted from the rapid growth of the internet, and consumer access to a ubiquitous amount of information. These studies clearly indicate that there has been a surging progression of empowerment online, which has resulted from a power shift from an organisation to a consumer. This study aims to understand what form of power source consumers demonstrate within an OC, in order to deliver a comprehension towards consumer empowerment within a green clothing OC.

The following sub-section explores literature which defines the empowered consumer which has resulted from an online power shift.

2.4.2 The Empowered Online Consumer: The Power Shift

The ubiquitous connectivity of the internet which is evident within an OC has allowed consumers to access a significant amount of information, voice their opinion, and engage with others within the online platform (Pires et al., 2006; Chan and Li, 2010; Labrecque et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2015). Consequently, previous studies demonstrate that the substantial amount of information available within the internet has amplified consumer empowerment and ignited the power shift online (Pires et al., 2006; Quinton, 2013; Li 2018).

A prior study highlights the momentous amount of power a consumer achieves within the internet, when defining the consumer as an “empowered, internet-enabled, passionate consumer” (Quinton, 2013:914). According to Quinton (2013), the power shift has led to

consumers looking to each other to inform their decision-making rather than companies, which has resulted in a brand's diminished power. Hence, evidencing the empowered consumer and the emergence of a counter culture against "brand tyranny" (Lim, 2009). A number of studies have postulated a convergence between the power shift and an accumulation of back-and-forth threads between an organisation and consumer, consumer to consumer and brand to consumer, which has led to the empowered consumer (Belk, 2013; Quinton and Simkin, 2016). The different exchanges of communication portray the consumer as a pivotal influencer within the conversation (Belk, 2013; Akhavannasab et al., 2018). A number of studies have explored consumer empowerment via a managerial perspective, that have found that the empowered consumer has influenced brands basic components of brand management, in order to embrace the revived consumer-brand relationship (Kucuk, 2009). Likewise, Cova and Pace (2006) and Hatch and Schultz (2010) both indicate that the predominant flow of communication is from the consumer to the brand, which leads to the brands altering their online strategies. Literature further indicates that online consumers have an elevated power within an OC, due to their situated role within an OC that entails sharing information with the brand or organisation (Kucuk, 2009; Quinton, 2013).

Collectively, these studies outline a managerial perspective towards the magnitude of the empowered consumer online, and the consequences of the power shift for brand management. However, there is a paucity of literature that explores consumer empowerment from a consumer perspective that delivers an insight into why consumers are empowered. Thus, this study intends to conduct a qualitative research design to comprehend why and to what extent consumers are empowered within an OC. Alongside, examining the factors that lead to their sense of empowerment. Furthermore, this study aims to explore how the aspect of a power shift interplays with consumer empowerment within a green clothing OC and consumers communication with organisations. Hence, this study aims to build upon Quinton (2013) and Quinton and Simkin's (2016) studies to comprehend the inter-relationship between the power shift and consumer empowerment, in order to establish the drivers that lead to consumer empowerment.

The ensuing section examines green literature and analyses prior studies to determine a definition of the term green.

2.5 Green Literature

2.5.1 Review of Literature: Green, Ethical, Sustainable and Pro-Environmental

Over the past decade, there has been a proliferation in academic literature that discusses the concept of green. The majority of prior studies evidence an array of terminology that interplay with the concept of green, such terms include ethical, sustainable and pro-environmental. This study intends to use the understanding of green in relation to this thesis context of green clothing, and considers the term pro-environmental. The latter is due to prior literature that demonstrates the overlapping between both green and pro-environmental, as both concepts entail consumers' concern for the environment. This research synthesises prior literature to develop a definition of green for the understanding of this research, which is shown at the end of Section 2.5.

Green literature demonstrates the overlapping similarities between the terms green and ethical, due to the overarching element of consumers' concern towards the environment (Newholm and Shaw, 2007; Papaoikonomou et al., 2012; Pinto et al., 2019). However, an ethical consumer demonstrates concerns towards the society as a whole, entailing concerns towards animal welfare, labour practices, Fairtrade issues and the supply chain of the product (Auger and Devinney, 2007; Newholm and Shaw, 2007). In comparison to a green consumer, whose concerns are solely towards the environment and reducing their impact on the environment (Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Moraes et al., 2012). Therefore, conveying the differing characteristics of a green consumer compared to an ethical consumer.

Recent literature sheds light on the overlapping nature of the terms, green consumption and sustainability. A current study argues that sustainability encourages green consumption, hence, indicating that green consumption is a sub-set of sustainability (Cho, 2015). According to Sisodia et al. (2007), sustainability contrasts to the term green concern, as sustainability consists of a drive towards environmental practices for the future rather than just the present. Additionally, sustainability and green differ due to the complex nature of sustainability, which consists of a concern towards encouraging further eco-innovation within practices and production (Joshi and Rahman, 2015). Overall, within sustainability literature there is a drive towards future concerns rather than just present concerns towards the environment, as sustainability literature demonstrates a life-cycle of how to be sustainable (Cho, 2015). Considering this study exploring green clothing, the latter discussion demonstrates that green clothing entails a reduced environmental footprint and the consideration towards apparels at the present time, rather than just the future.

The concept of green shares a significant resemblance with the term pro-environmental. Recent studies discuss the similarities between the concepts pro-environmental and green due to the most prominent attribute which is the over-arching element of consumers' concern for the environment, and because consumers who perceive themselves to be pro-environmental have the intention to be green and purchase green products (Culiberg and Elgaaied-Gambier, 2016; Arli et al., 2018). The close similarity between both terms is so significant, that recent literature has used the terms interchangeably within their studies (Bamberg and Möser, 2007; Whitmarsh and O'Neill, 2010; Culiberg and Elgaaied-Gambier, 2016). Within green literature, the term pro-environmental demonstrates environmental concerns that are derived from a consumer perspective, such as, within the production process of a product (Stern, 2000). Thus, aligning with past literature that a product is labelled green when regarding the manufacturing process (Hailes, 2007). Additionally, the concerns of a pro-environmental consumer are similar, for instance, interests towards the consumers impact on the eco-system (Bamberg and Möser, 2007). Furthermore, Cho's (2015) study argues that green is a sub-set of pro-environmental, further suggesting that a consumer partaking in a green activity such as green consumption reflects pro-environmental behaviour. Nevertheless, the term pro-environmental differs to green, due to pro-environmental consisting of consumers' concerns towards health, species within the environment and other people (Bamberg and Möser, 2007). These concerns can be suggested to relate to ethical concerns, therefore, portraying a link between the terms ethical and pro-environmental (Newholm and Shaw, 2007). This study intends to consider the term pro-environmental due to the resemblances with the concept of green, however, this thesis is aware of the disparities between both terms as green clothing does not relate to the impact on health and other species within the environment.

Overall, it can be viewed that green consumption is a sub-set to three types of green terminology: ethical, sustainable and pro-environmental. This study will be conscious of the similarities and differences of green with additional concepts, when exploring consumers' terminology related to green clothing within an OC. Subsequently, this thesis aims to examine consumers' green concerns and pro-environmental behaviour in relation to the exploration of consumers' drive to share knowledge about green clothing.

The subsequent section explores green terminology literature, in particular, the concept of green consumer, followed by green consumption and green product.

2.5.2 Green Terminologies: Green Consumer, Green Consumption and Green Product

Within green literature, a green consumer is defined as a consumer who expresses traits of environmental concern (Bohlen et al., 1993). Therefore, seeking a product that fulfils these concerns by purchasing a product that has a low impact on the environment (Roberts, 1996). A prior study by DEFRA (2008) illustrates 7 segments within the UK, which divides the population into consumer categories that have green concerns. The study found that 18% of the UK population which equates to 7.4 million people are “positive greens”, this segment indicates a green consumer due to their pro-environmental attitudes and perceptions (DEFRA, 2008). Alongside, the portion of consumers being the least motivated by saving money when undertaking pro-environmental behaviour, and are the most likely to influence their friends and family (DEFRA, 2008). The remaining consumers segments within DEFRA’s (2008) study evidenced a lack of environmental concern and indicated that pro-environmental behaviour would not fit within their lifestyle, and were motivated by their desire to reduce waste and save water, electricity and money. This study aims to explore consumers who align to the “positive greens”, whom have environmental concerns and undertake pro-environmental behaviour in relation to clothing. This thesis aims to examine consumers’ green concerns and behaviour via a green clothing OC, alongside comprehending consumers’ drive to share knowledge about their green values and behaviour.

Recent green literature demonstrates a consumer’s green consumption behaviour. Moisander (2007) defines green consumption as a consumer purchasing, using and disposing of the green product or green service, with the intention of a reduced impact on the environment. Thus, demonstrating the clear stages of a green consumer’s concern towards a green product, resulting in the behaviour of green consumption (Arli et al., 2018). Likewise, Moraes et al. (2012) define green consumption as a consumer behaviour that entails consumer’s concerns to reduce their environmental footprint, by reusing, reducing and recycling goods and produce. Within both prior definitions, the factors of a consumer’s behaviour are predominantly reusing and reducing of consumer goods, which infers using less of a product to limit the consumer’s environmental impact (Johnstone and Hooper, 2016; Perera et al., 2018). Additionally, Jaiswal (2012) discusses the causal relationship between a green consumer, green consumption and green product, the study reveals that a consumer’s environmental concern leads to a willingness to consume an ecological product.

Furthermore, green literature conveys the overlapping nature of green consumption and ethical consumption. A recent study reveals that green consumption is a subset of ethical consumption (Carrington et al., 2010). Due to the similar nature of consumer's environmental concerns which are immanent within green and ethical literature. Both consumption practices are similar due to consumer's attitudes towards reducing or minimising their impact on the environment (Newholm and Shaw, 2007; Sebastiani et al., 2013; Carrington et al., 2016). In the same vein, a recent study by Lu et al. (2015) propose a research model which demonstrates that ethical beliefs lead to green consumption, which is stated within their model as 'green buying intention'. Figure 2.3 below illustrates Lu et al.'s (2015) research model, that proposes the relationship between ethical beliefs and green consumption.

Figure 2.3: Research Model: Relationship between Consumer Ethical Beliefs and Green Buying Intention

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. Pages where material has been removed are clearly marked in the electronic version. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

(Sourced from: Lu et al., 2015)

Lu et al. (2015) suggest that green buying intention is dependent on consumers ethical beliefs, the study suggests that a green buying intention can lead to pro-environmental behaviour. The study acknowledges prior literature which indicates that environmental awareness is a factor within ethical beliefs, thus, suggesting when consumers have a high ethical awareness this leads to green consumption (Vitell and Muncy, 2005; D'Souza et al., 2007; Arli et al., 2018; Zou and Chan, 2019). However, both ethical and green consumption differ. For instance, ethical consumption entails consumer concern towards the society as a whole. Such concerns consist of religious and political motives (Honkanen et al., 2006), and towards workers' rights (Shaw and Shiu, 2002; Carrington et al., 2010). In comparison, green consumption relates directly to the consumers' environmental concerns towards reducing or minimising their impact on the environment (Moraes et al., 2012; Johnstone and

Tan, 2015). Collectively, the studies reviewed demonstrate a relationship between green and ethical consumption, however, both terms are differentiated in terms of consumers overall concerns. This study intends to explore consumers' green consumption, though is mindful of the possible overlap of consumers' concerns towards ethical consumption.

Past studies within green literature discuss consumers voluntary consumption of green products. For instance, a recent study demonstrates that green consumers with environmental concerns, are voluntarily willing to incur the significant cost of a green product compared to a traditional product (Griskevicius et al., 2010). Motives surrounding consumers willing to endure a cost, consist of a consumer's perception of the product benefiting the society and the environment (Griskevicius et al., 2010). A green product is defined as consisting of a production process of a product which has a reduced or minimal impact on the environment (Shamdasani et al., 1993; Griskevicius et al., 2010; Jaiswal, 2012; Joshi and Rahman, 2015). According to Hailes (2007) the manufacture of a product is taken into account when consumers purchase a green product. For instance, the study reveals that a green consumer has concerns towards the manufacturing of the product and its impact on the environment (Hailes, 2007). Furthermore, recent academic literature outlines the process of a green product which has a reduced impact on the environment, such as, the materials used during manufacturing are safer on the environment and consist of green attributes such as being recyclable (Chen and Chai, 2010; Johnstone and Tan, 2015). Concerning, the end process of a product that comprises of the packaging and marketing communications, Chen and Chai (2010) suggest that less packaging used on products minimises the environmental impact, and 'greens' the product. Furthermore, Hailes (2007) argues that prior research indicates that a green consumer avoids a product that has a risk towards the environment. Likewise, additional studies suggest that a green consumer would opt for a product that has green attributes and a minimised impact on the environment (Schlegelmilch et al., 1996; Akehurst et al., 2012). Compared to the consumer's traditional choice, which may not consist of green attributes. Hence, research conveys a clear relational link between a green consumer and their positive attitudes towards a green product. Considering the literature reviewed in this sub-section, this study aims to examine consumers' drive to share knowledge about green clothing products, alongside consumers use of the specific information related to the green clothing products.

Prior studies within green literature suggest that the term ethical product portrays similarities to the term green product. For instance, both terms consist of the overarching concept of the

reduced impact on the environment (Newholm and Shaw, 2007; Papaoikonomou et al., 2012). However, green literature evidences the differences between the terms, ethical and green product. For example, an ethical product consists of certifications and labels on products, such certifications demonstrate ethical concerns which are for the society as a whole (Auger and Devinney, 2007; Newholm and Shaw, 2007). The labels and certifications highlight consumer's concern towards the environment, labour practices, animal welfare and development and Fairtrade issues surrounding production, and the supply chain of product (Newholm and Shaw, 2007). Examples of ethical certifications are, "Fair Trade", "Free Range", "Rain Forest Alliance", "Forest Stewardship Council" and the "Marine Stewardship Council" (Mintel, 2015). Therefore, the term ethical product portrays consumers contrasting motivations towards purchasing products, in comparison to the term green product revised at the start of the sub-section. This thesis considers prior literature that explored the concept of an ethical product, in order to understand how the terms green and ethical product differentiate. This study aims to solely explores consumers' knowledge sharing in relation to green clothing that entails alternative green products.

This study uses the following definition of the term green, for the purpose of this thesis's understanding the green terminology that consumers indicate when sharing knowledge within a green clothing OC. The definition entails consumer's concern towards the environment and their desire to reduce their impact on the environment:

A consumer lifestyle choice which consists of consumer's concerns towards the consumption and disposal of a product which includes the factors of reducing and reusing. With the overall aim of reducing or minimising their impact on the environment.

The following section discusses ecological citizenship. The theory closely aligns with green literature due to the ecological citizenship theory entailing consumers who champion their green concerns and actively promote pro-environmental behaviour amongst the public.

2.6 Ecological Citizenship Theory

This study uses the ecological citizenship theory to understand how and why consumers share knowledge about green clothing and are empowered within a green clothing OC. The following section proposes to demonstrate a thorough understanding of ecological citizenship, and further evidences how the theory fits with this study. This section highlights

the correspondence between the study's pivotal concepts of OCs, knowledge sharing, consumer empowerment and green literature.

The following section illuminates the background to ecological citizenship, highlighting the original concept of citizenship in which ecological citizenship was an added dimension. Further revealing current criticisms and definitions of ecological citizenship.

2.6.1 Evolution of Ecological Citizenship from Citizenship

Marshall (1950) introduced the theory of citizenship. Kymlicka and Norman (1994: 354) define citizenship as a “post-war political theory... defined entirely in terms of the possession of rights”. The three types of citizenship that were introduced by Marshall (1950) were, civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship. Within these three aspects, citizenship entails seven types of behaviour, these are: a helping behaviour, sportsmanship, organisational loyalty, compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue [morality or righteous behaviour] and self-development (Pearce and Herbig, 2004). The theory exerts a definition of a consumer from a political stance, due to the theory primarily being used within studies that investigate and explore phenomena from a political viewpoint (van Steenbergen, 1994). The theory can be used by studies in order to examine a phenomenon at a group and individual level (George and Bettenhausen, 1990; George and Brief, 1992; George, 2000; Pearce and Herbig, 2004). Within a prior study, Xu et al. (2012) use the citizenship behaviour theory as a lens to explore consumers' knowledge sharing at a group level. Thus, demonstrating a study that employs citizenship theory to explore knowledge sharing within an online phenomenon.

Ecological citizenship was added by van Steenbergen (1994) as a fourth dimension to Marshall's (1950) citizenship theory. Ecological citizenship was added because Marshall's (1950) third dimension 'social' was heavily criticised, due to pressures towards the environment that occurred within the 1980s alongside the altered developments and problems related to ecological concerns (van Steenbergen, 1994). The added concept of 'cultural' was also added to the theory of citizenship (van Steenbergen, 1994). Within van Steenbergen's (1994) book, the author argued that ecological citizenship had been touched upon by two prior authors (Dahrendorf, 1990; Falk, 1992), however, failed to expand on the concept into an extra dimension like themselves. According to Dahrendorf (1990) there should be a move towards a livable environment and towards sustainable development, however, van Steenbergen (1994) considers the impact this may have on the entitlements of citizenship. Whereas, Falk (1992) discusses the concept of the global consumer who

highlights environmental problems, the study entails two factors, firstly, managerial which suggests that the environment is in danger, and secondly, the environmental activist. van Steenbergen (1994) takes both prior studies into consideration and suggests that there are two global environmental citizens. The author distinguishes the first as an “earth citizen” who is aware of their place as a living organism on the earth (van Steenbergen, 1994). Followed by a second concept of an “global environmental citizen” often termed as the global citizen that refers to the earth as a “big science”, the concept comprises of two factors which are “care” and “humans” as participants (van Steenbergen, 1994). This study considers the two global environmental citizens in relation to the green literature, due to this study exploring consumers’ knowledge sharing within a green clothing context. Relating to green literature, this study will not adopt the full understanding of a “big science” as prior literature defines green as not entailing care towards humans and health. Rather the concept of green comprises consumers’ concerns towards the environment at the present time and the desire to reduce consumers’ environment impact via pro-environmental behaviour, that entails green consumption and purchasing of green products.

Ecological citizenship demonstrates an opposing definition of a citizen to Marshall’s (1950) study, ecological citizenship comprises of a more sociological definition in comparison to citizenship which consists of a political stance. For instance, ecological citizenship emphasises the citizen’s duties rather than rights, in comparison to Marshall’s (1950) citizenship behaviour theory that stressing the citizen’s rights (Falk, 1992). However, both theoretical concepts are similar due to the studies being able to examine a phenomenon at both an individual and group level (van Steenbergen, 1994). Considering this study’s social constructivist position, the thesis intends to explore consumers’ drive to share knowledge within an OC, that entails consumers’ collective communication, engagement and reciprocity. Thus, the ecological citizenship theory fits this study’s philosophical underpinning and aligns with the research aims.

In more recent years, ecological citizenship has received criticism from Dobson (2000) who reviewed numerous literatures to determine the ecological citizen within the present day. Dobson (2000) critiques van Steenbergen (1994) study, as “trying” to add a fourth dimension to Marshall’s (1950) study and argues that the study is prevented from seeing what is “genuinely interesting” about ecological citizenship. Dobson (2000) suggests that van Steenbergen (1994) loses sight of the interesting aspects of ecological citizenship, because the author focused too much on Marshall’s (1950) framework. A review of past studies by

Dobson (2000) that examined ecological citizenship, led to the study building upon prior literature and denouncing the reliability and applicability of additional authors' perspective. Similar to van Steenberg (1994), Twine (1994) was criticised for missing the opportunity to demonstrate a relationship between the environment and citizenship. However, Dobson (2000) agreed with Smith's (1998) study, the latter study suggested that ecological citizenship evidences a new obligation to politics, that further stresses a human obligation to the environment, animals, oceans and trees. Nevertheless, Smith (1998) lacks an in-depth exploration due to only four pages within the author's book which discuss ecological citizenship, therefore warranting Dobson's further investigation.

Dobson (2000) indicates that ecological citizenship combines the following phenomena, these are, environmental policies, citizenship and consumer culture (Turner, 1993; Kymlicka and Norman, 1994). According to Dobson (2003), ecological citizenship comprises of a post-cosmopolitan de-territorialised citizen who entails feminine virtues of compassion and care, and has concerns towards their ecological footprint. Furthermore, proposing that an ecological citizen demonstrates their conscious choice and stresses their responsibilities and rights towards the environment (Kenis, 2016), this is expressed within the following definition. An ecological citizen is rights-claiming and responsibility-exercising, who occupies the public sphere and takes the nation state as the political container of citizenship (Dobson, 2003; Lummis et al., 2017). An ecological citizen is further expressed as a consumer who has a 'return to duty' perspective who advocates that global citizens should take responsibility (Goldblatt, 1997; Dobson, 2003; Howles et al., 2018). Prior literature demonstrates that Dobson (2003) provided a distinction between the liberal and cosmopolitan tradition that entails an ecological citizen who is aware of global environmental problems, alongside care and compassion being central factors (Dobson et al., 2005). The recent definition by Dobson (2000; 2003) built upon van Steenberg's (1994: 141) prior explanations that states "an ecological citizen participates in public life which is broader than the political life" and is an "extension of citizenship rights which includes non-human beings", and "demonstrates voluntary or discretionary behaviours". Thus, Dobson's (2000) definition that aligns with van Steenberg's (1994) study suggests that the citizen's care for the environment and society is fundamental. This thesis intends to build upon both studies understanding of ecological citizenship, in particular, this research considers Dobson's (2000; 2003; et al., 2005) papers due to the author evidencing an ecological citizen within recent years. In particular, this study aims to contribute to previous

studies' understanding of an ecological citizen within a green clothing OC. Moreover, the un-reciprocal aspect of an ecological citizen whom engaging with others, distinguishes ecological citizenship from Marshall's (1950) description of citizenship (Dobson 2000). The latter aligns with this study's aim to explore consumers' reciprocating behaviours, as previous literature demonstrates that users reciprocate within an OC to help and support others and not because of a desire to receive a reply (Shumaker and Brownell, 1984; Chan and Li, 2010).

Furthermore, prior literature indicates that ecological citizenship is commonly used by researchers to address phenomena's such as, social class, gender, society, new forms of social inclusion, education, religion, nationalism and other concepts which are a problem, or new relations that the public face today (van Steenbergen, 1994; Carlsson and Jensen, 2006; Gabrielson, 2008; Howles et al., 2018). This study's aim to examine consumers' drive to share knowledge within a green clothing OC which illustrates a new phenomenon that is of topical interest today, due to consumers increasing awareness about green clothing, along with industry and the government implementing a 'greener' fashion supply chain (UK Parliament, 2018; Thorisdottir and Johannsdottir, 2019). Also, as a result of the lack of academic and managerial understanding towards the drivers of consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing context. This study can therefore be suggested as a new relational topic that we are facing today which warrants future research. Previous studies (Dobson, 2000; Rokka and Moisander, 2009) indicate that ecological citizenship is an underused and undervalued theory within current studies to explain consumers' green concerns and pro-environmental behaviour. Thus, the former studies further evidence the call for future research to use ecological citizenship as a theoretical concept to comprehend consumers' knowledge sharing in relation to green behaviour and concerns.

2.6.2 Consumers' Awareness of Ecological Problems: The Importance of Ecological Citizenship in the Present Day

Recent research reviews Dobson's (2000; 2003; et al., 2005) critiques of extant research exploring ecological citizenship. Both Sáiz (2005) and Gabrielson (2008) discuss within their studies the importance of ecological citizenship, and the shift in understanding an ecological citizen within recent years. Both authors are in agreement within Dobson's (2000; 2003) interpretation of ecological citizenship, and the neoliberal political status of the citizen. These prior studies agreement within Dobson (2000), further validates this study proposing to use Dobson's (2000; 2003; et al., 2005) critiques of van Steenbergen (1994)

and additional prior research, as an underlying understanding of ecological citizenship. Sáiz (2005) adds to Dobson's (2000) review, by further emphasizing how ecological citizenship has developed in the present day, and demonstrates a comprehensive overview of why the concept is important in current times. For instance, the impacts of globalisation on the environment is a current problem, which calls for a shift in green political theory and global politics (Goldblatt, 1997; Held and McGrew, 2002; Sáiz, 2005). Alongside issues such as climate change and the destruction of the ozone layer and ecosystem that demands a global cooperation to find solutions, and society's growing awareness of the contemporary environmental crisis that poses challenges which needs humanity to make changes (Sáiz, 2005; Howles et al., 2018; Karatekin and Uysal, 2018). This study explores a current global problem that is the environmental impact of fast fashion, that has caused catastrophic implications across the world as a result of heightened manufacturing, increased demand in consumption, caring of the garment and disposing of the garment (Claudio, 2007). Hence, ecological citizenship is a suitable theory for this study to use to understand consumers' drive to share knowledge about green clothing, whom advocates alternative pro-environmental behaviour to consuming fast fashion.

Sáiz (2005) suggests that the evolution of the term ecological citizenship, is due to consumers' growing awareness towards ecological problems, in particular, the author suggests that the latter have become the domain of global governance. Ecological citizenship is proposed within Sáiz's (2005:165) study as being "underdeveloped" and "still under construction", the study suggests that this is due to the prior arguments that contest the relationship between ecological citizenship and citizenship. Dobson (2000) refers to the link between ecological citizenship and liberalism, similarly, Sáiz (2005) demonstrates within their study that ecological citizenship is linked to democracy and political globalisation. Sáiz (2005) establishes a strong argument of why ecological citizenship was formed, which entails the two following points of view, these are, firstly, environmental problems being a global issue, and, secondly, reflecting a "global age" also termed as globalisation (Delanty, 1997; Held and McGrew, 2002). Due to the significant link between the theory and liberal democracy, Sáiz (2005:191) defines the citizen within the theory as having "the responsibilities and obligations of the citizen in the framework of a sustainable society and in relation to underrepresented collectives, as well as its socialising role as a facilitator of ecologically conscious citizens (Kenis, 2016). It is about, then, an active citizenship which must go hand-in-hand with an extension of political participation". This definition portrays

similarities with Dobson's (2000) critique of an ecological citizen. Therefore, Sáiz's (2005) study further evidences the usability and validity of this study undertaking Dobson's (2000) critique of ecological citizenship. Furthermore, a recent study by Gabrielson (2008), suggests that Dobson's work about ecological citizenship is commendable and admirable. Gabrielson (2008) proposes that Dobson's research propositions the aspects of globalisation, politics and demonstrates a thorough explanation of the current citizen, which adds to the validity of his work.

Thus, recent studies demonstrate the credibility of Dobson's (2000) review of ecological citizenship, and highlight the relevance of Dobson's (2000; 2003; et al., 2005) critiques. Nevertheless, it can be suggested that the two studies (Sáiz; 2005; Gabrielson; 2008) demonstrate the applicability in 2005 and 2008, thus, both studies do not advocate a present view and warrant a current exploration. This study proposes to explore Dobson's (2000; 2003; et al., 2005) review of an ecological citizen within the present day, further adding to the validity of using the author's critique. Also, this study aims to explore if Dobson's (2000) review reflects the ecological citizen of today.

The succeeding section outlines the similarities between knowledge sharing literature, and ecological citizenship literature. Further demonstrating the applicability of this study proposing to use ecological citizenship to understand the social phenomenon.

2.6.3 The Role of Knowledge Sharing within Ecological Citizenship

Within this study, the aspect of knowledge sharing aligns with previous studies rationale of ecological citizenship. The theory discusses aspects of consumers' significant awareness surrounding the impact of globalisation, which entails the sharing of knowledge around the world, and the progressing awareness surrounding ecological problems (van Steenbergen 1994; Dobson, 2000; Sáiz, 2005). It can be suggested that due to the sharing of knowledge, and content creation of consumers thoughts surrounding globalisation and ecological impact, this has in turn created an "ecological citizen" (Delanty, 1997; Held and McGrew, 2002; Sáiz, 2005; Lummis et al., 2017). Thus, demonstrating a new type of liberal citizen to be added to Marshall's (1950) citizenship theory. Dobson (2000) discusses an ecological citizen's characteristics that are similarly portrayed within the knowledge sharing literature. For instance, an ecological citizen is rights-claiming and wants to exert their responsibility more liberally (Dobson, 2000), compared to a citizen within the citizenship theory (Marshall, 1950). The rights claiming citizen described by Dobson (2000) is evidenced within Cervellon and Wernerfelt's (2012) study, that examines knowledge sharing within

the context of sustainable fashion. The study reveals that consumers who partake in co-consumption within a green OC consider themselves as a major actor of the development of sustainable initiatives (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). Thus, the latter demonstrates an ecological citizen who is empowered and exerts a responsibility towards their green concerns.

Additionally, Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) suggest two aspects of knowledge sharing, these are, co-production and co-consumption. The co-consumed concept which entails consumers publicly communicating their knowledge to the OC consumers, is reflected within Dobson's (2000) critique of an ecological citizen. For instance, according to Dobson (2000) an ecological citizen occupies the public sphere and takes the nation state as the political container of citizenship. Hence, the former definition demonstrates a citizen who is obliged by their responsibilities, and evidences that they are active and are doer's by sharing knowledge and speaking out (Dobson, 2000). Furthermore, shedding light on how consumers are voicing their concerns within a "public sphere" this can suggest an OC, as the online platform is public and is an open platform to share concerns.

Previous studies (Shim, 1995; Paulins and Hillery, 2009) reveal that consumers who demonstrate a responsible behaviour and concern towards the environment, have more knowledge about ecological problems and how to overcome such issues. Therefore, prior studies evidence that a consumer with an environmental conscience who obtains an abundance of knowledge surrounding ecological problems are likely to distribute that information, these characteristics are depicted within recent studies that explore an ecological citizen (van Steenberg, 1994; Dobson, 2000; Sáiz, 2005; Gabrielson, 2008). Therefore, demonstrating the likeness between the consumers who share knowledge within a green clothing OC and the ecological citizen, who also communicate their responsibilities by sharing knowledge. Thus, the appropriateness of using ecological citizenship as an understanding for this study is shown, as an ecological citizen and a green clothing OC consumer demonstrate similar characteristics and behaviours. The studies presented thus far provide evidence that reiterates the fit of this study using ecological citizenship theory to understand consumers' drive to share knowledge within a green clothing OC.

The subsequent section concludes Chapter 2 and summarises the discussions that were presented that relate to: OCs, knowledge sharing, consumer empowerment, green literature and ecological citizenship.

2.7 Summary

2.7.1 Review of the Literature

To conclude, the chapter initially explores OC literature. Primarily delivering an understanding into the significant growth of the internet, and proposing a definition of the term OC. Within the literature exploring OCs, the rapid evolution of the internet is conveyed which has led to a substantial amount of OCs. Prior studies evidence the interchangeable use of terms OC and VC. As a result, the study proposes a hybrid definition of the term OC, which synthesises prior studies definitions of OC and VC. Below is the definition which this study proposes to use:

An online platform which is used as a social environment consisting of people who gather together, based upon their shared practices and norms of behaviour. The communal atmosphere provides a space for people to interact and share information, ideas, advice and common interests.

Furthermore, this study reviews previous literature that discusses the concept of knowledge sharing within OCs. As a result of examining prior studies that define the term knowledge sharing, this study proposes to use the following definition by Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) as an understanding: a content creation or social interaction by a consumer within an OC. This study uses Cervellon and Wernferfelt's (2012) definition due to the commonality the study has with this study's context of green clothing and the exploration into knowledge sharing within an OC. Thus, validating the suitability of the definition for this study's understanding. This study reviews literature that discusses the evolution of consumers' knowledge sharing within an OC, that entails users shift from sharing beliefs and thoughts (Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012), to distributing factual information because of their desire to learn (Kaiser and Fuhrer, 2003; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Kong et al., 2016). This study aims to examine if consumers' knowledge sharing aligns with the current findings that entail consumers sharing factual and objective information. Moreover, the exploration into two aspects of knowledge sharing is revealed, these are, co-consumed (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Pitta and Fowler, 2005; Füller et al., 2008; Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2009) and co-produced (Thomke and Von Hippel, 2002; Libert and Spector, 2007; Quinton, 2013). This study intends to explore co-consumed knowledge sharing, due to exploring the online phenomenon from a consumer perspective, however, considers co-production as an alternative type of knowledge sharing that is conveyed by consumers.

This study discusses prior literature that examines the drivers of consumers' knowledge sharing. As a result, this study identifies a research gap that warrants future exploration into understanding consumers' drive to share knowledge within an OC from a consumer perspective (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). In particular, Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) and Rokka and Moisander (2009) invite future research to explore knowledge sharing within a green OC. This study aims to contribute to Wang and Fesenmaier (2004), Chan and Li (2010) and Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) findings that indicate that hedonic, social and functional participatory benefits drive consumers' knowledge sharing within an OC. This study intends to examine how and to what extent the three participatory benefits drive consumers' knowledge sharing, and to explore the interplay between the three participatory benefits within a green clothing OC.

Furthermore, this study explores prior research that discusses the importance of reciprocity that results in a thriving OC, and the impact of reciprocity on knowledge sharing which has been found to lead to consumers' attitude and behaviour change (Mangleburg et al., 2004; Chan and Li, 2010). This study proposes to build upon Chan and Li's (2010) study that found that an experiential route of interactivity has a positive impact on consumers' reciprocity and knowledge sharing within OCs. In particular, Chan and Li's (2010) findings evidence that SBEI is slightly more significant than enjoyment, which is another factor within the experiential route of interactivity. Hence, the study does not confirm if SBEI is the most important, as the factor enjoyment closely follows within their findings. Thus, this study intends to understand if consumers are driven by an experiential route of interactivity which leads to reciprocating behaviours, in particular, to comprehend if SBEI or enjoyment is the most important aspect within the overarching concept. Alongside, delivering an insight into additional factors that may facilitate or hinder reciprocity. This research further aims to examine if consumers demonstrate a potential attitude or behaviour change, as a result of reciprocating behaviours and knowledge sharing.

Additionally, the concept of consumer empowerment is examined which is discussed by current research as a pivotal aspect that drives consumers' knowledge sharing within the digital era (Quinton, 2013; Labcreque et al., 2015; Quinton and Simkin, 2016). Previous literature evidences the shift from an organisation to a consumer, thus, resulting in a renewed customer-brand relationship (Kucuk, 2009). Due to the growth of the internet which has given rise to knowledge sharing within OCs, consumers evidence that they want their voice heard by organisations and a desire engage with community members to support one-

another's decision-making (Quinton, 2013). The section further demonstrates the importance of consumer empowerment, and indicates the call for future research to explore consumer empowerment from a consumer perspective. Thus, this study proposes to examine consumer empowerment and the interplay with consumer's knowledge sharing within a green clothing OC. The research further intends to provide additional insight into other factors that may lead to consumer empowerment.

Moreover, this study discusses green terminology and reviews literature that indicates additional terminology that overlap with the term green, these are, ethical, sustainable and pro-environmental. Subsequent to analysing prior research that indicates the latter, this study reveals that green is a sub-set to the three additional types of green terminology: ethical, pro-environmental and sustainability. The term pro-environmental was demonstrated as the most alike to green, due to previous research using the concepts interchangeably, alongside users who indicate the terms express their desire to reduce their environmental impact. Furthermore, the following aspects were examined, green consumer, green consumption and green product, in reference to previous studies that explore the concepts. As a result of assessing relevant green literature, this study proposes to use the following definition of green:

A consumer lifestyle choice which consists of consumer's concerns towards the consumption and disposal of a product which includes the factors of reducing and reusing. With the overall aim of reducing or minimising their impact on the environment.

The proposed definition of this study indicates the overarching element of consumers' concern towards reducing their impact on the environment, which is a pivotal factor within green literature.

This study intends to use the theory of ecological citizenship to understand consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing OC. This study delivers a review of the emergence of ecological citizenship, which originated from Marshall's (1950) theory of citizenship. Citizenship is a theory which is primarily used for political research (Marshall 1950), van Steenberg (1994) added the additional dimension of ecological citizenship due to recognising consumers' changing environmental perspectives and concerns. Van Steenberg (1994) sheds light on prior authors (Dahrendorf, 1990; Falk, 1992) that have

touched upon the concept of ecological citizenship, however, failed to comprehend the concept.

Recent critiques of van Steenbergen (1994) are reviewed, in particular, this study discusses a recent evaluation by Dobson (2000; 2003) who suggests that van Steenbergen's (1994) added dimension lacks a compelling argument due to too much focus on Marshall's (1950) framework. Dobson's (2000) critique contributes to van Steenbergen (1994) ecological citizenship, and evidences the applicability of the theory in the present day. An examination of previous studies that tried to build on van Steenbergen's (1994) concept, are labelled as uncomprehensive and invalid by Dobson (2000), further justifying why Dobson's review was warranted. Current studies (Sáiz, 2005; Gabrielson, 2008) evidence Dobson's (2000; 2003) critique of ecological citizenship as being compelling and reflecting the ecological citizen of today. Hence, Dobson's (2000; 2003; et al., 2005) critique of ecological citizenship are valid studies to build upon. Previous literature argues that ecological citizenship is an underused and undervalued theory that warrants future research to use the theoretical concept to understand consumers' green conscience and pro-environmental behaviour. Thus, this study intends to use Dobson's (2000) critique of ecological citizenship theory, to comprehend consumers' knowledge sharing about green clothing within an OC.

The subsequent section outlines the proposed research aims and questions that this study intends to address, and the conceptual framework that has derived from the literature review.

2.7.2 Proposed Research Questions and Conceptual Framework

The research aims and questions for this study are derived from the following bodies of literature, these are, OCs, knowledge sharing, consumer empowerment, green terminology and ecological citizenship. Demonstrated below are the research aims and the three proposed RQs, alongside a rationale that explains how the RQs derive from the literature.

This study's research aims are as follows:

- To investigate consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing OC, and understand what factors drive their knowledge sharing about their pro-environmental behaviour and green concerns.
- To explore how consumer empowerment and consumers' knowledge sharing interplay, and gauge the factors that influence the two concepts within a green clothing OC.

- To establish how and to what extent consumers are empowered when sharing knowledge within a green clothing OC, and gain an appreciation of how consumers' drive to share knowledge influences their empowerment in doing so.

Research question 1 – What roles do hedonic, social, functional participatory benefits play within consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community?

This RQ aims to explore the participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing OC. This study proposes to build upon three recent studies by Wang and Fesenmaier (2004), Chan and Li (2010) and Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012).

Firstly, Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) study discusses the concepts of hedonic and social participatory benefits, which are found to be the main participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing within an OC. The hedonic and social participatory benefits consist of a consumers' desire to support others, form friendships, share experiences, and share knowledge for fun and enjoyment (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Preece, 2000; Wang et al., 2002; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) reveal that psychological and functional participatory benefits are not significant drivers that result in consumers' knowledge sharing. Thus, the former indicates that consumers are not driven by a sense of belonging, affiliation and identity with an OC, alongside gathering knowledge for their own decision-making and convenience and sharing knowledge about consumption activities (Rheingold, 1993; Walther, 1996; Armstrong and Hagel, 1996; Bressler and Grantham, 2000; Preece, 2000). Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) suggest that their study did not find a psychological participatory to be a pivotal driver, due to the travel OC context not entailing a supportive environment that would foster a psychological participatory benefit. Thus, the study proposed a call for future research to examine what participatory benefits drive consumers' knowledge sharing within an alternative supportive OC. Thus, this study intends to understand if consumers are driven by hedonic and social participatory benefits within a green clothing OC, and considers a psychological participatory benefit which may emerge within an alternative OC. Similarly, Chan and Li (2010) indicate that hedonic and social factors are elements that lead to greater engagement within an OC. Hedonic and social participatory benefits are termed as social bond and enjoyment within Chan and Li's (2010) study. Hence, the latter study confirms this study exploring hedonic and social participatory benefits.

In contrast, a recent study by Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) illustrate that consumers are driven by a functional participatory benefit. For instance, the study indicates that users are driven by a desire to share knowledge and gather expertise knowledge for the purpose of aiding their decision-making. Cervellon and Wernerfelt's (2012) findings correlate with Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) study definition of a functional participatory benefit. Additional research reveals that users are driven by a functional participatory benefit, for instance, prior literature findings evidence users' desire to share factual content that they can learn from (Kaiser and Fuhrer, 2003; Kong et al., 2016). Alongside, users' intention to gather reliable and trustworthy information that is objective to inform their decision-making about a product or service (Ayeh et al., 2013; Bilgihan et al., 2014).

Therefore, three participatory benefits that entail social, hedonic and functional are presented within the working hypothesised framework within Figure 2.4. This study aims to explore how and to what extent consumers demonstrate the three participatory benefits when sharing knowledge within a green clothing OC. Alongside, examining the interplay between the three participatory benefits.

Research question 2 – How do consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing inter-relate, within consumers' narrative of a green clothing online community?

Within knowledge sharing literature, consumer empowerment is highlighted. Prior studies predicted the shift of power from an organisation to a consumer, in light of the gradual evolution of the internet (Bakos, 1991; Kozinets, 1999; Levine et al., 2000). As a result of the significant growth of the internet in recent times, this has led to a ubiquitous amount of OCs and social interaction between consumers (Stokburger-Sauer and Wiertz, 2015). Furthermore, the power shift from an organisation to a consumer has been demonstrated within recent studies, which acknowledges that consumers have more influence and control over organisations (Lim, 2009; Kucuk, 2009; Quinton, 2013). Recent studies indicate an interplay between consumer empowerment and consumers' knowledge sharing. For instance, Labrecque et al. (2013) discuss four power-sources that empower consumers online, these are, "demand-based power", "information-based power", "network-based power" and "crowd-based power". Demand-based power entails consumer empowerment as a result of consumers acknowledging the benefits of the internet such as no geographical boundaries and the ability to communicate in real-time (Day, 2011; Labrecque et al., 2013). Information-based power comprises a consumer's empowerment due to the ability to

express themselves and voice their opinions towards a subject of interest online (Labrecque et al., 2013). Network-based power achieves consumer empowerment due to consumers sense of influencing others (Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson, 2012), and using social media tools such as ‘hashtags’, ‘likes’, ‘retweets’ and sharing blogs (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; James et al., 2011; Goldenberg et al., 2012). Lastly, crowd-based power consists consumer empowerment as consequence of crowd-creation, crowd-selling, crowd-support and crowd-funding (Mathwick et al., 2007; Seog and Hyun, 2009; Labrecque et al., 2013). Hence, Labrecque et al.’s (2013) study indicate the inter-relationship between consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing, due to the various powers entailing users’ sense of empowerment as a result of sharing knowledge or an online activity. Likewise, a recent study by Quinton and Simkin (2016) identify four stages that result in an empowered consumer, the previous stages entail a solitary journey that leads to building trust with the online platform and subsequently sharing knowledge within an OC. The study indicates an interplay between knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment, for instance, Quinton and Simkin’s (2016) model illustrates that as a result of consumers’ knowledge sharing, consumer empowerment is revealed.

Nevertheless, there is a paucity of literature that explores consumer empowerment from a consumer perspective, and a limited exploration into the interplay between consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing. Therefore, this study aims to explore how and to what extent consumers indicate consumer empowerment within an OC, alongside identifying factors that facilitate or impede on consumer empowerment. This research intends to understand the interplay between consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing, in order to comprehend the factors that associate or disassociate both concepts.

The RQ further intends to explore if consumers demonstrate enjoyment or SBEI prior to reciprocating behaviours which leads to knowledge sharing within an OC. Chan and Li’s (2010) study reveals that SBEI was the most significant factor which led to consumers’ reciprocating behaviours, however, the study unveiled that the concept of enjoyment closely followed. Henceforth, Chan and Li’s (2010) findings warrant further research to confirm if consumers were driven by their desire for camaraderie and to form relationships online which would convey SBEI, or to reciprocate with others for enjoyment purposes which would portray enjoyment. Therefore, this study builds upon Chan and Li’s (2010) understanding of “experiential route of interactivity” to understand if enjoyment or SBEI

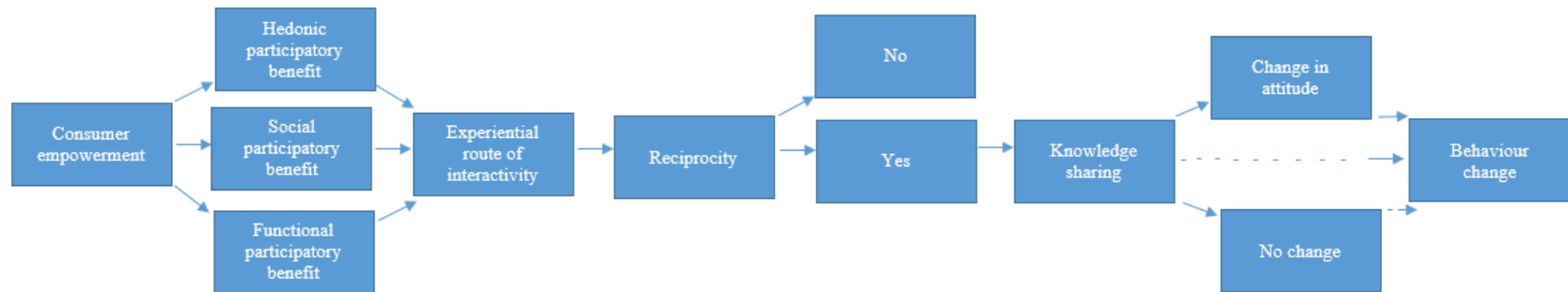
results in consumers' knowledge sharing. In doing so, this study will further understand the interplay between knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment.

Research question 3 – What is the relationship between the participatory benefits in RQ 1, consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing?

Building on RQ 1 and RQ 2, this study proposes to explore how consumers' participatory benefits to share knowledge, the inter-relationship between consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing correlate. The study builds upon prior literature that discusses the participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Chan and Li, 2010; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2011) and consumer empowerment (Labrecque et al., 2013; Quinton, 2013; Quinton and Simkin, 2016). As a result, the study aims to comprehend how the concepts influence each other. In light of this study's using the ecological citizenship theory to understand consumers' knowledge sharing, prior literature has conveyed that an ecological citizen demonstrates an empowered voice and indicates the act of knowledge sharing in relation to their green concerns and pro-environmental behaviour (Dobson, 2000; Sáiz, 2005). Hence, this study considers ecological citizenship when understanding the inter-relationship between the three concepts. Prior research demonstrates that as a result of consumers' reciprocating behaviours that lead to knowledge sharing within an OC, potential attitude and behaviour change can occur (Mangleburg et al., 2004; Chan and Li, 2010). The RQ intends to further understand if attitude and behaviour change ensues, following consumers' knowledge sharing about green clothing within the OC. As a result, the latter contributes to the understanding of how RQ 1 and RQ 2 interplay.

This study presents a hypothesised framework which is shown in Figure 2.4. The conceptual framework draws from the concepts and the theoretical underpinning which are examined within this chapter. These are, consumer empowerment, the three participatory benefits (social, psychological and functional), experiential route of interactivity, reciprocity, knowledge sharing and consumers' attitude and behaviour change.

Figure 2.4: Proposed Conceptual Framework



(Sourced from: Author, 2016)

In regards to Figure 2.4, firstly, consumer empowerment is shown at the beginning to illustrate the power shift from an organisation to a consumer, which is demonstrated within prior literature as a catalyst to knowledge sharing (Quinton, 2013; Labrecque et al., 2013; Quinton and Simkin, 2016). Secondly, three out of the four participatory benefits are demonstrated as the main drivers that motivate consumers' knowledge sharing, these entail, hedonic, social, and functional. Both Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) and Chan and Li (2010) evidence that hedonic and social participatory benefits are pivotal drivers to consumers' knowledge distribution. The participatory benefits portray consumers' drive to distribute information in order to support others, form relationships, to have fun and enjoy themselves (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Chan and Li, 2010). A functional participatory is added due to a current study by Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012), the findings demonstrate that consumers share knowledge for the benefit of gathering objective and factual information for their own decision-making and learning.

Thirdly, this study builds upon Chan and Li's (2010) finding that indicates that the experiential route of interactivity is a pivotal factor that influences consumers' reciprocity. The study warrants further exploration to confirm the study's findings that indicate social bond experiential activity as a pivotal factor that leads to reciprocating behaviours, due to the element of enjoyment closely following the former in the study's results. Reciprocation is considered within Chan and Li's (2010) study as an element which contributes to the outcome of knowledge sharing. However, this study does not measure reciprocation as a moderator of the outcome knowledge sharing. This is due to the study proposing an in-depth understanding into the drivers of consumers' knowledge sharing via a qualitative research design. Furthermore, prior studies confirm that reciprocity which leads to knowledge sharing, results in consumers' attitude and behaviour change (Mangleburg et al., 2004; Chan and Li, 2010). This study intends to explore if consumers' attitudes and behaviours change in relation to green clothing, as a result of reciprocating behaviours and knowledge sharing with OC. Figure 2.4 shown below, illustrates the proposed conceptual framework.

The subsequent Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of this study. This entails, an examination into the research philosophies and approaches, the research approach, the research design, the research strategy, sampling, data analysis and the consideration of ethics.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sheds light on the philosophical and methodological approaches which are adopted by this study. The philosophical and methodological approaches are driven by this study's research questions (RQs) derived from the literature review.

This chapter is organised as follows. Section 3.2 describes the philosophical approaches of this study which comprise an ontological stance (Section 3.2.1) and an epistemological position (Section 3.2.2). Furthermore, Section 3.3 details the research approach of this study which entails the forms of reasoning, which concerns the research design of this study (Section 3.3.1). Section 3.4 sheds light on the study's research design which consists of a multi-method qualitative research design (Section 3.4.1), and the nature of the research design (Section 3.4.2). Section 3.5 discusses how this study collected data. The section describes the research strategy in which this study conducted (Section 3.5.1), entailing focus groups (Section 3.5.1.1) and semi-structured interviews (Section 3.5.1.2). Section 3.5.2 provides an explanation about this study's sampling method (Section 3.5.2.1), and the sample sizes of the focus groups and the semi-structured interviews (Section 3.5.2.2). Section 3.6 discusses how this study used thematic analysis to analyse this study's data. Section 3.7 entails the consideration of ethics within this study. The chapter is concluded within Section 3.8.

The following section discusses the research philosophies and approaches of this study.

3.2 Research Philosophies and Approaches

3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology consists of the study of the nature of reality. Ontology determines the stance in which the researcher views the world and how it operates (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Two positions within ontology consist of, objectivism and subjectivism (Saunders et al., 2012). This study adopted a social constructivist viewpoint which is an aspect within subjectivism. A subjectivist position considers the consequential actions and perceptions of social actors within a social phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2012). Whereas this study's social constructivist position delivers a rich insight into how social actors create shared meanings and realities via a social interaction (Saunders et al., 2019). Social constructivism originates from Vygotsky (1962), the study emphasises the concept of the shared meaning-making process in order to constitute the reality

of a human psychological activity. In the past decades there has been a growing body of literature that evidences a discussion related to a post-Vygotskian perspective, which entails modernising the concept to understand activity-related phenomena (Gal'perin, 1967; Rogoff, 1990; Stetsenko and Arieivitch, 1997). The post-Vygotskian viewpoint delivers insights into the current changing social development. Stetsenko and Arieivitch (1997) review prior literature and reveal two lines of research that stem from Vygotsky (1962), which renovate the concept. The first aspect is referred to as ontogenetic, which considers the different forms of individuals' interaction within "sociocultural interactivities and shared meaning-making practices" (Shotter, 1993; Stetsenko and Arieivitch, 1997:170). The second line entails a functional aspect, consisting of the knowledge and skills achieved during the construction of self (Leont'ev, 1978; Stetsenko and Arieivitch, 1997).

This study considered the past and present reviews of social constructivism, and built on Stetsenko and Arieivitch's (1997) renewed perspective of Vygotsky (1962). The latter is due to this study's interest to explore and analyse consumers' knowledge within an online community (OC) that combines current social and cultural factors, and to examine the engagement between consumers. Thus, this study's objectives align with Stetsenko and Arieivitch's (1997) social constructivist stance.

Furthermore, it can be argued that a social constructivist approach is necessary to this study's social phenomena, in order to fully understand the reality occurring behind it (Saunders et al., 2012). For instance, this study explores consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing OC. A social constructivist approach enables this study to understand what motivates consumers to share knowledge with one-another, and to assess the inter-relationship between consumers' knowledge sharing and empowerment within a green clothing OC.

3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology consists of what knowledge is considered acceptable, the position includes, positivism, realism and interpretivism (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This study undertook an interpretivist perspective, as the stance allowed this study to gather in-depth insights into consumers' knowledge sharing within an OC, and provided an understanding into the phenomena's complexity (Saunders et al., 2012). Moreover, an interpretivist position enabled the researcher to comprehend the differences between the social actors within a phenomenon,

which contributes to the researcher's understanding (Saunders et al., 2019). Considering this study, the stance allowed the researcher to recognise the varying motivations that drive consumers' knowledge distribution and how consumers are empowered, and what factors influenced their knowledge dissemination and empowerment. Adoption of an interpretivist stance meant that the researcher was able to produce a detailed explanation of pivotal mechanisms within a specific circumstance, in particular, demonstrating how distinct variables inter-related and manifested within a context (Lin, 1998). Therefore, this study undertook an interpretivist exploration, as the epistemological perspective enabled this study to address the three RQs.

Furthermore, this study considers axiology as it determines the credibility of the research, due to the researcher understanding their own values and actions within the research (Saunders et al., 2012). This study considered the researcher's personal values about the thesis topic, in order to generate a credible research project that did not consist of a conclusion made from the researcher's own values, but from the research being undertaken.

The prior sections portray an explanation into the philosophical approaches that this study adopted, this included, social constructivism and interpretivism. The ontological and epistemology approaches discussed are suitable perspectives that are associated with a qualitative research design, and provide a justification that indicates that both stances will address this study's RQs. The following section comprises of the methodological approaches that this study adopted.

3.3 Research Approach

3.3.1 Forms of Reasoning

Deductive and inductive are two approaches which arise from the reasoning which the researcher adopts (Saunders et al., 2012). This study used an inductive approach which is commonly associated with a qualitative data analysis (Thomas, 2006). The purpose of this study undertaking an inductive analysis, was to allow findings to occur from the pivotal themes that are manifested from the raw data (Thomas, 2006). Strauss and Corbin (1998:12) describe an inductive analysis as "the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data". This understanding is consistent with Bryman and Bell (2015), who evidence that an inductive approach comprises of the relationships between the theory and

research. For instance, when the research undertakes an inductive stance the outcome of the study is predominantly theory, the initial process consists of gaining generalisable inferences from observations (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Therefore, the reasoning of an inductive approach entails generating untested conclusions (Saunders et al. 2012).

This study undertook an inductive approach to analyse the qualitative data that was generated from the two qualitative research strategies. A beneficial element of an inductive approach is the process of feeding back into theory, which means that the findings can contribute to further theoretical development within the research field of this study (Saunders et al., 2019).

The following section describes the research design that this study employed.

3.4 Research Design

This section discusses this study's research design which is informed by the three RQs. Primary research is undertaken in order to collect data which is driven by the RQs. The ensuing sections detail the primary research undertaken, which entails a multi-method qualitative research design comprising, focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

3.4.1 Multi-Method Qualitative Research Design

This study used a multi-method qualitative research design. As the design links with this study's philosophical position, which includes, a social constructivist and interpretivist stance and an inductive position. A multi-method research design entails using a mixture of data collection techniques with an associated analysis procedure (Saunders et al., 2012). In regards to this study, two qualitative research strategies were conducted, and a thematic analysis tool analysed the data led by this study's inductive stance.

Past literature evidences the advantages of this study using a multi-method research design. For instance, the design allows the researcher to accumulate a rich amount of data, and the approach achieves data reliability and validity (Takhar-Lail and Gorbani, 2015). Likewise, a multi-method approach enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding into a complex social phenomenon (Gil-Garcia and Pardo, 2006; Palakshappa and Gordon, 2006). Moreover, a multi-method study achieves data validity as a result of triangulation, which leads to capturing different aspects of the phenomena that the study intends to explore (Takhar-Lail and Gorbani, 2015). Mingers (2001) states that the triangulation of the methods enables a focus on data from different perspectives, hence, delivering a richer understanding into this study's phenomena.

The combination of the multi-method procedure alongside the multiple participants within both methods allowed this study to, examine the participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing, how consumer empowerment inter-related with knowledge sharing, and the interplay between the participatory benefits, knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment. The first phase of the multi-method process entailed focus groups, to gather an initial insight to address RQs 1 and 2 of this study. The first phase informed the second phase of the multi-method design, which included semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews gathered a rich and comprehensive understanding, thus, addressing all three of the RQs.

Three additional research designs were considered, qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods, however, these were dismissed by this study. A qualitative research design entails a study using one qualitative research method to make sense of the socially constructed meanings (Saunders et al., 2019). A qualitative research design allows a study to develop a richer theoretical perspective (Saunders et al., 2012). However, the use of a single method fails to demonstrate a concrete reasoning and justification, unlike the triangulation method that is utilised within a multi-method study. Thus, the latter design would not be suitable for this study that warrants a triangulation of qualitative methods to gather a rich understanding into this study's online phenomena. A quantitative research design consists of a positivist approach, which numerically and statically measures relationships within a phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2012). The philosophical position of the latter design does not fit this study's stance that warrants an in-depth comprehension towards the data. A mixed-method design would not be appropriate for this study, as the purpose is to combine qualitative and quantitative studies. The former design would not suit this study as the underpinning philosophy does not require a numerical investigation, rather a rich exploration is needed which can only be fulfilled via a qualitative multi-method study.

3.4.2 Nature of the Research Design

The nature of the research design entails three types: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. The nature of this study is exploratory, which entails the role of the researcher being aware and understanding of the social phenomena. An exploratory study is evidenced when the researcher conducts research by asking participants open questions, in order to discover what is happening and to gain rich insights into the phenomena that is being examined (Saunders et al., 2012). An advantage of this study undertaking an exploratory study, is to explore an online phenomenon

that has little known and to seek a new perspective on this study's topic (Troshynski and Blank, 2008). The literature review within Chapter 2 evidences the paucity of literature that explores consumers' drive to share knowledge within a green clothing online community (OC) from a consumer perspective. Prior studies call for further exploration into the participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing within an additional phenomenon (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). In particular, recent studies warrant an examination into the green clothing phenomenon (Cervellon and Wernferfelt, 2012) via an ecological citizenship conceptual lens (Dobson, 2003; Sáiz, 2005; Rokka and Moisander, 2009). Thus, an exploratory study fits this study's objectives to conduct further exploration into a body of literature that requires additional investigation.

This study undertook an exploratory research design that entailed asking focus group participants and interviewees semi-structured questions to gain a thorough understanding to address the three RQs. Hence, an advantage of conducting exploratory research comprises of the adaptability to change questions, and the flexibility to conduct a research method to gain in-depth insights (Troshynski and Blank, 2008; Saunders et al., 2019). Moreover, an exploratory design enabled this study to start with a broad focus by asking semi-structured questions, however, the focus became narrow by asking probing questions to gain a comprehensive insight. Thus, an exploratory study delivered the rich and comprehensive understanding that this study warranted in order to address the RQs.

In contrast to a descriptive study, that comprises of gaining an accurate account of an event, person or situation (Saunders et al., 2012). Likewise, an explanatory study consists of exploring causal links between variables (Saunders et al., 2012). The latter portrays an association to a quantitative study, that measures the relationships between constructs within a phenomenon. Therefore, an explanatory and descriptive study would not be appropriate, due to this study warranting an in-depth insight by conducting an exploratory multi-method qualitative study.

The prior sections provide a comprehensive understanding of the research design that this study undertook. The next section examines this study's data collection procedure.

3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Research Strategy

This study conducted two focus groups with social media users in order to gain an initial insight into the study's online phenomenon¹. Followed by, 20 semi-structured interviews with green clothing OC users², for the purpose of gathering a rich understanding to address this study's RQs. The questions and answers from the focus groups³ informed the semi-structured interview guide⁴. The table below outlines the study's RQs alongside the two qualitative research methods that were conducted. The table illustrates what method addressed what RQ via a tick symbol and a brief explanation.

Table 3.1: The Research Strategies alongside the Study's Research Questions

Research questions	Preliminary insight – focus groups	In-depth insight – Semi-structured interviews
1. What roles do hedonic, social, functional participatory benefits play within consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community?	✓ The focus groups aim to deliver an initial understanding into what participatory benefits drive participants to share information on social media. The nature of a focus group means that participants can speak to together about their drivers, which may spark	✓ The semi-structured interviews intend to provide a comprehensive understanding into interviewees' drive to share knowledge within a green clothing online community. The nature of the questions means that interesting answers can be probed to gain further

¹ Appendix 1 details the procedure of the focus groups.

² Appendix 2 discusses the procedure of the semi-structured interviews.

³ The focus group guide rationale is shown in Appendix 1, whilst Appendices 3 and 4 present the focus group 1 and 2 guides.

⁴ The semi-structured interview guide rationale is discussed in Appendix 2, whereas Appendices 5 and 6 evidence the pilot and main interview guide.

	a deeper insight into their motivations.	insights into interviewees' drive.
2. How do consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing inter-relate, within consumers' narrative of a green clothing online community?	✓	✓
	The focus groups intend to provide a prelude into aspects that influence participants' empowerment on social media. Alongside, gaining a preliminary understanding into how participants' empowerment and knowledge sharing on social media inter-relate. Due to the communal aspect of a focus group, this means that participants can share their experiences, and others responses may trigger participants to provide more information about their knowledge sharing on social media.	The semi-structured interviews aim to deliver an in-depth insight into interviewees source of empowerment online via semi-structured questions which enable further probing by the interviewer. Also, the semi-structured interview allows the interviewee to discuss at length the inter-relation between their knowledge sharing and empowerment online. As a result, the probing that is permitted within the interview, enables the interviewer to ask the interviewee follow up questions which provide rich insights into their behaviour.
3. What is the relationship between the participatory benefits in RQ 1,		✓
		The advantage of the semi-structured interviews is the ability to

consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing?		ask probing questions which ensures flexibility. For instance, the interviewer can enquire further if an answer requires further explanation. Related to this research question which warrants a rich insight into how interviewees' motivations, knowledge sharing and empowerment relate, the further examination delivers the in-depth comprehension that the research question requires.
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Traditionally consumers' knowledge sharing online has been investigated by prior studies conducting quantitative studies to measure the constructs within a phenomenon (Wang and Fesenamier, 2004; De Valk et al., 2009) or have employed mixed-methods (Chan and Li, 2010). Online surveys are the most common quantitative method that prior studies employed, alternately, mixed-method studies used online surveys alongside netnography. However, the quantitative and mixed-method studies lack the in-depth insight that this study warrants. In most recent studies, research has explored knowledge sharing within a green context via qualitative methods, as a purely qualitative study or as a mixed-method study. The methods include, netnography (Kozinets, 1999; Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Kozinets et al., 2010; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Shen et al., 2014; Sloan et al., 2015) and semi-structured interviews (Moraes et al., 2012; McNeil and Moore, 2015). This study did not undertake netnography, because the observations would not have delivered the rich insight into the 'why' and 'how' questions that

this study warranted an exploration. Rather, netnography would have provided the study with the ‘what’ the participants were discussing within an OC, hence, the data would not have been sufficient for this study⁵.

Moreover, in consideration of this study’s social constructivist and interpretivist stance, this study conducted focus groups to gain insights into the communal interaction that is fostered within this method (Fahad, 1986). For instance, focus groups deliver a rich exploration into participants group discussion which encourages new thoughts and generates ideas during the dialogue between participants (Smith, 1972; Kinnear and Taylor, 1979). To the researcher’s understanding, this study is the first to conduct a focus group to explore the drivers of consumers’ knowledge sharing within a green clothing phenomenon within an OC.

Overall, this study conducted two qualitative research methods to seek a rich explanation warranted by prior studies (Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012), these are, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Prior studies further emphasise the advantages and associations when undertaking focus groups and semi-structured interviews together within a qualitative study (Dunn, 2005; Clifford et al., 2016). For instance, Clifford et al. (2016) state that both types of qualitative methods are similar and complement each other as they are both informal and conversational types of data collection, which allow an open response from participants and interviewees. Hence, the latter demonstrates how both methods suit this study that warrants a rich understanding into the online phenomena and addresses the RQs by delivering a rich insight into consumers’ online behaviour.

The following section discusses the use of focus groups by this study.

3.5.1.1 Focus Groups

This study conducted two focus groups to gain a preliminary understanding to address RQs 1 and 2⁶.

A focus group is defined as a group interview that comprises of a clearly defined topic, and is conversed within an interactive discussion between participants and can be recorded or videoed

⁵ Sections 7.6 and 7.7 within Chapter 7, discuss how this study initially conducted netnography. however, the method was not successful in providing the rich insight this study warranted.

⁶ Appendix 1 outlines how this study conducted the two focus groups.

(Carson et al., 2001; Barbour et al., 2008; Krueger and Casey, 2009; Saunders et al., 2012). This study's researcher used a Dictaphone to record the focus group discussions, and later transcribed the data prior to analysis. Focus groups entail a semi-structured set of questions that take place within an informal setting to ensure that the participants feel comfortable (Clifford et al., 2012; Acocella, 2012; Carey and Asbury, 2016). Alongside the questions, stimuli can be used to encourage discussion between participants, examples include photographs or videos (Krueger and Casey, 2009; Morgan, 2010). During the group discussion the researcher acts as a moderator to ensure that a good quality conversation between the participants takes place (Stewart et al., 2007). It is vital that the researcher who acts as a facilitator has experience to guarantee an engaging conversation, that will lead to rich stories that have not been spoken about before in such detail (Carey and Asbury, 2016). Thus, the level of detail that transpires within a focus group will deliver the rich insights in which this study warrants.

A focus group typically consists of 4-12 participants; however, the number of participants depends on the nature of the study (Saunders et al., 2012). In the light of this study which entails a non-sensitive and non-complex discussion, six participants were used within the two focus groups (Saunders et al., 2019). In contrast, a study that examines complex and sensitive issues would warrant a smaller number of participants within a focus group, for instance, between 4-6 participants (Saunders et al., 2012). The focus group questions during this study, are informed by the researcher's initial observations of consumers language, behaviour and green terminology used within YouTube videos that discuss green clothing⁷. The study's online observations were undertaken within YouTube due to the vast amount of publicly available content related to green clothing. The YouTube observations took place between the 15/08/2017 until the 05/09/2017. The first focus group was held on the 25/10/2017, whereas the second focus group was held on the 15/11/2017. The time between both focus groups was due to transcribing the first focus group, and because of the time taken to recruit suitable participants for the second focus group. Each focus group lasted 1.5 hours to 2 hours long.

⁷ Appendix 7 discusses why this study conducted initial observations on YouTube, and the rationale of how the observations informed the focus groups. Whereas, Appendix 8 presents a table that demonstrates the purpose of doing the YouTube observations. Appendix 9 states how this study undertook the YouTube observations. Appendices 10, 11, 12 and 13 present the stimuli gathered from the YouTube observations to be used within the focus group guides.

An advantage of this study undertaking focus groups as an initial insight, is due to the ability to gather an in-depth and comprehensive understanding into consumer's behaviours, discussions, language and experiences on social media (Oringderff, 2004; Lijadi and van Schalkwyk, 2015). In particular, the method fits the discipline in which this research is being carried out, as focus groups are prolifically used within Marketing studies (Carey and Asbury, 2016). An array of social scientists' evidence that focus groups are an innovative research method (Acocella, 2012), in order to explore a phenomenon that has little known about it (Bertrand et al., 1992) and the method allows the researcher to focus on a particular reference group (Morgan and Spanish, 1984). In regards to this study, a focus group compliments the study, as the researcher explores a phenomenon that is of interest within a growing body of literature discussing the digital era. The collaborative nature of a focus group offers another benefit, for instance, the method capitalises on participants' interaction which enhances the collection of perspectives and deeply held beliefs (Carey and Asbury, 2016). In the same vein, focus groups provide insights into participants' beliefs and attitudes that influence their behaviour, and as a result of providing a context alongside stimuli, this can enable shared experiences that underlie their behaviour (Carey and Asbury, 2016). This study used stimuli in the form of videos and screenshots of comments, these were informed by the YouTube observations⁸. Prior studies discuss the use of incentives which can be beneficial in offline studies, for instance, a monetary reward can increase response rates and be a gesture of good will to thank the participants for their time (Goodman et al., 2004; Göritz, 2006; Head, 2009). Recent studies state that participants are likely to participate because of their interest within the study, thus, the study's significance must be stated to attract curiosity (Fry and Dyer, 2001; Head, 2009). This study gave focus group participants a £20 Amazon voucher to say thanks for their contribution and time spent⁹, and provided a clear explanation of the study to attract interest on the 'Call for Participants'¹⁰.

The open-ended questions asked by the researcher during the focus groups, contributed to the study's understanding about the questions asked during the semi-structured interviews (Morgan, 2010). For instance, the preliminary study delivered a clearer focus on the research purposes

⁸ The four videos used from YouTube as stimuli are shown in Appendix 7, section 2. The screenshot stimuli used is shown in Appendices 10,11,12 and 13.

⁹ Appendix 14 illustrates the form that participants filled out to attain their incentive.

¹⁰ Appendices 15 and 16 show the 'Call for Participants' which were used online to attract participants.

which included, what questions to ask, what terms should be included within the questions, and other guidelines on the order of the questions (Lijadi and van Schalkwyk, 2015). On reflection of the initial study, the organisation of the focus group offered this study's interviewer an insight into how to recruit the participants and how to build rapport with the interviewees for the semi-structured interviews (Lijadi and van Schalkwyk, 2015). The researcher gathered insights to inform the second focus group guide, via a feedback form given to participants within the first focus group¹¹. Within both guides, the asterisks evidence the probing questions asked by this study's researcher. The second focus group guide differs to the first guide, due to additional questions asked which were informed by the prior focus group. The added questions meant that this study could gain a deeper understanding to address the RQs proposed, the questions in italics within Appendix 4 evidence the added inquiries. To note, this study aligned the focus group questions with previously proposed RQs, which were later modified after collecting data via the focus groups¹².

An online focus group was considered as an alternative research method, however, after further exploration into prior literature an offline focus group better suited this study. For instance, a traditional offline focus group allowed the participants to voice their contributions for longer, whilst literature reveals that online focus group participants are likely to remain quiet or distribute shorter comments that lack insight (Bruggen and Wilems, 2009; Lijadi and van Schalkwyk, 2015). In the same vein, Bruggen and Wilems (2009) state that participants are more likely to demonstrate a comprehensive and deeper contribution within an offline focus group, compared to a somewhat superficial interaction via short comments during an online focus group. Hence, studies reveal that a traditional offline focus group provides a more in-depth response from participants, which can lead to higher quality findings. Thus, this study conducted two traditional offline focus groups to address RQs 1 and 2.

¹¹ Appendix 17 presents the feedback form given to the participants within the first focus group.

¹² Appendix 18 shows the original research questions and the modified research questions used by this study at the present date. A rationale is demonstrated which evidences why the research questions were later modified.

3.5.1.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

This study conducted 20 semi-structured interviews, to address the three RQs with richer insights and build upon the findings that emerged from the two focus groups¹³.

A semi-structured interview is defined as a verbal exchange between an interviewer and another person, whom the interviewer attempts to elicit information from (Dunn, 2005). Often a semi-structured interview is referred to as a conversational, soft or informal interview due to the flexible nature of the method (Clifford et al., 2016). It is important that the researcher ensures that the interviewees feel comfortable during the interview. In particular, it is important that the interviewer remains non-judgmental in regards to what the interviewee is saying, and pays attention to the interviewee when they are talking (Longhurst, 2003). By doing so, a comfortable atmosphere is created for the interviewee to discuss aspects that are important to them (Krueger and Casey, 2000; Longhurst, 2003). The purpose of a semi-structured interview is to explore research areas that are complex, warrant further research and importantly address the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions (Corbin and Morse, 2003). Considering the social constructivist ontological position of this study, which entails exploring how participants construct their own world when sharing knowledge (Gergen, 1985; Lee, 2012). Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewees to describe their own experiences when discussing their motivations to share knowledge, and how it makes them feel empowered within an OC.

The semi-structured interviews are recorded via a Dictaphone, alongside the interviewer taking notes about the interviewees’ behaviour or interesting dialogue shared, by doing so this reduces the pressure for the interviewer to write down the conversation (Valentine, 2005; Clifford et al., 2016). It is suggested by prior studies that the interviewer should reflect on the conversation after the interview, in particular, noting the tone within the conversation, the key themes that emerged or parts of the discussion that intrigued the interviewer (Miles and Humberman, 1994; Kitchen and Tate, 2000). Thus, concerning this study the researcher wrote analytical memos during each interview and reflected on the overall discussion, subsequently, the notes taken were used during the data analysis. As a result of recording the interviews via a Dictaphone, the conversations were later transcribed by the researcher prior to analysis (Clifford et al., 2016).

¹³ Appendix 2 explains how this study conducted the 20 semi-structured interviews.

A semi-structured interview guide entails a list of themes (Clifford et al., 2016; Saunders et al., 2019)¹⁴. This study's themes reflect the theoretical concepts discussed within the literature review in Chapter 2, these are, OC, knowledge sharing, consumer empowerment, green terminology and ecological citizenship. Only a few key questions are asked within a semi-structured interview, due to the flexible nature of the interview the additional probing questions may vary in each interview (Longhurst, 2003; Clifford et al., 2016). For instance, the researcher may ask probing questions during the interview in order to gain richer insights into the interviewees answer (Rabionet, 2011). Probing questions are used within a semi-structured interview, in order to give the interviewer a choice in wording to allow clarification (Hutchinson and Skodolwilson, 1992). Additionally, probing questions can ensure reliability of the data, by providing opportunities to seek sensitive issues (Treece and Treece, 1986), and can elicit complete and valuable information (Bailey, 1987). Thus, this study used probing questions alongside the main questions in the interview guide to query 'why' and 'how' in conjunction with examples. Existing studies emphasise the importance of the researcher gaining experience or training prior to commencing a semi-structured interview, due to the essential necessity of the researcher being able to ask the right probing questions in order to gain in-depth insights (Dingwall et al., 2002; Rabionet, 2011). Thus, the researcher of this study conducted a pilot semi-structured interview prior to undertaking the main semi-structured interviews, to gain experience and feedback on their interviewing skills¹⁵.

A pilot study can be defined as being a small version of the main study, also referred to as a feasibility study (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001), a trying-out stage (Baker, 1994) and a vanguard study (Thabane et al., 2010). The pilot study is a crucial element within research; however, it is suggested that a pilot study does not guarantee that the main study will be successful but does significantly increase the likelihood of success (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). De Vaus (1993: 54) emphasises the importance of a pilot test, stating 'do not take the risk. Pilot test first'. Moreover, Thabane et al. (2010) indicate that a pilot study enables the researcher to confirm the sampling procedure, the data collection method, the budget and the time of the method. Alongside, providing the researcher with an awareness towards,

¹⁴ Appendix 2 section 1 discusses the pilot interview guide, whereas, section 2 discusses the main semi-structured interview guides. Appendices 5 and 6 present the two interview guides.

¹⁵ Appendix 2 section 1 discusses this study's procedure when conducting the pilot semi-structured interview.

interviewees response rate, the time contributed to transcribing an interview and how to ensure that all data complies with Coventry University Ethics (Van Teijlingen et al., 2001). Thus, it is detrimental that this study conducted a pilot test prior to the main semi-structured interviews, to ensure the validity of the main semi-structured interview and to ensure the researcher was fully equipped.

Considering the online phenomenon, this study conducted online semi-structured interviews with OC users located around the world, due to the global reach and lack of geographical boundaries of the chosen OC (Kozinets 1999; Hemetsberger and Schau 2008). An online interview is also termed as an electronic interview, which consists of an interview that commences in real-time using the internet (Morgan and Symon, 2004). According to Saunders et al. (2012), an electronic interview that takes place in real-time is termed as synchronous, these types of interviews are conducted within social media platforms or chat rooms. Recent social science studies reveal that the internet is a viable medium to overcome problems around distance and access to interviewees (Evans et al., 2008; Flick, 2009; Hanna, 2012). Hanna (2012) suggests that Skype is a modern software that allows researchers to conduct an interview if a face-to-face interview is not feasible. Skype is discussed as being a software that enables similar interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee within a face-to-face interview. For instance, Skype has a visual aspect which allows both people to see each other when talking, this is also beneficial to the interviewer as the visual allows them to note behavioural aspects that are interesting for the analysis (Evans et al., 2008). Additional benefits of a Skype interview entail, the low costs and the ease of access for both parties to use the software, and both the interviewer and interviewee can remain in a 'safe location' when talking (Hanna, 2012). Moreover, current studies indicate that an online interview encourages interviewees to reveal more information because of the inherent anonymity within an online medium (Preece, 2000; Al-Saggaf and Williamson, 2004).

Potential negatives that may occur during a Skype interview comprise the technical problems with a webcam, speaker or microphone, which can lead to the suspension of the interview (Hanna, 2012). To overcome such issues, the researcher asked the interviewee prior to the interview to check that their webcam, speaker and microphone were working, and checked that

their own equipment was sufficiently working¹⁶. A telephone interview was considered as an alternative method to contact interviewees who were not able to attend a face-to-face interview, however, a telephone interview would lack the visual aspects that a Skype interview permitted (Holt, 2010).

Therefore, this study conducted Skype semi-structured interviews and considered the limitations that the interviews may endeavour. Overall, a semi-structured interview conducted via Skype has many benefits that suit this study's underpinning philosophy, which entail gaining a deep exploration into OC users' knowledge sharing and empowerment within a green OC. Due to the geographic reach of the interviewees, using Skype overcame the access problems and ensured that the interviewer could identify visual aspects that contributed to the data analysis. The semi-structured interviews were undertaken between the 22/02/2019 until the 17/03/2019.

The following section discusses the sampling method and sampling size of this study, in relation to the two chosen research strategies discussed within this section.

3.5.2 Sampling

3.5.2.1 Sampling Method

This study used a non-probability sampling method to recruit participants for the focus groups¹⁷ and semi-structured interviews¹⁸. This section presents a rigorous explanation of the sampling strategy and a robust clarification of the sourcing approach, to ensure the validity of this study (Yardley, 2000; Robinson, 2014).

Bryman and Bell (2015) justify the reasoning of non-probability, stating that probability sampling is commonly used during observational and ethnographic methods. A negative association when using a non-probability sampling method consists of generalising the population, whereas within a probability sampling generalisation is not allowed (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This study used a non-probability sampling to select participants for both the focus groups and semi-structured interviews, in particular, snowball and stratified purposive. A

¹⁶ Appendix 2, section 6 in the table, further details when the researcher contacted the interviewee regarding their technical equipment to ensure the interview proceeded.

¹⁷ Appendix 1, sections 1-3 in the table discuss the sampling procedure for the focus groups.

¹⁸ Appendix 2, sections 3-5 detail the sampling procedure for the semi-structured interviews.

snowball sampling method was conducted for the recruitment of the focus group participants, which entailed contacting a group of prospective participants and using them to establish further connections (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Snowball sampling is also referred to within prior studies as, chain sampling, referral sampling and chain-referral sampling (Robinson, 2014). This study collected focus group participants by sharing a ‘Call for Participants’, followed by selecting those who fitted the inclusion and exclusion criteria stated within Appendix 19¹⁹. Considering the snowball technique, prospective participants were able to share the flyer and to encourage others to join the focus group.

However, a stratified purposive sampling was adopted for the semi-structured interviews, which entailed selecting prospective participants within an interest-group or sub-group (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This study selected interviewees on the basis that they corresponded with the selection criteria shown in Appendix 20, so that the study recruited the appropriate interviewees. This study asked participants and interviewees screening questions prior to conducting both data collection methods, to further confirm that they met this study’s criteria.

Robinson (2014) emphasises the importance of criteria during sampling, stating that the use of inclusion and exclusion criteria enables a sample to become homogeneous. This study focused on participants who shared certain characteristics and specific traits (Etikan and Alkassim, 2016), and participants were examined within a defined set (Smith et al., 2009). For instance, this study recruited focus groups participants who were active users of social media and regarded themselves as having an environmental conscience. The study also contacted interviewees who were within the same green clothing OC, were consumers, were not ‘trolls’ or ‘bots’ and were all active users within the platform. Thus, justifying how a homogeneous sample aligns with this study’s objectives. In contrast, a heterogeneous sample would not have been suitable for this study, as the study does not warrant an exploration into a diverse group of cases within a widespread phenomenon (Robinson, 2014). This study’s inclusion criteria entail the researcher specifying attributes that the participants and interviewees must acquire to qualify for this study (Robinson, 2014). Whereas, the exclusion criteria comprise elements that disqualifies the participants and interviewees from this study (Robinson, 2014).

¹⁹ Focus group 1’s ‘Call for Participant’ is shown in Appendix 15, whereas, focus group 2’s ‘Call for Participants’ is shown in Appendix 16.

This study determined an inclusion and exclusion criteria for the two focus groups, this is shown in Appendix 19. In addition to the criteria, this study asked the participants a set of screening questions once they confirmed their willingness to contribute within the focus groups²⁰. The screening questions are shown within below.

1. Do you have a social media account (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube)?
2. Have you responded (commented or shared) to a Facebook, Twitter or YouTube video in the past week?
3. Do you have concerns towards sustainability and the environment?
4. Are you able to attend the informal discussion in Coventry?

Moreover, Appendix 20 illustrates a table outlining the criteria that this study used for choosing appropriate interviewees from the OC. This study chose Twitter as a social media platform to select interviewees for the semi-structured interviews²¹. An initial observation was conducted to identify a green clothing OC to select the prospective interviewees. As a result, #sustainablefashion was chosen as a suitable OC to recruit participants. Appendix 23 presents a step-by-step procedure of the preliminary observations, which led to the OC selection. Appendix 24 entails a list of the search terms used during the observation, and Appendix 25 presents a list of 'hashtags' identified prior to applying the criteria to select an appropriate OC.

In total, 69 #sustainablefashion OC users were contacted that met the criteria. Eight users declined the interview or could not do the interview due to personal reasons, and 39 users did not respond or did not pursue the interviewee recruitment conversation via Twitter or email. As a result of the screening questions asked via email when recruiting the participant, two participants were eliminated, as they stated they were not that active on Twitter and did not want to use Skype to be interviewed. The screening questions that were asked are shown below.

²⁰ Appendix 21 demonstrates a rationale behind the screening questions this study asked prospective participants prior to the focus groups.

²¹ Appendix 22 discusses the advantages of this study using Twitter.

1. Are you 18 years of age and over?
2. Is this you tweeting in the image below? *enter image of tweet that I am using*
3. Are you the creator and sole user of this Twitter account, and everything created is by yourself?
 - a. If no, who else?
4. Do you have Skype and a working web-cam and microphone?
 - a. If not, are you able to download skype?

Tables 3.2 and 3.3 illustrate the chosen sample that met the criteria alongside demographics, for the two focus groups. The table demonstrates a generalisable sample, due to the inclusion of a variety of ages, ethnicities, educational awards and professional titles. As a result, of including a varied sample the data will be less biased towards one perspective (Saunders et al., 2019). This study hopes to gather a multitude of perceptions, however, from consumers aligned with the inclusive criteria in Appendix 19.

Table 3.2: Focus Group 1: Selected Participants and Demographics

Focus group participant number	Demographic details			
	Age	Ethnicity	Education	Profession
1	35-44	Asian	Medical degree	Professional occupation
2	55-64	British	Degree	Professional occupation
3	35-44	British/Asian	Postgraduate	Associate professional and technical occupation
4	18-24	Asian	Degree	Masters student
5	25-34	British	Postgraduate	PhD student
6	25-34	British	Doctorate	Professional occupation

Table 3.3: Focus Group 2: Selected Participants and Demographics

Focus group participant number	Demographic details			
	Age	Ethnicity	Education	Profession
1	18-24	English/white	Degree	Associate professional and technical occupation
2	35-44	Asian	Postgraduate degree	Sales and customer service occupation
3	18-24	English/white	Degree	Sales and customer service occupation
4	25-34	Black/African	Degree	Marketing
5	18-24	English/white	Degree	Caring, leisure and other service occupation
6	25-34	European	Degree	Professional occupation

Table 3.4 presents the chosen sample alongside the demographics and online community usage for the 20 semi-structured interviews.

Table 3.4: Chosen Interviewees for the 20 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interview Twitter Participant number (ITP)	Gender	Profession	Online community usage
ITP 1	Female	Charity shop volunteer	Heavier user
ITP 2	Female	Part-time mature student	Heavier user
ITP 3	Male	PhD, eco-influencer, lecturer, and sustainability consultant in Tourism	Heavier user
ITP 4	Male	Sustainable textile producer	Lighter user
ITP 5	Female	Researcher about microplastics from synthetic clothes	Lighter user
ITP 6	Male	CEO of second-hand textiles company	Lighter user
ITP 7	Female	Employee at a textiles company	Lighter user
ITP 8	Female	Sustainable fashion business owner	Lighter user
ITP 9	Female	Podcaster and blogger about sustainability	Heavier user
ITP 10	Female	Artist	Heavier user
ITP 11	Female	Co-founder of a sustainable bags and accessory business	Heavier user
ITP 12	Female	Fashion blogger	Heavier user

Interview Twitter Participant number (ITP)	Gender	Profession	Online community usage
ITP 13	Female	Works within the textile industry	Heavier user
ITP 14	Female	Co-founder of litter picking business	Heavier user
ITP 15	Female	Design and technology teacher	Lighter user
ITP 16	Female	Fashion lecturer and researcher	Heavier user
ITP 17	Female	Fashion consultant and business owner upcycling garments	Heavier user
ITP 18	Male	PhD and CMO of Vegan clothing website	Lighter user
ITP 19	Male	Freelance photographer and social media manager	Heavier user
ITP 20	Male	Programme manager	Heavier user

The following section discusses the appropriate sampling sizes for the focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

3.5.2.2 Sample Size

In consideration of this study comprising a qualitative research design, it can be difficult to state the sampling size. For instance, it can be problematic when establishing how many participants will be involved before theoretical saturation is reached (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Additional challenging aspects comprise, not knowing if more individuals are needed to be involved within

the study (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Also, considering this study's inductive approach, it can be suggested that a small sample is more applicable, due to this study warranting an in-depth exploration into an online social phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2012).

Within Section 3.5.1.1, this study reviews prior literature and advises this study to recruit six participants within each of the focus groups²² (Saunders et al., 2019). This is due to the phenomena that is being explored within the focus groups not consisting of sensitive content which would warrant a smaller group of participants (Saunders et al., 2019). Instead, this study is able to recruit a larger group of participants to a focus group (Saunders et al., 2012), due to the non-complex discussion that will take place due to the study exploring consumers' knowledge sharing and empowerment on social media.

In regards to the sampling size for the semi-structured interviews, this study conducted 20 interviews, due to current studies that suggested between 15-23 as a suitable sample size²³ (Al-Saggaf and Williamson, 2004; Athwal, 2014; Hanif, 2016; Pasternak, 2017). Additionally, the number of interviews depended on the data reaching saturation, a good quality qualitative study depends on exhausted discussion within the interviews, saturation is met once themes and narrative are frequently repeated (Morse, 1995; Guest et al., 2006).

The ensuing section details the process of data analysis that this study employed.

3.6 Data Analysis

This study used Braun and Clark's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis, in order to gain a rich and in-depth understanding to address the RQs. Concerning this study's inductive approach to qualitative analysis, to ensure a cohesive and consistent data analysis, contextual information is gathered via: self-memos, a reflective diary, a research notebook, transcript summary's, document summaries and progress summaries (Saunders et al., 2012). By documenting the latter contextual information, this demonstrates a record of the researcher's thoughts and further analysis that emerged from the data, thus, contributing to this study's data analysis (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Saunders et al., 2012). This study documented the data collected via the

²² Appendix 1, section 1 details the focus groups sampling size and rationale.

²³ Appendix 2, section 3 details the sampling size of the semi-structured interviews and provides a rationale.

process mentioned above, in order to demonstrate the consistency of data analysis and to validate the researcher's thoughts.

Thematic analysis is defined as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within the data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 79). The tool fits the study's analysis requirements, as thematic analysis provides a detailed, rich and complex amount of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thus, addressing the RQs that warrant a deep and comprehensive exploration into the phenomenon. Prior research indicates that thematic analysis is a widely used tool of analysis, however, warrants further research to contribute to the understanding of how to successfully conduct this type of analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Attridge-Stirling, 2001; Tuckett, 2005). In recent years, Braun and Clarke (2006) have addressed the lack of rigour when undertaking thematic analysis, subsequently, their research paper is now widely acknowledged and is continuously cited within recent literature that uses this analysis technique (Alhojailan, 2012; Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Caton and Chapman, 2016; Clarke and Braun, 2017; Castleberry and Nohlen, 2018). Thus, the latter evidences the credibility and quality of Braun and Clark's (2006) six steps on how to successfully undertake thematic analysis within a qualitative study. Thus, this study adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps to thematic analysis. Table 3.5 illustrates the steps that this study undertook.

Table 3.5: Six Steps of Thematic Analysis

Steps	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing the data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set and collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing the themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (step 1) and the entire data set (step 2), and generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells. Subsequently, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	This is the final opportunity for analysis. This step entails, the selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

(Adapted from: Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Prior research demonstrates the validity of using thematic analysis as a tool to analyse qualitative data. For instance, Vaismoradi et al. (2013) suggest that thematic analysis provides a deeper understanding into the context of the narrative that is being told within the interview. The latter further evidences the suitability of this study using thematic analysis, due to this study's aim to gain a rich and in-depth understanding. In particular, this study delivers a deeper insight into the 'how' and 'why' aspects within the study's RQ by using thematic analysis (DeSantis and Ugarriza, 2000; Ayres, 2007). Thematic analysis is advantageous for this qualitative study, due to the flexibility of the analysis technique, for instance, the flexibility in the RQs, sample size and method of data collection (Clarke and Braun, 2017). The flexibility of thematic analysis further entails the ability to identify patterns within the data in relation to the participants' views, experiences, behaviours, perspectives and practices (Clarke and Braun, 2017).

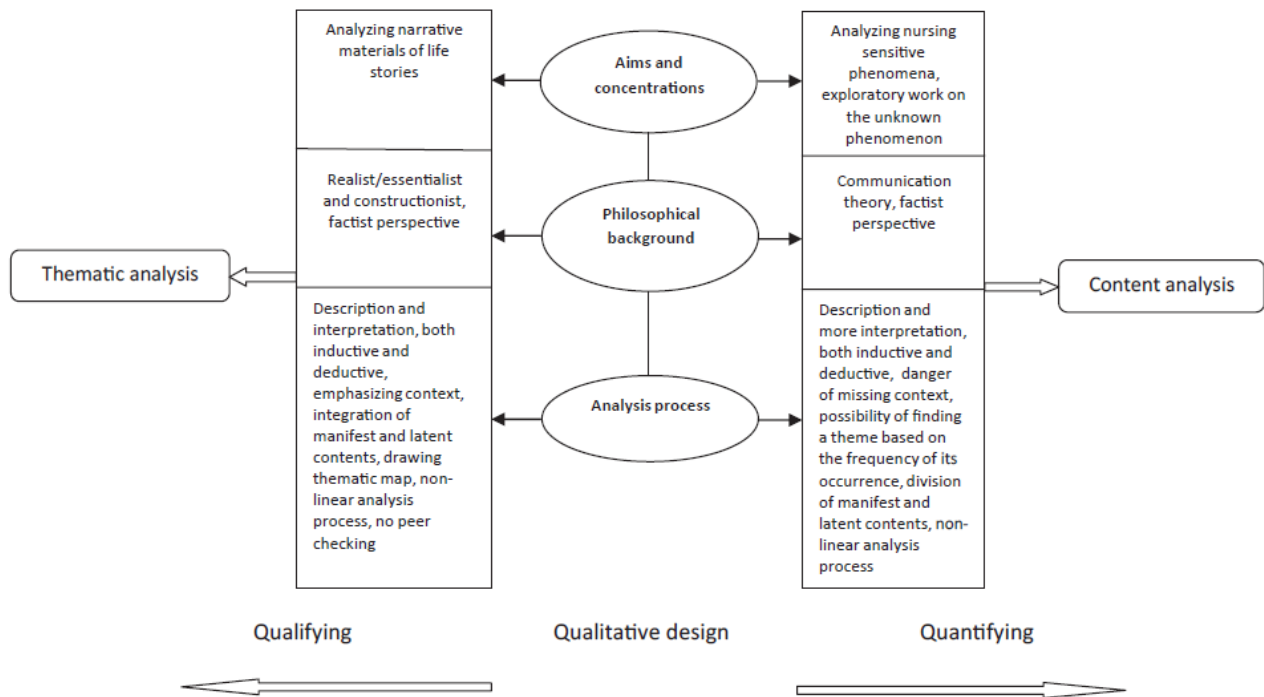
Two types of thematic analysis are available, these are, theoretical and inductive. Theoretical thematic analysis is driven by the researcher's analytic or theoretical interest area; thus, the analysis is purely analyst-driven (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The latter would not be an appropriate analysis tool, because the technique does not fit with the study's inductive philosophical underpinning, which means that the analysis is data driven rather than analyst driven. Therefore, considering this study's underpinning philosophy, the study undertook an inductive approach which entailed a process of coding that did not fit the pre-existing coding framework (Patton, 1990; Braun and Clarke, 2006). In particular, the themes are initially derived from the data with no relation to the literature or the researcher's reflection. Thus, the initial analysis is a process of not coding to the researcher's analytical preconceptions or an existing coding frame, it is purely data-driven (Braun and Clarke, 2006). There are two levels to undertaking inductive thematic analysis and identifying themes, these are, semantic and latent (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A semantic analysis comprises of the themes being identified from a surface meaning from the data, and not looking beyond what the participant is saying (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Whereas a latent thematic analysis, commonly associated with a constructivist philosophical underpinning, examines the underlying conceptualisations and meanings of the semantic content of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Considering this study's social constructivist ontological position, a latent thematic analysis is suitable. Also, the latent thematic analysis addresses this study's RQs, as the analysis tool delivers a rich and

comprehensive understanding into the emerging themes. To summarise, this study undertook Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis, in particular, the inductive and latent thematic analysis.

Content analysis was an alternative analysis technique that was considered, due to the overlapping similarities with thematic analysis. Prior literature indicates that both analysis techniques are used interchangeably within studies, the studies argue that the concepts are similar and do not present a clear rationale that differentiates them (Sandelowski, 2010). Such confusion towards the two concepts has led to the techniques being merged and re-titled, for instance, as phenomenological thematic analysis (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2003) and thematic content analysis (Green and Thorogood, 2004). A recent study by Vaismoradi et al. (2013) examined the differences between the two analysis concepts to indicate how the methods differentiated. A pivotal factor that separates both techniques entails that, content analysis is associated to the quantification of data, by calculating the occurrence of themes and different categories (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). In contrast, thematic analysis does not quantify the emerging themes or categories, instead the concept examines the reasons underlying the occurring themes led by the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thus, the latter evidences that thematic analysis suits this study, as this study's epistemological stance of interpretivist warrants an exploration into understanding the 'why' and 'how'.

Figure 3.1 below exemplifies the similarities and differences between content and thematic analysis that are discussed within this section, and evidences the importance of this study using thematic analysis.

Figure 3.1: Main Characteristics of Thematic Analysis and Qualitative Content Analysis in the Continuum of the Quality Methodology



(Sourced from: Vaismoradi et al., 2013)

3.6.1 Ensuring Validity in Qualitative Research: Credibility and Reliability

Previous studies discuss the challenges associated to ensuring validity within qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003; Silverman, 2017; Silverman, 2020). Validity is defined as how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and how credible it is to the participants, thus referring to the inferences drawn from the data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1987; Schwandt, 1997; Creswell and Miller, 2000). This study ensured validity by building upon Creswell and Miller's (2000) two perspectives. Considering the first perspective "the lens used by the researcher" this doctoral study determined the credibility by doing the following, the researcher remains in the field on the basis of saturation of themes and categories (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Guest et al., 2006). This process is demonstrated when the study undertook steps 4 and 5 of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis, entailing the researcher's return to the data to ensure that codes, sub-codes, themes and interpretations made sense (Patton, 1980). The second perspective "paradigm

assumptions”, comprises the researcher’s paradigm as worldviews or assumptions that shape their use of procedures (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Creswell and Miller, 2000). Considering this study’s social constructivist philosophical underpinning, a constructivist position is adopted, comprising a pluralistic, open-ended, interpretative, and contextualised perspective (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Golafshani, 2003). This study used two procedures that align with the two perspectives; “triangulation” and “researcher reflexivity” (Creswell and Miller, 2000). Triangulation entails the use of multiple information or sources to form themes in a study (Takhar-Lail and Gorbani, 2015; Silverman, 2020). The study’s multi-method qualitative design provided a triangulation of two methods to explore consumers’ knowledge sharing online from different angles (Mingers, 2001; Gil-Garcia and Pardo, 2006; Palakshappa and Gordon, 2006; Silverman, 2017), the latter is important because triangulation eliminates dependency on a solitary data point in the study (Creswell and Miller, 2000). Researcher reflexivity entails a researcher disclosing their values and beliefs in order to understand their biases prior to the research process (Creswell and Miller, 2000). This study’s researcher was aware of their beliefs to make sure that the analysis was driven by the data rather than by the researcher’s values.

Ensuring reliability within qualitative research is challenging, unlike quantitative research that can use pre-tested measures and scales, qualitative research can ensure reliability by using field notes and inter-coder agreement during the analysis of the data (Silverman, 2017). Concerning this study’s inductive approach to data analysis contextual notes were taken in the form of self-memos, a reflective diary, a research notebook, transcript summary’s, document summaries and progress summaries (Saunders et al., 2012), the latter confirmed reliability. A thematic analysis workshop²⁴ was undertaken during the study with two academics with expert experience and knowledge to discuss the codes and themes emerging from the data, further demonstrating how this study ensured reliability.

The subsequent section discusses this study’s consideration of ethics when undertaking data collection and data analysis.

3.7 Consideration of Ethics

It is important that this study followed Coventry University Ethics guidelines before undertaking primary research, as ethics are a crucial aspect for the success of the research study

²⁴ P221 in section 7.7 delivers a detailed explanation of the thematic analysis workshop

(Saunders et al., 2012)²⁵. During the data collection process, the online ethics forms were completed and were approved, hence, successfully meeting Coventry University's guidelines²⁶. In relation to this study, a 'Participant Information Form' was sent via email to all prospective participants prior to a focus group and semi-structured interview. For the purpose of informing them about this study, their participation, and the ethical research protocol²⁷. Once the prospective participant had read and understood the 'Participant Information Form', an 'Informed Consent Form' was distributed to receive consent to partake within the focus group and the pilot interview²⁸. Due the online nature of the interview, the interviewer asked the interviewee for their consent, the recording via a Dictaphone verified their consent. Within the 'Informed Consent Form' the participant or interviewee was asked for their consent to allow the discussion to be recorded, for the purpose of this study transcribing the discussions for the following analysis of the data. It is important for this study to inform the participants and interviewees, and receive their consent in order to ensure that the study undertaken is credible and complies with the General Data Protection Regulation of 2016. To ensure that this study aligns with the latter, electronic confidential documents are stored on a password protected USB and external hard drive, and paper copies are kept in a secure locker provided to PhD students by Coventry University. This study will later dispose of data generated from the primary research at the end of the study.

Concerning the online aspect of this study within the semi-structured interviews, it is important that this study understood the online ethics involved. For instance, Evans et al. (2015) suggest that an online environment which contains personal data shared by consumers is subject to the regulations of the Data Protection Association. Hence, data collected from the OC was fairly and lawfully gathered to abide with Coventry University Ethics. Moreover, this study's researcher contacted interviewees via a separate Twitter account created as a professional page related to their research. Following the University of Manchester's (2019) guidelines, the

²⁵ Appendix 1 details how the focus groups complied with ethics, and Appendix 2 discusses how the interviews complied with ethics.

²⁶ Appendix 26 demonstrates 8 ethical approved certificates that are associated to this PhD. The forms date from the 17/06/2016 until the 21/02/2019. The latest ethical approval certificate is shown at the start of thesis.

²⁷ Appendix 27 presents the 'Participant Information Form' used for the focus groups. Appendix 28 shows the 'Participant Information Form' used for the pilot semi-structured interview. Whereas, Appendix 29 demonstrates the 'Participant Information Form' used for the main semi-structured interviews.

²⁸ Appendix 30 shows the 'Informed Consent Form' used for the focus groups. Appendix 31 demonstrates the 'Informed Consent Form' used for the pilot interview.

researcher stated on their Twitter page that this account is for research purposes only, to clearly indicate transparency to the interviewee. A disclaimer was stated on the researcher's Twitter account to confirm their association to Coventry University and to the Centre of Business and Society as a PhD student. The purpose of the latter, was to inform those who read the researcher's 'tweets', that these were their own opinions and thoughts and not associated to Coventry University or the Research Centre (University of Manchester, 2019). The researcher also considered the information that they shared, which meant not sharing private photographs or content concerning their private life (The British Psychological Society, 2019). Also, stronger privacy settings were enforced by the researcher, as recommended by The British Psychological Society (2019).

Moreover, this study used Twitter as an online platform to recruit interviewees for the interviews²⁹, therefore, the study kept updated with Twitter's terms and conditions and data protection policies, the following website was used: <https://twitter.com/en/tos>. It was vital that this study's researcher recruited interviewees with a public profile, if the researcher were to recruit from private mediums, they must ask permission from the gatekeeper to join (Manchester University, 2019). In the case of this study, the researcher recruited participants from a public green clothing OC on Twitter. It was advised that when communicating with an interviewee willing to partake within the interview, that the interaction took place on a one-to-one basis via private message on the social media platform or by e-mail (University of Manchester, 2019). Abiding with The British Psychological Society (2019) and Coventry University Ethics, the researcher must not establish inappropriate relationships with service users or clients online, publish classified information from clients or service users or 'post' inflammatory comments about the individuals or Coventry University.

Following Coventry University Ethics guidelines, the researcher of this study will ensure anonymity of participants and interviewees when publishing the thesis, by not using a real name for the participants or interviewees instead an individual abbreviated identity will be given to them.

²⁹ Appendix 22 provides an explanation about why this study chose Twitter.

This section demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the ethical and legal implications of this study. The ensuing section concludes the chapter.

3.8 Summary

To summarise, this study's philosophical and methodological approach complied with the RQs derived from the literature review. Considering prior studies discussed within Chapter 2, the study's chosen methodology is informed by previous studies that explore a phenomenon that overlapped with this study's interest. Considering this study's ontology, this study undertook a subjectivist philosophical stance, in particular, a social constructivist position. A social constructivist stance suited this study's objectives to understand social actors created shared meanings via social interactions. This study adopted an interpretivist position within the epistemological stance. This is due to this study assuming a subjectivist position and the RQs driving the study's desire to understand a social phenomenon which comprises of rich and in-depth data. This study considered axiology, which comprised of the researcher acknowledging their own actions and values within the study, to ensure a credible and successful qualitative study. Furthermore, the study used an inductive approach as the research design, thus, validating the reasoning of undertaking a qualitative study, as the approach feeds back into theory.

The qualitative research design chosen for this study is due to the RQs driving the study consisting of a need for an in-depth and rich explanation. Likewise, an exploratory study is appropriately chosen for this study due to the RQs requiring a comprehensive understanding. The research conducted two focus groups to deliver a preliminary understanding to RQs 1 and 2. Whereas 20 semi-structured interviews were employed via Skype to deliver a comprehensive understanding to all three RQs. The most used methodologies undertaken by previous studies entailed, netnography, online surveys and semi-structured interviews. Both netnography and online surveys would not be suitable for this study, because both methods lack the ability to deliver a rich insight into consumers' knowledge sharing and empowerment within a green clothing OC. Hence, this study undertook semi-structured interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding to address the RQs. Considering this study's ontological stance of social constructivism, this study undertook focus groups to gather an insight into consumers' group discussion and shared perceptions or attitudes towards this study's phenomena.

This study used non-probability purposive sampling. In particular, snowballing sampling for the two focus groups, whereas, a stratified purposive sampling was suitable for the 20 semi-structured interviews. Appendices 19 and 20 evidence the criteria chosen for the two research strategies, to ensure a homogeneous sample. This study recruited six participants within each of the two focus groups, due to the in-sensitive nature of the phenomena. Alongside, the recruitment of 20 interviewees for the semi-structured interviews, as a result of reviewing prior studies which show that 15-23 interviews are suitable. This study was conscience of the saturation point when collecting data, saturation was met at the above number of focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The latter was evident, when the same themes and discussion occurred within the focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

This study analysed the data derived from both research strategies using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis. This study undertook an inductive thematic analysis, alongside, implementing a latent thematic analysis. This study demonstrates an awareness of an alternative analysis tool that shares similarities with thematic analysis, which is content analysis. The pivotal aspect which differentiates both analysis methods, is that content analysis entails a quantifiable aspect when analysing the data, whereas, theoretical analysis is driven to identify emerging themes when analysing the rich data. Thus, the latter is most appropriate for this study.

The chapter examines the ethics which are pivotal when conducting a valid and rigorous qualitative study. Section 3.7 evidences how this study complied with Coventry University Ethics, and the legal considerations that need to be understood when undertaking online semi-structured interviews. This study followed the recent General Data Protection Act of 2016, this entails ensuring that participants and interviewees are kept anonymous within the study and all data will be destroyed at the end of the PhD.

The ensuing Chapter 4 discusses the findings that emerged from the two focus groups.

Chapter 4: Initial Scope

4.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the initial scoping based on two focus groups. The emerging themes identified within the chapter arose from the data collected from two focus groups with social media users. This study analysed the data using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis, the process is explained within Section 3.6³⁰.

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to deliver a preliminary understanding into research questions (RQs) 1 and 2. The analysis addressed RQ 1 by examining the drivers of users' knowledge sharing on social media. RQ 2 is addressed within the analysis, by examining how users' knowledge sharing and empowerment inter-relate.

The chapter is organised as follows. Section 4.2 outlines participants' motivations to share knowledge on social media. Sub-sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.3 discuss the three main drivers influencing participants exchange of information, this includes 'professional identity', 'desire to educate' and 'personal interest'. This is followed by section 4.3, that explores the factors that discourage users to share knowledge. Sub-sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 deliver insights into two aspects that deter participants' distributing information on social media. The influences include, 'self-consciousness' and 'lack of confidence'. Lastly, section 4.4 reflects on the themes emerging from both focus groups and concludes the discussion within the chapter.

4.2 Aspects that Drive Users' Knowledge Sharing

This section examines the motivations that drive participants to share knowledge on social media. The analysis identified 3 main drivers, these are, professional identity, desire to educate and personal interest.

Section 4.2.1 discusses that participants share knowledge to present, a professional identity, seek validation when contributing information to gain confidence about their perceived role, and undertake roles that demonstrate their perceived identity. Such roles include opinion leader, influencer, information sharer, networker, promoter and conversationalist. Section 4.2.2 examines the desire to educate which drives users' knowledge sharing. Participants demonstrate

³⁰ The table in Appendix 32 demonstrates how this study analysed the data using the 6 steps of thematic analysis. Appendices 33 to 38 support the explanation within Appendix 32. For instance, the Appendices presents tables of the codes, thematic maps and tables that define the emerging themes.

they are driven to educate because they want to help others, and because their online anonymity drives a desire to educate. Section 4.2.3 discusses personal interests as a driver that encourages users to share knowledge. On the one hand, users share information to make themselves feel good or exchange information to gain valuable knowledge related to a personal interest. On the other hand, users share knowledge to support their friends and family. All three concepts demonstrate the different drivers influencing users' knowledge sharing on social media.

4.2.1 Professional Identity

The theme examines users' who are driven to share knowledge for the purpose of presenting a professional image on social media. In order to present a professional image, users modify 'tweet' content, seek validation for their perceived identity from others, and distribute content to demonstrate their professional roles on social media.

Maintaining a professional identity is an important driver portrayed by participants within both focus groups, this is demonstrated when participants describe their current professional role as an entrepreneur, in industry or in academia. As a result, participants are inclined to display their perceived professional image on social media by sharing information associated to their specialist interests. Participant 6 evidences her/his drive to portray a professional image on Twitter, stating that s/he is an academic and purposively shares knowledge associated to her/his job as a lecturer, for instance, solely sharing 'professional interests'. The participant argues that s/he does not share information not associated to her/his profession even if there is a potential link to her/his academic interest. For example, during focus group 1 the participant discussed that s/he lectures within a discipline that is related to crime, however, intentionally does not share information that is loosely linked to the topic. For the purpose of reflecting a consistent professional identity across the participant's social media:

So, my professional one (Twitter page) I use as me as an academic... I also have a Twitter page for myself for my academic interests let's say so my professional interests... My Twitter is not necessarily my public profile, like some things like football even if it is connected to crime (crime is associated to their profession as a lecturer). I will avoid it. (FG1, P6)

The statement above reveals that the participant hopes to manage her/his public image on social media, with the intention to control how her/his social media followers view her/him. During focus group 1 the participant frequently discussed how s/he managed her/his online image via

multiple social media accounts, by knowingly sharing knowledge on certain platforms that will encourage others to regard the participant as a professional. In the case of the quote above, Twitter is a platform that the participant hopes to evoke a professional image.

The importance of maintaining a professional image on social media is further demonstrated by participant 2, however, by sharing knowledge on one account rather than via multiple accounts. As a result, of participant 2 learning about her/his friends' negative experiences when using multiple accounts, s/he solely shares knowledge that is orientated to their profession. The participant evidences that s/he manages how her/his social media followers view them on one platform, because s/he desires to communicate a professional persona and wants to avoid a problematic situation of 'posting' unsuitable comments:

I have some friends and colleagues who maintain multiple accounts but there's actually a high error rate associated with that. And the consequences of posting something personal on a professional account and vice versa. As such I took the view to keep it simple, one account of each platform and keep it solely for business purposes... Like I said right at the output I limit my comments for professional reasons. (FG1, P2)

The statement reveals another underlying rationale to 'post' on one platform, for instance, the participant shares knowledge on one social media because it is easier to present a professional image that way.

Moreover, during focus group 1 a discussion started in relation to the drawbacks concerning the 140-character limit on Twitter, however, participant 2 disagreed with fellow participants negative connotations. Instead, participant 2 preferred the 140-character restriction on Twitter because it allowed her/him to 'post' a 'short, punchy and immediate' tweet, enabling purely professional content to be 'posted'. Thus, the restriction enabled the participant to share content that reflected her/his desired professional image:

Twitter is limited to 140 characters currently changing... I personally quite like the 140 limit it is short, punchy and immediate. (FG1, P2)

The statement alongside the analytical memos made during the focus group, evidence that the participant used the Twitter character restriction to complement her/his knowledge sharing to manage how others perceive her/him as a professional.

In contrast, to the above participant's inclination towards Twitter's character limit, a participant in focus group 2 reveals her/his indifference towards the restricted character count and evidences an alternative approach to share knowledge driven by a professional motive. For instance, the participant distributes precise information related to her/his job to fit the character count, alongside a photo displaying content that is associated to the succinct 'tweet'. The latter is regarded as 'easy' for the participant to do, in regards to circulating work-related content. Thus, the statement below evidences the participant's rationale to share information is driven by professional reasons to distribute content related to her/his job:

On Twitter there are limited words, and when I have to give out some information or news about what is going on (related to job) it limits me. So, on Twitter I put a photo with the content, so the content is within the photo... On Twitter I have to be precise...if you're conducting a particular event you need to write about it or after it, when you tweet you just paste the photo on Twitter. That's quite easy for me.
(FG2, P2)

During focus group 2, the participant continually evidences their reliance on social media in regards to sharing work information, because the platform makes it easy for her/him to circulate knowledge to colleagues and organise events. Hence, the participant reveals that the majority of her/his knowledge is driven by a professional motive.

Participants evidence a need for social media users to validate their professional identity. The need occurs when participants 'post' content related to their expertise to signal a perceived identity, in the hope that other users recognise them as the persona and validate them as the desired image.

Participants who state that they are professionals and solely share knowledge to be perceived as professional, discuss that they share their own expert opinions. A sense of validation-seeking is demonstrated by participants who exchange knowledge with others about related topics to their profession to evoke their identity. Thus, a desire to seek validation entails participants hope for social media users to identify them as their anticipated perceived identity. During focus group 1, the participants were asked by the researcher if they shared their own opinions or experiences on social media and why, participant 6 revealed that s/he only shares her/his opinions at a 'professional level' within online debates. The statement below indicates that the participant

engages within conversations related to her/his academic job which is associated to politics. Participant 6 stresses that s/he shares knowledge for only professional reasons across all social media platforms, and keeps her/his personal comments to a minimum. The participant discusses the reason why s/he manages her/his image online, which is to reduce a personal presence across social media and to instead be seen at a professional level by viewers. The latter, is evidenced within the last two sentences of the quote below. Thus, the participant reveals a desire for validation from her/his social media users, to be perceived as a professional:

It all depends, on what type of content it is. If someone posts, like I said I'm shying away from personal accounts. If someone is talking politics then I'll engage in a vague conversation. Like the referendum what's going on then I'll engage in a discussion. I think with personal things that people are dealing with maybe someone gets engaged I'll say congratulations or whatever. I've almost reduced my social media presence to this at a personal level. And a professional level I try to engage in debates. (FG1, P6)

The statement above reveals the participant engaging at a higher level when having a conversation on Twitter which is of interest to her/him, in particular, engagement is heightened when the topic entails her/his profession. Thus, the participant's level of engagement is dependent on the content and the association to her/his perceived identity.

Participants demonstrate that they share knowledge on different platforms in order to manage their image, in particular, to seek validation for their desired persona. Participant 1 evidences that s/he shares knowledge differently across social media, in particular, s/he uses Twitter to exchange information and gather information related to their medical profession. Whereas, on Facebook the participant shares knowledge with users that s/he have a close relationship with. For instance, during the focus group the participant stated that 'Facebook is more for personal use and Twitter is for professional reasons and for following various organisations within the medical field and other organisations'. The participant demonstrates that s/he seeks validation for her/his professional persona on Twitter, by criticising or praising information shared by online experts, such as, 'NHS England' or 'local health board':

It depends on really with the context like in personal situations. I suppose it's kind of more pertinent to respond to people that you know intimately. So, the context is quite personal. On the other hand, with Twitter where I follow NHS England or the local health board it would be more for information. Yes, I do occasionally respond for example either criticism or something that they have put on there. Or praise them as well. (FG1, P1)

The statement above further reveals that the participant hopes to signal that they are knowledgeable by criticising and praising ‘posts’ shared by medical organisations. Thus, the latter demonstrates how the participant shares knowledge in order to seek validation for their professional image on Twitter.

Participants demonstrate a variety of personae due to their professional identity to share knowledge on social media. The roles emerged from the analysis, and provide an insight into how participants present a character online to distribute information within the role. The following roles that stem from the analysis include, opinion leader, influencer, information sharer, networker, promoter and conversationalist. The analysis evidences that the majority of users simultaneously indicate more than one role at a time. As a result, each character complements the other and enables the participant to portray their perceived professional image.

The following descriptions of the roles provide an explanation of how users present themselves as a persona, and contributes to an understanding of why they are driven to share knowledge on social media. An opinion leader perceives themselves as being knowledgeable and shares their expert opinion on the subject matter. The influencer role consists of a user who is perceived by others as knowledgeable, subsequently other users act upon the information shared. For instance, the role entails the user contributing or sharing information that they have gathered, which results in influencing others’ decision-making. An information sharer role consists of a user who shares information that they have gathered on social media, in particular, they share knowledge that is of interest to their followers. The networker role entails a user who shares knowledge on social media for the purpose of establishing a professional connection and anticipates a professional benefit. The promoter role consists of a user who shares information about the products or services that they sell on social media or sells on behalf of their company. Lastly, a conversationalist role comprises a user who exchanges information with others about a topic that they are interested in via a ‘hashtag’ consisting of the conversation on the topic. The ‘hashtag’ encourages the user to contribute their knowledge to an ongoing conversation. Participants share knowledge differently within their perceived personae with the intention of displaying a professional image on social media.

A participant portrays the following roles when sharing information, these are, opinion leader, influencer, information sharer and networker. All four roles are presented individually but unite for the purpose of portraying her/his professional identity on social media. Participant 1 discusses that s/he plays the character of opinion leader and influencer, as s/he perceives herself/himself as a user who others will listen to and can provoke a movement to 'raise issues'. Information sharer and networker roles are conveyed by the participant, when s/he states 'getting information' and 'opinions' results in sharing information and connecting with others who are perceived as an 'opportunity' to interact with:

Part of it is getting information and getting opinion and the opportunity to interact and influence opinion perhaps. Especially if it's a professional group or group's that have 10,000 people... If people make enough noise about a particular problem it gets looked at and addressed. And I find that social media is a good platform to raise issues, because it's instant to more public. Therefore, it gets looked at sooner. (FG1, P1)

The role of networker is a prevalent role demonstrated by a participant alongside an opinion leader persona. A participant demonstrates the role of networker when sharing knowledge on social media for the purpose of her/his job. For instance, participant 2 shared knowledge on Facebook, Twitter and Hangout to communicate with professional connections about upcoming work events and arrange meetings. During focus group 2, the participant discussed how s/he aligned social media with her/his job because it was 'pretty easy' and 'handy' for her/him to communicate with colleagues. Thus, demonstrating that the participant is driven by a professional motive to share knowledge, in particular, s/he uses the online platforms because they entail uncomplicated tools to use. The opinion leader character is evidenced by the participant when using social media to distribute her/his expert knowledge to arrange meetings or circulate upcoming events. Hence, the participant reveals her/his professional authority on social media which entails her/him distributing information and fellow colleagues paying attention to what s/he says:

As I said before I run a group here (related to her/his job). So, to get connected with people and spread out the information, so that is the major thing I use Facebook for which is nearly every day. So, Facebook, Twitter, Hangout. For calling different people, through Hangout I can talk to 5 people or 6 people on a video call or something. So, that's very handy for me, if I'm at work on a break I can quickly do a video chat and connect and get them together and arrange such things. So, it is

quite handy for me to get the group together and spread out the information. (FG2, P2)

On Hangout I can talk to all of you together. So, it's like a conference call, but a video conference call. So that's why it's pretty easy. (FG2, P2)

Both the networker and promoter role are demonstrated by a participant, who shares knowledge on a Facebook page created for the purpose of contacting social media users associated to the music industry and publicising her/his upcoming gigs. During the focus group, participant 3 revealed that s/he created a Facebook page related to her/his music career, as a result of observing other musicians having a professional page. Hence, the participant demonstrates a professional rationale as to why s/he circulates upcoming gig information and talks to others on a page created to endorse herself/himself as a musician:

I also have a page on there (Facebook) for my music. I do a few gigs in Coventry so I often post them there. So, I use it promote that as well... It's mainly about contacting people and networking and stuff. (FG2, P3)

It would of started when we just started telling people about it. And then it would have been like oh I'll make a page because I'd seen other musicians doing it. It's a good way to see what gigs are going on. If you just put in open mics in Coventry or whatever, nothing much comes up. But on Facebook there's loads and loads of pages. They have events specifically for if you're doing a gig or whatever, so you can just invite people to it and stuff. So that's why I tend to use it for. (FG2, P3)

The statement above reveals that the participant manages different social media platforms, for instance, creating a Facebook page just for her/his career. Thus, the latter demonstrates that participant 3 manages social media platforms to control how users view her/him, referring to the statement above the intention is to be viewed as a professional musician.

Individual roles that are not portrayed alongside other personae are demonstrated by participants, for the purpose of demonstrating a professional identity. The role of networker was discussed as an integral reason to why one participant shared knowledge about her/his business on Twitter. The participant revealed that s/he was driven to share knowledge because s/he wanted to connect with perceived experts associated to her/his business. The participant argued that when s/he created her/his own company, networking with related specialists was an important aspect for establishing a successful venture and reflecting a professional identity online:

And I used to have Twitter when I started my own company, because I found that that was a good way to follow and interact with people that you wouldn't normally have access to. And I use to go to a big event, which had a tiny proportion of a huge bunch of people. So, if you start to follow people (on Twitter) and say you have been to this conference, and saw you speaking then people respond. I found that as a way to get to know people, since my business. (FG2, P6)

The role of promoter is evidenced as a pivotal persona by a participant, who shares knowledge on social media to endorse the products s/he sells as an entrepreneur. Subsequently, the participant distributes information to be perceived as a professional to prospective customers. The participant discussed that s/he perceives Twitter and LinkedIn as professional platforms that allow her/him to promote health and wellness products, in the hope to sell them to potential buyers. The participant shares information consistently by sharing the same message across social media to promote the products. The participant states that s/he hopes to position herself/himself as a professional in order to create her/his own future jewelry business online. Moreover, the participant signals that s/he seeks validation for her/his professional identity from other users, in the pursuit to create her/his own business:

I think Twitter and LinkedIn are more professional. It's more communicated between people in a professional way, or to present your business. That's taken more positively. Then the people who want to engage with you, really engage with you... I do sell health and wellness products, so basically, I use social media to promote those products... So why I got into that, is because I want to sort of expand my own business, I will do jewellery in the end. So, I will do network marketing and connect and see how that works first. (FG2, P4)

A conversationalist role is evidenced as a fundamental persona for a participant, who discussed that s/he used 'hashtags' on Twitter to keep track of conversations. During focus group 1, participant 6 frequently discussed her/his academic career and a drive to share knowledge that is job related. Hence, the participant reveals a professional rationale as to why s/he exchange information on social media. The participant discussed how s/he used a 'hashtag' to contribute to conversations, because the 'hashtag' makes it easy for her/him to locate a conversation, whereas, 'tweets' not related to a 'hashtag' 'can fly out everywhere':

Whereas Twitter (tweets) can fly out everywhere and you cannot see someone else's reply or message on that topic. Unless you search through every message on the topic, or unless it has been in a hashtag. (FG1, P6)

The statement above evidences how the participant shared knowledge using ‘hashtags’ to have a conversation with users who were talking about work-related content. Thus, the participant used different outlets, such as a ‘hashtag’ to evidence her/his professional identity.

4.2.2 Desire to Educate

The theme of a desire to educate emerges from the analysis as a driver that motivates users to share knowledge, in the hope to teach others about a topic related to the users’ profession. Users depict altruism when sharing knowledge to support others, whilst not expecting a personal gain. Alternatively, users distribute information to teach others for the desire of behaviour change.

Participants gather knowledge from Twitter profiles that they perceive as professional and legitimate sources of information. Certain ‘posts’ trigger the participants’ interest and inspire them to exchange knowledge within the conversation. The information gathered provides participants with a richer understanding associated to their profession, in turn, the participant feels a sense of duty to educate other users by circulating what they learnt. Gathering knowledge is deemed as being very important to one participant, who reveals that s/he gathers knowledge related to her/his profession and distributes the information to educate her/his followers. Thus, demonstrating that as a result of the participant collecting information for her/his own learning, this influences her/his desire to educate others. The participant discussed that s/he accumulates information online nowadays, whereas previously s/he gathered knowledge by ‘joining a club or society’ or via monthly newsletter subscription. During the focus group, the participant recalled the expansive network s/he has on Twitter, which is a positive for her/him because s/he can gather information from experts associated to her/his professional interest. Subsequent to gathering information, the participant circulates knowledge for the purpose of supporting others who may be interested. Therefore, the participant portrays that s/he has a sense of responsibility to share information s/he has found to help her/his followers, for the purpose of educating others:

So, 25 years ago before we were all online if you had hobbies or interests you had to join a club or society. You might get a monthly newsletter... There were bulletin boards... Same interests 20 years ago but the way that I am communicating and sharing those interests is actually just completely different... I am actually following people that are regarded as specialists in the field that I am interested in, I only follow a couple hundred people on Twitter but they very clearly fall into a number of categories... Then I have subject matter experts who perhaps through developing

their Twitter or Facebook account have developed some reputation for being a leader in that field. (FG1, P2)

So, I tend to use Twitter as an information flow primarily for me... I do a lot of other research and if I think that something that I have read elsewhere is of interest to people who follow me then I will tweet that. (FG1, P2)

The second statement above evidences the participant's altruistic behaviour driven by her/his motivation to educate and to share information that may be of interest to others.

In contrast, a participant revealed that her/his concealment behind the screen motivated her/him to educate others by sharing her/his opinions. The user's anonymity entailed a distance between her/his 'offline self' and 'online self', thus, allowing her/him to project another persona online which would not be displayed in her/his everyday life. Within focus group 2 participant 6 discussed how s/he would express anger towards another user's 'post' because s/he felt confident behind the screen, the latter influenced her/him to 'post' information that disagreed with others. The participant labeled herself/himself as a 'troll' for sharing honest opinions that opposed others views, and agreed with a fellow participant that described participant 6 as a 'keyboard warrior'. The participant argued that educating others was a pivotal driver that explained why s/he shared knowledge on social media, however, the participant suggests that recently users are not learning from her/him. The last sentence of the statement below demonstrates the participant's discussion in the focus group, in which, s/he discussed how s/he is not educating as much but argued that her/his anonymity enables her/him to continue acting as a 'troll' to educate rather than to annoy others. Thus, demonstrating that participant 6's desire to educate others is still a central driver for her/him:

If I get really annoyed like if somebody says somethings not good, then I am not shy about telling them... I am one of those trolls as well... I used to do it a lot more in the past (troll online) than I am doing it now, and I feel that I am not really achieving anything. Spending a lot of time and energy but I am not really educating anyone... I think it is much better to be done face-to-face (to educate). Because the reaction is there, and human emotion and impact is known. And all the other things around language and communication. They all exist in a face-to-face environment. Whereas online you're so detached behind the keyboard. I sometimes get extremely angry behind the keyboard... I wouldn't normally do that in day-to-day life, or on the contrary I wouldn't just say something to annoy people. (FG2, P6)

The statement further demonstrates that the participant manages her/his identity on social media. For instance, participant 6 ensures that s/he is kept anonymous when sharing knowledge to educate others, rather than presenting who s/he really is. Thus, the participant's online anonymity enables her/him to fulfil a desire to educate.

4.2.3 Personal Interest

The theme personal interest is a driver that motivates users to share knowledge, because of their curiosity and enjoyment with the content of a conversation. For instance, the latter entails the participant distributing information to respond to a conversation that intrigues them or is affiliated with their family or friends. A higher level of engagement is reflected when the content appeals to the user and fits their interest.

Participants discuss that they are more likely to share knowledge and engage with users, when the dialogue fits their curiosity or aligns with their interest. Therefore, showing that a participants' personal interest motivates them to disseminate content with users on social media. A participant argues that s/he has recently changed the way s/he exchanges information on social media, for instance, becoming 'more of a follower than an engager'. The latter is due to the participant's drive to exchange information when the social media conversation is novel and intrigues her/him. For instance, the participant states that s/he is driven by information that 'blows my mind' or 'something is good' or 'tickles me'. Therefore, demonstrating the participant's personal interest as a driver that motivates her/his information sharing:

I think I am more of a follower rather than an engager. But from time-to-time especially if there's something that blows my mind, I am one of those people that will say thank you. Or if something is good, or something that really tickles me I'd say yay thank you. (FG2, P6)

The statement above reveals that the participant partakes in a higher level of engagement with others on social media, when the content appeals or fascinates her/him. Thus, the more relevant the content is to the participant, the more driven s/he is to share knowledge on social media.

Knowledge exchange is further heightened when the conversation appeals to the participant's cognition. For instance, the participant evidences engagement with 'posts' to learn more and to display her/his appreciation of the information shared. Participant 6 expresses an expected outcome when s/he exchanges information for her/his personal interest, which includes, a desire to acquire a useful contact or gather information related to her/his personal interest. The

participant disregards how s/he may help the user, demonstrating that her/his hope is to only fulfil a need for information to benefit herself/himself:

I see good initiatives or good projects or community projects. And I mentioned that I work for a charity it's a local mental health charity... And when I see something that is interesting or I could potentially benefit from just from knowing somebody in that group or getting a bit of knowledge. And I would comment and say I find that interesting let's get together and chat. It's easy to engage with people and see what they are up to. On those platforms (Twitter and LinkedIn). (FG2, P6)

Moreover, users demonstrate their motivation to engage with users that they know on social media, such as, family or friends, to either support or acknowledge content shared by them. A participant states that s/he reciprocates on 'posts' to support and encourage a family member, for instance, s/he comments on her/his cousin's YouTube page to acknowledge career achievements. The participant demonstrates her/his motivation to only comment on a 'post' or share knowledge to support a family member or friend. Thus, the latter reveals that a higher level of engagement occurs when the content corresponds with the participant's desire to encourage a family member or friend:

Yeah sometimes (comment). It's more like friends that have YouTube channels, or family. I have a DJ'ing nephew; he is DJ'ing around the world. So, commenting and supporting like that. (FG2, P4)

Similarly, the inclination to only engage with a familiar user is demonstrated by another participant. However, the participant reveals a predisposition towards exchanging information on 'posts' that are of a personal interest to her/him and because the 'post' was shared by a friend. An uncertainty is expressed by the participant, when discussing the aspect of engaging with unknown social media users. Thus, the participant's personal interest to support a user who s/he knows in person, is a driver that restricts who s/he engages with on social media:

I probably wouldn't comment if I didn't know the person. Unless it was something relevant to me, then probably not no. Unless I was tagged in it or something, like a friend shared it or reposted it, or made a discussion. (FG2, P3)

The statement above evidences the influence of the participant's personal interest, determining who s/he shares knowledge with and what type of content s/he distributes. Hence, revealing that

that a personal interest motive controls a variety of aspects when the participant shares knowledge on social media.

4.3 Factors that Discourage Users' Knowledge Sharing

This section discusses the factors that discourages users to share knowledge on social media, this includes, 'self-consciousness' and a lack of confidence. Section 4.3.1 entails participants' feeling uncomfortable to share a 'tweet' due to the uncertainty of being judged by other users. Participants further evidence apprehension towards distributing 'posts' because they do not want to offend others or encourage criticism. Trepidation is expressed within 'self-consciousness' when participants discuss their concerns towards the truth of the 'post' that they intend to share to a global audience. The latter is due to the participants' worry towards receiving a negative reaction or judgement to their 'post'. Within the section, participants evidence the following precautions to avoid repercussion, for instance, stronger privacy settings, monitoring past 'posts' and deleting prior comments or information shared. Section 4.3.2 examines how participants are hesitant to share knowledge because they regard themselves as not being knowledgeable to contribute information. The latter, leads to participants only distributing knowledge via 'retweets' and 'likes' rather than producing their own content.

4.3.1 Self-Consciousness

'Self-consciousness' is expressed when participants demonstrate their concern towards sharing a 'tweet' that may be judged by a current or prospective employer, family member or unknown user with opposing views. The uncertain reaction that the 'post' may receive, acts a barrier and discourages the participants' exchange of information. Past 'posts' are monitored by participants and are deleted if they contain provocative messages which may cause negative reactions from users. Henceforth, participants share information on social media platforms differently to reduce ramification. For instance, participants reveal lower levels of engagement, such as, a 'liking' or 'retweeting' or not exchanging new knowledge. 'Self-consciousness' entails the following three aspects: participants are anxious of misinterpretation; participants monitor and filter previous 'posts' to avoid negative judgement and participants reform their online behaviour to prevent repercussions.

Anxiety is evidenced by participants who share 'posts', they reveal that they are concerned that the 'post' may insult users. Users state that their apprehension to engage is due to others

misinterpretation and the lack of face-to-face contact when sharing information online. Users indicate that an unease towards distributing content has resulted from their past experiences, this is demonstrated when participant 5 argued that using the wrong ‘emoji’ can offend another user. The participant expresses her/his uncertainty towards sharing ‘posts’, highlighting that users take offense due to ‘misinterpretation’ and a lack of physical contact, this has resulted in ‘general conversations’ upsetting someone. Thus, the participant’s anxiety demonstrates a lack of control over potential repercussions on her/his ‘posts’, consequently s/he is reluctant to exchange knowledge:

And misinterpretation of people’s comments. Say you don’t put the right emoji to react to someone and people take it the wrong way. They get offended... It’s really hard to get your emotion across, and people get offended. There’s a fine line... Between a general conversation or trying to put something across, it can offend people. Because 9 times out of 10 it tends to be offensive or someone takes offence. Even if it’s not meant that way... Anything that is on social media that isn’t face-to-face, people can take offence. (FG2, P5)

The above statement reflects participant 5’s hesitancy to exchange information on social media because of potential negative reactions that s/he has previously experienced. Hence, the participant’s anxiety towards offending another user has deterred her/his involvement within an online conversation, because the exchange of information may offend someone.

An apprehension towards receiving unwanted negative judgement is evidenced by participants, for instance, receiving misinterpretation from others on the participants’ ‘posts’. During focus group 2 a discussion emerged regarding what users can see the participant’s social media ‘posts’, a sense of trepidation is evidenced by the majority of the participants when talking about the subject. The participants revealed their worry towards unwanted misinterpretation and the reach of the comment on social media. The quotes below are in the order of the conversation, the discussion evidences the escalation of apprehension and the realisation of who can see what and the potential misunderstanding:

It’s public information. So, everything on Facebook that is posted is public information. (FG2, P6)

Your mums. Your dads. Your employers. Everyone (who can see your post). So, you’ve got to be careful what you put on the site. (FG2, P1)

There’s always somebody watching. (FG2, P5)

Or even when you go to start a job or you're applying for one. They can look up all your Facebook history. And people don't realise what they can actually see. (FG2, P3)

But there's a setting, I use it. There's a private setting. Nobody apart from who's friends with you can see it. So, no employer can see any details. (FG2, P2)

But sometimes you can get past that. So, if you put an image on Google it stays there forever. So, once you've put it on the internet, it can be copied. There is literally no way of getting out of it. Even if you delete it from one thing it can stay there... So, you've got to be careful what you put on. (FG2, P3)

The last two quotes reveal the heightened anxiety within the group discussion, towards the impact of the possible misunderstanding, because of the global reach of social media content that is not protected via privacy settings. The conversation provides an understanding into users' worry towards 'posting' content.

Users express their awareness towards what is expected within their job role and likely implications that could impact their job. For instance, such consequences entail unprofessional content being shared on social media, resulting in the content being misinterpreted by viewers. Thus, a professional identity is purposively presented to avoid repercussion. Participant 2 states that due to her/his job s/he has to be careful about what content is shared because of potential 'time-consuming' consequences. As part of her/his job role, the participant is researched prior to court appearances, therefore, incriminating 'posts' that are shared can be used against her/him. Subsequently, prior to the content being shared on social media the 'post' is scrutinised by participant 2, to eliminate provoking messages that could present an obstacle during work obligations within court:

A constraint for me in social media is that I end up in court a lot of the time. And the other side will do their best to research me, because most of what I say on social media is discoverable. And there's been a few times where that has given rise to an issue, not necessarily in a bad way but in a time-consuming way. (FG1, P2)

Following on from the heightened self-awareness displayed by participant 2 within the statement above. The participant states that as a result of her/his attention to detail in the hope of not receiving negative consequences s/he resorts to a 'like' on a 'post' rather than to comment. The change in knowledge sharing on Twitter reflects a suppressed participant who is not able to candidly share content, as the 'post' may be used against her/him or antagonise potential work situations in court:

So, I tend to use Twitter as an information flow primarily for me. My response is to like certain comments or tweets. But I tend not to specifically kind of comment on them. (FG1, P2)

The statements by participant 2 reveal the interplay between her/his job self-awareness and content shared on social media. As a result of the potential repercussions impacting her/his job, the participant reduces knowledge sharing to a 'like'. Also, the participant manages her/his identity online to control how users perceive her/him. For instance, the statements above evidence the participant's desire to be viewed as professional with no personal opinions that can contradict her/his job.

Apprehension towards potential backlash on prior 'posts' is discussed, participants express that they filter past 'posts' in the hope to discourage misjudgment on published content or anger users with conflicting views. A participant expresses her/his anxiety when choosing to reply to an online conversation about a 'debatable subject', s/he expresses an unease to share 'posts' that may be 'taken out of context' or be deemed as invalid to the discussion. The participant states that s/he monitors and retracts previous 'posts' perceived by her/him as untenable and is conscious of receiving negative replies on her/his comment. Thus, the participant's uncertainty discourages her/him to share knowledge and results in her/him retracting information shared:

In some cases, if you were to reply to a conversation that would be quite a debatable subject, sometimes your replies can cause further issues with those sorts of topics. It can be taken out of context or something and you may reply at one point where it's valid and then further down the line you would have to retract your comment, because of which way the debate has gone. It becomes an issue as you have to monitor what you are actually replying to quite regularly. (FG1, P5)

On the one hand, the statement above demonstrates that the participant does want to engage with others about a topic s/he perceives as interesting, in this case a 'debatable subject' which portrays the motivation of personal interest. On the other hand, the quote expresses that the participant's anxiety towards potential negative comments is so overbearing that s/he decides to withdraw and reduces her/his engagement. The latter evidences how the participant minimises her/his unease by filtering previously published content.

Users evidence a rigorous procedure that entails reviewing prior and recent 'posts'. Participant 5 examines content related to Brexit, due to the fear of being 'attacked' by others online and the

potential of conversations digressing. The participant argues that users misunderstanding of the content is to blame for potential negative reactions. Consequently, participant 5 argues that s/he filters present and past content that s/he perceives as being a catalyst to encourage negative response:

I'll share things and then a few years down the line then maybe I'll review it and take it off or something like that. But it's kind of like a post then review a few weeks later. Because situations change quite drastically and quickly especially with topics like Brexit and all that. There would be issues where people would be commenting on certain things, they wouldn't understand why they were commenting on those type of topics. At the time it makes sense but later on it comes back and attacks you.
(FG1, P5)

The statement above provides an insight into why users' filter content on social media and further demonstrates that the participant's 'self-consciousness' makes her/him conform to others opinions. For instance, the participant solely shares content that is uncontroversial and coincides with others thoughts, and revisits past 'posts' to ensure it fits the rhetoric. In turn, creating an echo chamber of similar thoughts and opinions related to specific topics, due to the fear of disapproval by other or receiving negative comments. The latter evidences the rationale behind the participant's discouragement to share knowledge, and reveals the outcome when participants filter prior 'posts'.

Apprehension towards past and present 'posts' that do not reflect the users' professional identity is demonstrated. For instance, participants portray their anxiety towards receiving backlash from potentially provoking content, which could result in a harmful impact on their present career or cause controversy amongst social media users. Consequently, users are cautious to not share information that is not related to their current professional identity, or distribute content that could encourage negative responses. Participant 6 expresses self-awareness towards her/his present academic position and is cautious not to distribute 'posts' that could threaten her/his job. The latter is due to the participant discovering a recent MP's past social media 'posts' jeopardised his career. The participant discussed her/his past experience when sharing contentious Facebook 'posts' related to her/his academic interests, which resulted in a family feud. Subsequent to participant 6 finding out about an MP's online incident and experiencing her/his own negative encounter, the participant stated that s/he will still 'post' about politics as it's related to her/his job. However, the participant is discouraged to share her/his own thoughts

related to the content on Twitter or Facebook, in the hope of reducing the risk to her/his professional identity and online role with her/his family:

I wouldn't post anything about the MP today because you know it could come back in 10-15 years in the future like Jarred O'hara, and now he might lose his job as an MP. I don't think I have ever posted anything like that, but you never know as I can't remember what I posted when I was younger. (FG1, P6)

So, in the past I have posted something on Facebook about the referendum last year. I had some family members who disagreed with me, they weren't wanting a debate on the issue, they were more angry or outraged. So, it caused a bit of tension between me and family members. Since then I have changed my approach of what goes on Facebook and what goes on Twitter. Because you know if I teach politics then I'm going to post something about politics but I'm going to be careful on Facebook and other platforms as well. (FG1, P6)

The statement above evidences how the participant manages different identifies on social media. For instance, participant 6 reveals her/his consciousness towards potential repercussions that may occur as a result of her/his 'posts' on Twitter not aligning with her/his present career. Also, the participant evidences their self-awareness of their role on Facebook, which entails the participant sharing content related to their profession, but purposely not 'posting' inflammatory content.

Moreover, to overcome repercussion users delete past 'posts' that do not reflect a professional image and quickly rectify perceived errors. Participant 6 highlights the errors s/he has made when sharing 'posts' that did not align with her/his professional image, as a result, s/he deletes irrelevant and potentially harmful 'posts' and reviews past content:

I've actually made errors myself. So, my professional one (Twitter) I use as academic... I have posted something once or twice and quickly rectified it; I've never left something up there for 7 days. (FG1, P6)

Participant 6 reveals a sense of trepidation towards her/his previous published 'posts' that does not reflect her/his professional image. Consequently, the participant argues that s/he scrutinises the content to reduce the risk of a potential repercussion. Thus, the participant demonstrates a continuous process of reviewing and deleting 'posts' on social media to overcome their anxiety related to past content.

A participant demonstrates the consequential impact of her/his 'self-consciousness' influencing her/his engagement on Twitter, which has led to the participant re-thinking how and where s/he shares knowledge. The participant evidenced that s/he shares personal information on social media, however, only to known users and distributes content that is not evocative. As a result, the participant states that her/his behaviour would minimise risk and prevent potential backlash from users. Participant 3 presents her/his restraint to disseminate knowledge, regarding what s/he perceives as personal and professional platforms, by managing what information is spread s/he hopes to still express herself/himself via the most suitable route. For instance, the participant shares personal opinions via articles that reflect her/his thoughts and political viewpoint onto a blog. Whereas on Twitter the participant exchanges no personal opinions that underly the narrative. As a result of controlling what and where information is shared, the participant hopes to reduce her/his apprehension towards receiving a repercussion:

It's personal but no hard feelings. So, just like if I'm commenting (on Twitter) to get to see someone or a nudge it's not something that I would regret tomorrow... Although it has changed, so, in the past I used to share a lot of articles with them (users on Twitter) and share a lot of my opinions and politics and aspects. My opinion, I thought I still want to do that but that's not the right platform to do that... It's for communicating its (Twitter) not the right platform to share these kind of stuff (personal opinion). If you were to (share opinions), you could share or write a blog.
(FG1, P3)

The participant evidences a sense of apprehension towards her/his modified behaviour, when s/he states a desire to still share personal opinions on Twitter. Thus, participant 3 indicates a craving to share opinions but her/his own restriction has meant that s/he has lost her/his voice on that platform. The statement reveals the extent of the participant's 'self-consciousness' impacting on her/his knowledge sharing.

A variety of factors heighten users' anxiety when sharing information on social media, this has subsequently led to a change in behaviour. Such aspects include, potential backfire which may impact their job or online image and determining an unoffensive identity to 'advertise' themselves. Both factors discussed demonstrate users' self-awareness of potential implications on their professional identity that they wish to display, as a result this leads to the user changing their behaviour when sharing information online to ensure the ideal image is projected. Participant 2 argued that s/he has converted her/his social media to a '100% professional' platform, this is due to her/his apprehension towards receiving backfire when sharing personal

comments. Furthermore, the participant demonstrates that as a result of having a purely professional social media presence this has enabled her/him to advertise a professional image:

And recently I have stopped posting things like personal comments on social media, because it may kind of backfire. And social media is regarded as a legitimate advertiser or marketing technique. So, I took the decision that my public kind of profile will be 100% professional. (FG1, P2)

Furthermore, a participant used a disclaimer on her/his social media due to legal requirements related to her/his profession in medicine, alongside using a disclaimer to protect her/his professional online image. Participant 1 argues that s/he uses the mandatory disclaimer to reduce the risk of content being misconstrued by users or ‘posts’ not being clear to users. Thus, the statement demonstrates that legal enforcement by organisations or institutions can restrict their employees’ knowledge sharing online. The participant reveals a consciousness towards what is expected by their organisation and is aware of the professional image which s/he must uphold on social media:

Since then my approach to reporting information has changed following guidance of relevant authorities, such as advice from my medical indemnity organisation... So, it's (social media) is a big legal minefield here as well, you need to know how much you put out there and you have to word things very carefully so it's not construed as the definite gospel as you say. You have to give disclaimers to everything and that you take no responsibility, so you lower the risk. (FG1, P1)

Alongside stating a disclaimer to dissuade negative consequences, the enforcement of privacy settings was discussed to inhibit others viewing past ‘posts’ not aligned with the users’ present professional image. In particular, privacy settings were enforced to hide prior content reflecting the user’s younger self, for instance, as a teenager or at university. A participant discussed how s/he shared nonsense information on Facebook when s/he were younger and when the platform was restricted to a smaller group of users. However, in the present day the participant expressed that s/he has evolved into a professional and has a different outlook on life. Subsequently, the participant shares information differently to reflect a professional persona online. Privacy settings are enforced by the participant to reduce the risk of users viewing past ‘posts’ and photographs not aligned with the participant’s present professional outlook:

I think I have changed my attitude to how I approach social media, I think a lot more about it... I used to reply a lot on Facebook and Twitter some of it would be beknown and some of it would be nonsense. Especially in the early days when I was much younger, like I joined Facebook before it was public and just for students. So,

I look back at some of the posts, and I think why did I post that? It's ridiculous... I've actually changed all my settings so I have quite strong privacy on there so no-one can see any of my photos... I have changed from an undergrad student to something more professional, I worry that I haven't got time to go back through it and moderate my entire life history on the internet. (FG1, P6)

The statement above demonstrates how the participant manages her/his identity on social media to fit her/his changing outlook on life. In particular, the growing and everchanging platform influences what and how the participant controls past and present published content. For instance, the original Facebook platform comprised of a smaller set of followers which enabled the participant to share more personal information. Whereas in the present day, the public nature of Facebook has impacted on the participant being more self-aware of what and how s/he shares knowledge.

4.3.2 Lack of Confidence

A lack of confidence influences users' hesitancy to share knowledge or engage with others, because the user perceives themselves as unknowledgeable or not an expert about the conversation topic. Consequently, users prefer to gather information to learn or distribute information in a conversation which is of interest to them. Also, users restrict their knowledge sharing to a 'like' or 'retweet' rather than sharing a comment. Therefore, a lack of confidence inhibits users to disseminate content and engage. Participant 4 expresses her/his lack of confidence to exchange knowledge, this has resulted in lower levels of engagement on social media. The participant expresses her/his inclination to only exchange information when the 'post' is of interest to her/him, or 'retweets' content if s/he perceives it to be of interest to others:

A lot of it is if I like something, I will like it or retweet it. Very rarely I'll make comments, I'm not confident in doing that. I'm not an expert in the field like these guys right here, so, it (knowledge sharing) is more casual and with separate interests rather than anything else... And Twitter that would be, if I like something then I would retweet it. If I find it interesting or someone else would find it interesting then I might just like stuff. So very rarely interact on the social media sites. (FG1, P4)

This statement shows that self-belief is a vital factor that enthruses the participant's knowledge sharing on social media. If there is a lack of confidence on behalf of the user related to the content, this can lead to not sharing information or reciprocating at all or a lower level of engagement via 'likes' or 'retweets'. The participant evidences that low confidence is a major aspect that deters her/his knowledge dissemination, thus, resulting in only sharing to an extent

if the content is familiar or of interest. During the focus group, this participant was the only one to voice their lack of confidence as a driver that deters her/his knowledge sharing. Therefore, the latter demonstrates that either a small majority of social media users struggle with their confidence online, or that more users inhibit self-doubt but do not express the factor as a driver that deters their knowledge sharing.

4.4 Reflections and Conclusions

The aim of this chapter is to provide a preliminary understanding into what drives consumers' knowledge sharing and how consumers' knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment inter-relate. The analysis evidences that there are external and internal factors that influence participants' drive to share knowledge on social media. The variety of aspects had the following effect on consumers, for instance, shaping consumers present and future distribution of information, contributing a sense of hesitation to sharing knowledge and increasing consumers' awareness towards potential repercussions on social media.

4.4.1 External Factors that Influence Users' Knowledge Sharing

The analysis indicates that there are three external factors that influence participants and deter their knowledge sharing on social media. These are, professional regulations that impede on a participant's online persona, a participant's job role related academia or medicine and advice from friends and family that impact consumers' knowledge sharing.

Mandatory regulations that align with an individual's job show to have a consequence on a participant's knowledge sharing. The purpose of the regulation depending on the job title, is to assure that participants conduct themselves in a professional manner on social media and act as a credit to the organisation. The analysis reveals that a participant who has a medically related job, is restricted by their employer who enforces legal laws on the her/his knowledge sharing on social media. The latter leads to a participant stating a disclaimer on her/his platform, to separate her/his views from their employers and to reduce her/his online followers' misinterpretation of content 'posted'. The disclaimer has meant that the participant only shares knowledge on social media platform for professional purposes, and deters her/his knowledge sharing of personal opinions or non-job-related information. Thus, the external factor reveals the consequences on what content the participant distributes, why the participant shares the information and how the participant conducts herself/himself on social media. Nevertheless, the

implied restriction because of the participant's medical job, has resulted in the participant evidencing their knowledge related to her/his field when criticising or praising governing bodies within medicine. Thus, the participant reveals her/his professional authority and expertise on social media.

Similarly, individuals' jobs that align with law or academia demonstrate an influence on the participants' knowledge sharing. Participants within the job roles do not have a compulsory mandate on how to conduct themselves online, however, voluntarily restrict what and how information is shared to present a professional outlook. For instance, a participant's job that is related to being in court, has resulted in the participant deciding to not share personal opinions on social media, to prevent repercussions on her/his job when in court. The latter has alluded to the participant having a social media platform just for professional purposes, which entails not sharing personal thoughts, 'liking' and sharing 'posts' rather stating a comment and gathering information that is related to her/his profession. Henceforth, the latter demonstrates the external influence that lacks a compulsory restriction, still has an invisible constraint on the participant's knowledge sharing, in particular, what, how and why s/he distributes information. Furthermore, considering the participant within an academic role, s/he reveals a hesitation to share personal opinions related to their life or their job because of a desire to present a professional platform to minimise repercussion. The participant reveals her/his choice to limit what knowledge is shared, because of her/his perceived pressure to remain professional to reduce potential backlash on her/his future career. However, the participant contrasts to the participant with the court-related job, because the participant in academia evidences a confidence to engage in debates related to her/his profession in order to share knowledge and expertise on a matter.

The aspect of friends and family having an influence on participants' knowledge sharing is demonstrated within the analysis. For instance, participants discuss what and how they share knowledge on social is as a result of what they have learnt from their family's, friends' and colleagues' experiences when sharing information on social media. Consequently, participants evidence that they are subjective to listening to people who are closely linked to them and how informal conversations related to their close-one's negative encounters or techniques to share knowledge, has impacted on the participants' rationale. One participant discusses her/his need for simplicity when sharing knowledge on social media, which led to the participant displaying

one identity across social media, this is professional. The latter is due to the participant learning about a colleague's negative experiences when using a variety of social media pages which led to wrong information being shared.

The analysis evidences that the external factors have led to participants managing their identities on social media, due to mandatory restrictions from an employer or to reduce consequences on their job. As a result of managing their online image, the participants reveal a hope to reflect a professional identity that aligns with their employer's expectations and their job. The latter means that participants are restricted to only share information that is aligned to their job, rather than using the social media to discuss their personal opinions or talk about their own personal interests. Participants demonstrate that they manage their identities across a variety of social media platforms, this entails choosing certain platforms to reflect a personal image where the participant can share personal opinions or private information with known users, who could be family or friends. However, one participant argues that s/he does not manage their identity across different platforms due to the potential problems that could occur, for instance, 'posting' content on the wrong platform. Therefore, the participant shares knowledge on one platform (Twitter) to project her/his professional image to keep things simple and easy for them. Thus, ease and simplicity are aspects that participants warrant if they wanted to share their identities across multiple platforms.

4.4.2 Internal Factors that Influence Users' Knowledge Sharing

The analysis indicates that participants are influenced by a variety of internal influences when sharing knowledge on social media. The internal influences include, personal knowledge acquired on social media, less likely to take a risk, lack of self-belief, and a desire to help others.

Participants evidence that they are influenced by what they have learnt when previously sharing knowledge on social media. For instance, the repercussions that they have faced when sharing knowledge in the past, has meant that participants have realised what knowledge not to share and why. The participants' behaviour changes as a result of their own previous experience online, thus evidencing that the participants are less likely to take risks when sharing knowledge. The latter is demonstrated when participants express how they will not share personal comments or thoughts, and have changed their behaviour to lower levels of engagement to reduce negative consequences occurring on social media.

A lack of self-belief is revealed as an internal factor influencing a participant's knowledge sharing. For instance, the participant compared themselves with other social media users and the focus group participants, as a result, the participant regarded themselves as not being knowledgeable and an expert. Consequently, the latter evolved into a discussion by the participant regarding an absence of confidence to share what s/he know which has led to minimal knowledge sharing. For instance, 'liking' or 'retweeting' a 'post' rather than sharing a comment. Thus, the internal factor of self-belief is a pivotal determinant for some social media users, which deters what and how knowledge is shared on social media. In contrast, participants demonstrate a drive to help and teach others, because they perceive themselves as being knowledgeable and that they have a responsibility to help users. For instance, the analysis reveals that the participants who use social media for professional purpose perceive themselves as being an expert and in a position where other users will listen to them. Consequently, participants discuss how they share or 'retweet' information that they have found on social media to help others. In the same vein, the drive to educate is demonstrated by participants who share information with users, a participant evidences that s/he has learnt from gathering information, hence, s/he shares knowledge to teach others. A participant expresses that instead of the latter, s/he shares comments on users 'posts' to teach them because of her/his expertise on the topic. Therefore, a desire to help or teach others is driven by users' self-perception of being knowledgeable, consequently, their sense of confidence influences their knowledge sharing and who the information is shared within.

The understanding into what drives consumers' knowledge sharing and empowerment to share, paves the way for the following chapter that builds upon aspects discussed. Furthermore, Chapter 5 intends to discuss consumers' drive to share knowledge within the #sustainablefashion online community, the inter-relationship between consumers' knowledge sharing and empowerment and contribute to the understanding of how consumers' drivers, inter-relationship between knowledge sharing and empowerment, interplay.

Chapter 5: Further Exploration

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 aims to build upon chapter 4's preliminary findings that addressed two of this study's research questions (RQs). For instance, to understand the drivers of users' knowledge sharing within the #sustainablefashion online community (OC), and to examine how users' knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment inter-relate. This chapter intends to further examine how users' drive to share knowledge, knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment interplay. Thus, the chapter intends to deliver a comprehensive understanding to address the study's three RQs. The emerging themes discussed within the chapter arose from the data collected from 20 semi-structured interviews with users from the #sustainablefashion OC. The data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis, the analysis procedure is outlined in Section 3.6³¹.

The previous chapter discussed the aspects that drive consumers' knowledge sharing on social media, these are, 'professional identity', 'desire to educate' and 'personal interest'. Nevertheless, the analysis identified two barriers that discourage users' knowledge sharing on social media, these are, 'self-consciousness' and 'lack of confidence'. Chapter 4 concluded with an understanding into the external and internal factors that influence consumers' knowledge sharing on social media. The exploration evidenced what, how and why information was and was not being distributed on social media, in relation to the aspects that drive and deter knowledge sharing.

The chapter is organised as follows. Section 5.2 outlines the factors that drive users to share knowledge within the OC. Sub-sections 5.2.1 to 5.2.4 discuss four aspects that drive users to distribute information, these are, 'lobbying', 'work agenda', 'scepticism' and 'belonging'. Section 5.3 follows, which explores three factors that empower users to share information about green clothing and engage. The latter includes, interviewees' 'green concerns', 'engagement' and 'online tools'. Lastly, section 5.4 reflects on the themes that emerged from the 20 semi-structured interviews, and discusses the overarching aspects that emerge from the chapter.

³¹ Appendix 39 describes how the thematic analysis was undertaken. Appendices 40-44 support the explanation within Appendix 39. The latter entails photographs of the analysis, tables of the codes, thematic map and definitions of the emerging themes.

5.2 Aspects that Drive users' Knowledge Sharing

This section examines the factors that drive users' knowledge sharing within the #sustainablefashion OC. The analysis identified four principal drivers, these are, lobbying, work agenda, scepticism and belonging.

5.2.1 Lobbying

The theme discusses how #sustainablefashion OC users advocate other users to change their clothing consumption, by raising awareness about the negative impacts of clothing on the environment and sustainable alternatives of consumption. The theme refers to two aspects of lobbying. Firstly, interviewees evidence that they share knowledge to encourage other Twitter users, companies and politicians to change their mindsets towards green clothing, and consequently change their behaviour. The latter refers to interviewees who purposely lobby because they perceive themselves as someone who wants change, and hopes to influence users' mindsets and behaviours, for the purpose changing the world for good. Interviewees who intentionally lobby others further reveal that they share knowledge within the OC to raise awareness to a broader audience. Interviewees describe their desire to make others more conscious of the negative impacts of fast fashion and sustainable alternatives to clothing consumption, such as, mending, using what you have and upcycling. Secondly, a desire to share knowledge within the OC for the purpose of contributing expertise or personal experiences is demonstrated by the interviewees. The interviewees indicate that they do not share information to change others' mindsets and behaviour. Both types of lobbyists' act as a filter, this position allows them to eliminate certain Twitter 'sources' that share knowledge and specific 'tweets'. The interviewees state that they eliminate information that does not align with their sustainable fashion views. As a result of users sanitising the knowledge they share, the majority of information distributed within the OC has a similar perspective towards sustainable fashion, with no corresponding viewpoint. Thus, demonstrating an echo-chamber of similar thoughts within the OC.

Users' lobby other community users by raising awareness about sustainable fashion with the intention to change others' mindset and behaviour. In particular, raising awareness about how individuals' actions can be altered, by championing green clothing consumption activities. The latter includes the following, mending, and making. An interviewee demonstrates that s/he lobby's others because of her/his sense of responsibility to raise awareness within the OC.

Interviewee 1 claims that her/his role is an ‘awareness bringer’ and someone who observes the growing dialogue about sustainability. As a result, the interviewee evidences her/his hope to contribute to the developing consciousness of green clothing. A desire to sew for the purpose of mending or making clothes is stated by interviewee 1, as a result of the latter, the interviewee hopes to reduce her/his clothing consumption. Thus, the interviewee reveals a personal experience regarding a changed behaviour that can contribute to being more sustainable:

As an awareness bringer and as a viewer to sustainability (her/his role). And starting to see where else it is growing. It's only started in small areas, and its growing and growing and growing. And therefore, where else can I contribute by retweeting and incorporating new hashtags. And again, it's about raising awareness so we change our behaviour. And hopefully, I learn to sew as a result. That's where I would really struggle. I have to buy my clothes because I can't make them. (ITP 1, Charity shop volunteer)

The statement above reveals that the interviewee has strong concerns for green clothing and examines information to learn more. Henceforth, the interviewee's involvement enthruses her/him to lobby others and advocate change.

Likewise, users share knowledge to lobby others to change others' mindsets towards greening their consumption, in particular, wearing what they have and not consuming. During the interview, ITP 2 was asked why s/he ultimately shared knowledge within the OC, s/he revealed that a desire was to encourage others to think the way s/he does in relation to green clothing. The interviewee evidenced that s/he accomplished the latter by sharing her/his personal experiences online, such as, charity shopping, donating garments and using what s/he has. In particular, ITP 2 states that s/he strategically distributes personal ‘tweets’ to appeal to the OC. The quote below, demonstrates the interviewee's hope to alter others' behaviour by sharing an example about how they could green their consumption:

So, if I can make someone think on Twitter, about not getting some new heels for a Friday night. If I can make them think you know what I'll wear a pair from the wardrobe... I would say that probably it's the personal tweets that get more attention from other people... And I think that the greatest change would be people adopting the sustainable lifestyle. (ITP 2, Part-time mature student)

An interviewee evidences a strong sense of duty to lobby others because of a desire to raise awareness about green clothing and potentially change the world. ITP 10 reveals her/his confidence in the OC, when stating her/his reliance on others to join the cause and make a

change. Lobbying is indicated when the interviewee states her/his hope for others to take responsibility and ‘chip in’ to make ‘a better world’:

The most important its raising awareness basically. And people changing their habits and demanding more. Because I think that we all have a responsibility in this world to make it a better world. Probably I am a dreamer, but I'd like to change the world... I think if we all chip in and do something about it, then we are able to leave this world a better place where everyone can have a better life. (ITP 10, Artist)

During the interview, ITP 10 reveals an understanding about green clothing by sharing what activities s/he does. However, the interviewee states that s/he lobbies others without her/his personal experiences, due to lacking confidence in others being interested in what s/he does to green her/his consumption. The quote below evidences the interviewees green clothing know-how, whereas self-doubt in sharing experiences within the OC is demonstrated within the last four lines of the quote. Thus, ITP 10 contrasts to ITP 1 and ITP2, as the interviewee lobbies without sharing personal experiences:

I really like DIY. About customization. About embroidery, I really love embroidery... I focus more on the R's, refurbished, reutilised, recycle, reduce and reuse. I try to focus on them in fashion... So, I don't think people will want to hear me talking about that, because I would probably just say don't buy anything. See what you have in your closet and see what you can do with that. Be conscious about what you have and not what you will buy next. I don't think people will want to hear much about that. (ITP 10, Artist)

Users' lobby for the desire to inspire others to act differently via engagement with a Twitter user. For instance, interviewees stress that reciprocation is more important than receiving a 'like' on their 'post', this is due to the interviewees' hope to have a conversation with others to raise awareness. ITP 9 explains that s/he wants to 'reach people that aren't actively engaged', and to 'make them aware of the problem, and then the power that they've got will make them part of the solution'. The latter, evidences the interviewee's hope to encourage others to think differently and alter their behaviour. Likewise, ITP 5 argues that s/he wants to engage with others rather than receive a 'like' on her/his 'tweet', the latter is described as not being a 'real interaction'. The interviewee evidences that as a result of information exchange between herself/himself and a user, s/he hopes that the conversation will influence the users' rationale towards green clothing:

But that's why I talk to people in the first instance, because I want to share knowledge and raise awareness... So, if they like my tweet, okay, but I'm more interested in interaction on Twitter. And maybe they can email me. And we can spark some collaboration. Or even if they ask for some information. A like is okay, but it's not enough, it's not real interaction. (ITP 5, Researcher about microplastics from synthetic clothes)

I want to share because the information about microplastic pollution from synthetic clothes is quite important (her/his research). And a lot of people are not aware of this problem. And now there is a lot of talk more than previous years about this particular issue... So, since I work on this topic, I think it's useful that my research is more approachable for the people within this community. And useful anyway to reach more people, and familiarise them with the environmental program. (ITP 5, Researcher about microplastics from synthetic clothes)

The second statement by ITP 5 demonstrates that s/he shares her/his research to make others more aware of her/his work, in order to educate users about the subject. For instance, ITP 5 distributes information about the environmental programme associated to her/his research, in order to 'familiarise' others with the concept and improve their understanding:

The importance of having an online interaction with another user is further demonstrated by interviewee 2. However, the interviewee emphasises the importance of the information becoming ingrained in an individual's everyday life alongside altering behaviours. For instance, a desire to change mindsets is evidenced, as the interviewee reveals a hope to engage with others and be listened to, so that a change occurs by the user. ITP 2 expresses her/his purpose is to encourage users to adopt a different outlook to green clothing by lobbying users online, rather than a desire to be popular online and gain a status for what s/he is doing. The last three lines of the quote demonstrate the interviewee's altruistic actions of wanting to help others understand and act on their altered rationale:

It's not important about how many likes, remember why you did this... So, when I share stuff like that, and they've got a brew and it's something they can pick up, or it's something to carry with them. Like when they go shopping, they think oh I remember reading about such and such, and can go on and do it. I'd rather they interact with the subject rather than me. I'm just the messenger I'm just the post man for it. Great if they like great if they follow, as it's another person you can chat with. But it's more about looking at the material that I share. (ITP 2, Part-time mature student)

Users evidence that they lobby companies within the OC, to change companies' outlook on green clothing and potentially change their behaviour. Interviewees reveal a desire to influence companies' rationale about green clothing, as a result of highlighting the companies' negative behaviour and urging for a change in behaviour. Subsequent to interviewees' lobbying companies within the OC, the 'posts' enthruse other users to lobby the company by sharing their opinions on the companies' actions. ITP 16 describes a personal experience that s/he shared within the OC, this consisted of voicing her/his opinion about a fast fashion brand's contradictory sustainability statement. The interviewee discussed the unexpected outcome of sharing the 'tweet', which comprised of another user commenting on her/his 'post' to join the lobby against H&M:

If there was something that I didn't agree with, I think Twitter is quite useful... I walk past Oxford Circus on the way to work. And on their big glass door, it says this door is closed, it's saving energy. And the door is wide open. I took a photo of this on the way to the global fashion conference and tweeted it to H&M. I don't know if they were interested, but someone else commented on it. I use Twitter for that sense because I think sometimes... I don't want to be really miserable but I think sometimes being direct to a company is effective, I guess someone has to look at it. (ITP 16, Fashion lecturer and researcher)

The statement above reveals that the interviewee lobbied H&M with the intention that the company would see her/his 'tweet' and potentially act on it. ITP 16 evidences that the purpose of lobbying on Twitter, is because the platform is useful in regards to sharing a direct 'post' to a recipient. Henceforth, the platform enabled the interviewee to lobby and distribute her/his opinions towards 'something' that s/he did not agree with.

Interviewees demonstrate that they lobby policy alongside companies, in the hope that other users will join their cause against a company or legislation in question. The interviewees evidence a rationale that drives their desire for other users to act on their content, for instance, for the hope to create a movement on social media which will make the company or policy maker listen. ITP 17 states that s/he lobby's against companies and politicians, in the hope to raise awareness with her/his potential customers about 'what companies are really doing'. The interviewee evidences a desire to create a movement as result of sharing her/his opinions, this is revealed when s/he states that s/he uses Twitter as a 'vehicle to drive political viewpoints' to raise awareness about alternatives to fast fashion consumption. During the interview, ITP 17 highlights that s/he distributes information about 'upcycling' and 'utilising what is already

there' to make others aware of green clothing activities, which are at the core of her/his sustainable fashion business. Whereas ITP 20 states that s/he shares knowledge to lobby politicians by 'retweeting' content that discusses green clothing. The interviewee expresses an ambition to 'build up pressure' amongst users, in the hope that this will lead to forming 'stronger policies and framework' to benefit green clothing:

So that's why I'm retweeting the tweets about sustainability and sustainable fashion. When consumers try to build up pressure, then people can come together and build stronger policies and framework. (ITP 20, Programme manager)

Users who lobby with the intention to influence the recipient, act as a filter by following particular 'sources' that they perceive as being from an expert, and share knowledge from these 'sources' because the content aligns with their green clothing concerns. ITP 3 expresses that s/he lobby's because of her/his green clothing concerns, during the interview the interviewee frequently expressed her/his passion for clothing and to reduce her/his environmental footprint. Also, the interviewee reveals her/his desire to raise awareness amongst users, in order to influence others' rationale towards sustainable fashion. In order to fulfil her/his ambition, the interviewee shares content from 'sources' who s/he perceives as experts:

I follow brands and I follow professionals in sustainability. Marshall Attitude is a brand, Thinking Moo is a brand. And Ellen MacArthur Foundation, I follow them as they talk about circular economy... As Twitter there is more professional talks. And more information about sustainability in general. Even though I share some stuff on brands too... Yes (raise awareness) there's a lot of people that don't know about sustainability. This cannot be happening we are in 2019 already. (ITP 3, PhD, eco-influencer, lecturer and sustainability consultant in Tourism)

An interviewee similarly expresses that s/he lobbies with the intent to raise awareness by sanitising the knowledge s/he shares. ITP 5 collects information from Twitter 'sources' whose views align with her/his green clothing concerns, in particular, s/he 'follows' researchers, environmental organisations, newspapers, magazines and politicians. The interviewee discusses her/his researcher position within the interview, and the purpose of her/his Twitter is to align content with her/his academic profession. Hence, ITP 5 does not share personal 'tweets' and gathers from 'sources' that associate with her/his academic background. In the interview, the interviewee recurrently expressed her/his intention to share knowledge for the objective of

raising awareness amongst users. Hence, ITP 5 ‘retweets’ information that originates from expert ‘sources’ to lobby users:

So, I follow politicians whose view is in align with mine. And I follow other researchers that are in the same field. To keep in touch and keep updated about what they are doing, or some environmental organisations and newspaper or magazines. So basically, just to collect information about my work... No, I don't do personal tweets. Maybe I retweet some articles about politics or other things... I would like to raise awareness. (ITP 5, Researcher about microplastics from synthetic clothes)

An interviewee demonstrates that s/he lobbies others with the intent to influence others, by contributing ‘posts’ that resonate with her/him and shares originally produced content via blogs and podcasts. Thus, filtering other information that does not align with the interviewee’s views. ITP 9 reveals that s/he ‘retweets’ content that is of interest to her/him and can identify with, in particular, using Google to alert her/him of recent information. Henceforth, the interviewee circulates similar ‘tweets’ within the OC alongside recent information that corresponds with her/his views, to raise awareness about green clothing. During the interview, ITP 9 reveals that s/he produces her/his own podcasts and blogs related to green fashion and sustainability in general. The interviewee unveils that s/he shares the original content to raise awareness amongst users and hopes that others change their behaviour by starting with the basics:

Awareness raising (why s/he shares content) ...If I've seen an interesting article, I'll tweet that. If I see something really interesting that resonates, I'll retweet. Sharing relevant blog posts. Or relevant podcasts I'll share those. That's the main thing. (ITP 9, Podcaster and blogger about sustainability)

I've got Google alerts set up on my phone... So, if I see something interesting, I will share that. A lot of it is sharing content from other people that I have seen. If I have content that is created then I will share that a well... Yeah. It has to be relevant for everybody. And I don't know what I would gain by specifically tweeting to them. What I want to do is to reach people that aren't that actively engaged and are making those changes. And get everybody started doing the basics. (ITP 9, Podcaster and blogger about sustainability)

The second statement stated by ITP 9, evidences the interviewee’s rationale for sharing information that corresponds to the OC’s thoughts, for instance, the content should be relevant to everybody. Thus, the interviewee’s rationale for filtering information is due to her/his preconception that OC users have similar viewpoints and would be interested in the content that s/he shares, and may be open to changing their behaviour. Furthermore, the interviewee

expresses that trust is an important aspect to encourage others to listen to her/his and potentially change their behaviours. The latter is evidenced within the following statement:

But I want them to trust me. I hope they would find it useful and take action from it. Well, half the time you see a like or a retweet but you don't know if you've actually impacted that person. (ITP 9, Podcaster and blogger about sustainability)

An interviewee demonstrates lobbying towards an organisation when sharing her/his personal experiences. ITP 14 indicates that her/his intention was not to change the receiver's behaviour or mindset, rather her/his rationale was to raise awareness about the matter in question amongst other users. Nevertheless, the interviewee revealed that her/his comment did have an influence on her/his followers, and consequently, her/his followers commented on the interviewee's 'post' to lobby the organisation. ITP 14 describes her/his personal experience of viewing the aftermath of a 'Santa Dash' charity run, s/he shared a 'tweet' detailing the unsustainable disposing of Santa outfits discarded around the park, alongside a picture of the incident. The interviewee expressed her/his need to raise awareness about recycling and shared her/his outrage. As a surprise to the interviewee, the 'post' went 'viral' and enthused others to comment on the 'tweet' and lobby GOSH to change their ways:

And they had all these Santa outfits and I've never felt so sick, they were everywhere. The black plastic belts had been smashed in the mud. Santa bibs hanging off trees. Santa jackets just thrown everywhere. The pictures I took went quite viralish. There was a dog poo bin with Santa outfits just coming out of it, and all over the floor. We picked up hundreds and hundreds of them. GOSH we didn't actually tag GOSH in Twitter, I didn't feel comfortable doing it. As they are a charity that do a very good job. However, some people did tag them in it and they GOSH ended up sending us some kind of response about what they do and what they are up to. (ITP 14, Co-founder of litter picking business)

Regarding the statement above, during the interview ITP 14 talked about her/his professional role as a co-founder of a litter picking business. Also, the interviewee evidences a moral concern regarding GOSH, for instance, s/he did not state the name of the organisation when lobbying because in general the charity does a good job. It can be suggested that the interviewee's professional role and conscience means that it is in her/his interest to not lobby with the intention of identifying the organisation because it may reflect badly on her/his business and it would not align with her/his principles.

Users who lobby others within the OC with no intention to alter the receiver's behaviour or mindset, sanitise the inform that they share by solely distributing 'tweets' that align with their green clothing views. An interviewee evidences the latter by eliminating 'sources' or particular 'tweets' prior to sharing knowledge, and following certain users to gather knowledge within the OC. ITP 16 evidences that s/he removes specific knowledge prior to distributing, due to the information not aligning with her/his green clothing views and not being of interest to her/him. For instance, the interviewee reveals that s/he 'retweets' content that is of interest to herself/himself, however, the information cannot be 'obvious' to others. Thus, the interviewee lobby's others with information that could potentially influences users' rationale towards green clothing:

So, sometimes I'd normally retweet something but if I think the article is very interesting, I would say something about it... I feel like sometimes I don't want to just retweet things because I'm not too sure what you're adding. And sometimes I would think that some things are kind of obvious. Especially if someone says that's really bad, and I wouldn't join in with that because yeah everyone knows that's bad.
(ITP 16, Fashion lecturer and researcher)

The statement above demonstrates that the interviewee 'retweets' for the purpose of adding value to the content that s/he shares. Thus, evidencing a desire to share content that is current and is unknown or unfamiliar information.

Similarly, ITP 16 describes her/his role of filter when gathering knowledge from selected 'sources' who are 'certain people or groups' and 'opinion leaders' related to green clothing. The interviewee states that s/he shares 'tweets' perceived as interesting from expert 'sources' who align with her/his views. Subsequently, ITP 16's shares content which may influence other users whose views coincide with her/his own:

If you're following certain people or groups, opinion leaders and they say something interesting then I would retweet. You're not gathering such as creating something new. If someone is interested in something that you're interested in, you're sharing that. (ITP 16, Fashion lecturer and researcher)

Interviewees demonstrate two types of lobbying when sharing knowledge. The majority of users' lobby, with the intention to raise awareness and change others' rationale and behaviour.

In contrast, a minority of users share knowledge without a desire to alter others' rationale or raise awareness about green clothing, however, the information has the potential to influence others to change their mindset of behaviour. The lobbyists' act as a filter by sharing particular 'tweets' or by distributing content from perceived experts. Reasons of why users sanitise information, entail the following, to share current non-obvious knowledge, to learn and distribute content that aligns with OC user's and their own green clothing viewpoint. As a result of the interviewees serving as a filter, the knowledge shared within the OC coincides with other users' sustainable fashion views. Consequently, the OC reflects an echo-chamber of similar opinions.

5.2.2 Work Agenda

The theme refers to how users within the OC share knowledge related to their job role or employer. The interviewees evidence two reasons to distribute information in relation to their profession or employer. Firstly, interviewees disseminate information, due to their green clothing concerns that align with their employer. Interviewees indicate that they circulate knowledge that can consequently promote their work place, because their employer's values match theirs in relation to undertaking activities, such as, recycling. The interviewees evidence that they have an obligation to distribute their employer's green clothing initiatives, in order to raise awareness about the concept. Secondly, users share knowledge to promote themselves or endorse the organisation that they work for. The interviewees evidence a drive to gain new business contacts, network and promote the products or services that they sell, rather than being driven by an environmental conscience. Both types of users demonstrate that they became knowledgeable about green clothing when working within the fashion or retail industry, or studying at university. In particular, interviewees who share information to promote themselves or their employer, discuss how they disregard other users' knowledge as they perceive it not to be true. The latter this is due to the interviewees in-depth green clothing knowledge accrued from work or study. Consequently, the interviewees depict an expert status within the OC. Both types of users who share knowledge act as a filter, this results in gathering and sharing specific information that aligns with their green clothing views.

Interviewees evidence that they share knowledge about their employer because they align with their employer's green clothing views, hence, resulting in a desire to support the company that they work for. The interviewees demonstrate that they do not indicate an intention to endorse

their employer. ITP 1 is the Twitter account holder for a charity shop and shares content related to the organisation on her/his employer's behalf. The interviewee describes how her/his job has influenced herself/himself to start 'tweeting' to support her/his employer on her/his personal Twitter page. In particular, ITP 1 revealed that s/he found the charity shop's 'posts' interesting which led to her/him sharing the information on her/his Twitter. The latter demonstrates that the interviewee shared information that aligned with her/his green clothing interest, and the charity shops content enthused her/him to circulate the information further via her/his personal page:

About sustainable fashion its mainly Twitter (what content s/he shares) ...I only started using Twitter to support (charity shop), before that I never knew the point of having Twitter. I had an account but never went on it really... And by using Twitter for (name of the charity shop), I started getting lost with loads of interesting articles to read... And by following all those I started thinking well I need stay focused for (charity shop), but on my own account I can start raising the awareness for something a lot boarder. (ITP 1, Charity shop volunteer)

The interviewee further expressed that s/he regularly 'cross-posts' 'tweets' from her/his employer's Twitter page onto her/his personal page by using the 'hashtag' #sustainablefashion, and 'likes' the organisation's 'tweets'. ITP 1 stated that s/he hopes to 'piggyback' on from the charity shop and 'grow awareness'. The interviewee's statement below conveys that s/he was inspired by her/his employer, this led to her/his raising awareness about the charity shop's green clothing activities:

I can piggyback on from the (charity shop) front or grow the awareness... With the (charity shop) feed because if I post it on mine, I feel very schizophrenic. Because I put it on my (charity shop) site and go like it (from their personal account) and then Nicola (colleague) will do the same. Because again, it shows that awareness. (ITP 1, Charity shop volunteer)

I would say it's mainly Twitter to Facebook (cross-posting). So, I'd put something on the (charity shop) Twitter page, and tweet it onto my Facebook page. That is because I know that it reaches a lot of people that are fairly close by. So, my friends around here. And it shows an interest to my friends from all over the world that might be interested in that element. (ITP 1, Charity shop volunteer)

Both statements demonstrate how the interviewee manages her/his different social media platforms, to raise awareness about her/his employer. For instance, ITP 1 'cross-posts' between the charity shop page and her/his personal Twitter page, and links her/his Twitter page to her/his

Facebook page to present her/his employer's green clothing initiatives to friends who have a similar interest.

An interviewee argues that s/he feels a sense of responsibility to distribute correct sustainable fashion information from her/his professional Twitter page, because of her/his environmental conscience. During the interview, ITP 11 discussed her/his concerns for the environment which originated from reading as a young child and has amplified since s/he created the business in 2005 with her/his partner. Thus, the interviewee evidences a drive to promote her/his business because of the green initiatives that form the company and due to her/his conscience. ITP 11 discusses her/his experience working in the sustainable fashion industry for 'over 20 years', and argues that s/he has connections with academic and scientific communities. The interviewee states that as a result of her/his broad perspective about sustainable fashion, s/he shares knowledge with a 'careful balance' that is factual about green clothing and about her/his business:

Because of the industry that we are in, and what we have been doing for over 20 years now. We have a lot of links into academia into scientific communities. We see studies coming out that other people are not aware of. (ITP 11, Co-founder of a sustainable bags and accessory business)

I guess you're using it (OC) to share information, but there is a very careful balance between that (factual information about sustainable fashion) and communicating pure stories about what we are doing as a company. And how we're responding to that information. It's a way of locating us in the wider environmental movement. So, people know where we sit in that space. (ITP 11, Co-founder of a sustainable bags and accessory business)

Both statements evidences that ITP 11 is mostly driven by her/his environmental concerns which is then followed by her/his desire to promote her/his business that advocates green initiatives. The interviewee demonstrates an awareness to how s/he controls how her/his followers perceive the knowledge that is shared. For instance, the purpose of the content is to circulate information that is not biased towards her/his company but also to provide factual environmental content.

An interviewee evidences that s/he uses Twitter for work purposes only, by sharing her/his research s/he is rewarded by being approached by organisations about her/his research. In

particular, the OC ‘hashtag’ is revealed as an important aspect that helps the interviewee to promote her/his work. Hence, the interviewee shares knowledge to make others’ conscience of her/his research:

I only use Twitter to communicate my work... I’ve been contacted by people from environmental organisations. And a lot of activists start following me after they see this hashtag (#sustainablefashion). So yes, it’s quite useful. (ITP 5, Researcher about microplastics from synthetic clothes)

A drive to promote her/his employer who sells sustainable clothing for a professional advantage, is evidenced by ITP 4. For instance, the interviewee hopes to broaden her/his network, gain business and to be acknowledged as an expert within the industry by being asked questions. In particular, ITP 4 reveals that s/he predominantly ‘retweets’ ‘posts’ related to her/his business interests for professional gain:

I feel that when I tweet or retweet it’s something that I want to spread that is important to me... Mostly I’m aiming for retweets to broaden my network. Also, from time-to-time I get a message asking for detailed questions and that is very nice as well. I’ve actually found some business offers via Twitter as well. (ITP 4, Sustainable textile producer)

This is something that I am doing (sharing on Twitter) as a business person... And hopefully it’ll build something for a branding leg for me and the company that I work for. (ITP 4, Sustainable textile producer)

The statement above indicates that the interviewee seeks validation and gains confidence when receiving questions and comments on her/his ‘post’, and hopes to be identified by others as a knowledgeable business person. The second quote evidences ITP 4’s purpose of sharing information on Twitter, which entails branding herself/himself and promoting her/his employer. Hence, the interviewee evidences her/his professional agenda when sharing knowledge.

An interviewee expresses that s/he manages two Twitter pages to express a personal and professional identity. For instance, ITP 8 shares knowledge about her/his business related to sustainable garments on her/his professional Twitter page, for the purpose of networking with potential clients or with users who are within a similar profession. During the interview the interviewee discussed how networking in London is limited, in respect to professionals in the sustainable garment business. Therefore, Twitter enabled the interviewee to network with a broader set of professionals and spread information to promote her/his business:

I don't think it's just one thing for me. Its business orientated and then its personal. I keep it public I keep it as open as possible... But the bit about the business is open to public. Personal reason is to spread awareness. Business wise what my business is about and to find like-minded people... As I do a whole load of networking as well. The network in London is very limited about sustainability and ethical wear. Because I've met most of the people that I'm supposed to meet... So, on social media I can spread the knowledge further. You go to the same event, meeting the same people having the same conversations. It's like actually I should be getting out there further. This is just so limited. It's not spreading. (ITP 8, Sustainable fashion business owner)

The promotion of an interviewees business is evidenced by ITP 18, who shares 'tweets' from her/his professional Twitter page to her/his personal Twitter page to promote her/his business. The interviewee aligns both platforms in order to deliver a consistent professional image which shows who s/he is and what s/he does. The interviewee reveals a drive to promote her/his business by 'retweeting' 'posts' from industry or magazines to promote what s/he sells. A rationale behind ITP 18 using her/his professional account to distribute information, is due to the influence that the account because of the large number of followers. Hence, the interviewee argues that sharing knowledge to raise awareness about the business is more effective via the professional platform rather than her/his personal platform:

We communicate with our consumers through our media platform rather than my personal platform account. Because for me it's (personal account) more private... What we do, is raise awareness through our media platform (professional). And my personal account is aligned with the platform (professional) as well. I usually retweet what comes from a magazine. Or if I find something interesting about this industry. (ITP 18, PhD and CMO of Vegan clothing website)

Because we do that through (company's professional platform). And (company) has about 50,000 followers, I have less than 17,000. The impact of that platform is much more than me. than me doing it through my personal account. It's not that huge. My name is not big enough to raise much awareness. (ITP 18, PhD and CMO of Vegan clothing website)

Moreover, the interviewee further describes how s/he shares knowledge from her/his professional account to be viewed as being associated with the company's green clothing views and to be recognised as an expert. Subsequently, the interviewee acts as a filter, by sharing knowledge to influence her/his followers' perception of herself/himself:

No, I don't want a conversation. An honest answer would be that I have an association with (company) so I want to have that image of me being active in that realm. So, it's more about that. So, if someone comes back and says who's this guy, they can see that I have loads of tweets about sustainable fashion and I kind of share my opinions. Because those tweets are close to my opinion about how sustainable fashion should go forward. It's more about constructing a social image. (ITP 18, PhD and CMO of Vegan clothing website)

An interviewee acts as a filter to influence other users' perception about her/his employer, for instance, s/he distributes specific information that favours her/his employer's manufacturing process of garments. ITP 4 argues that s/he is 'completely biased in this', when knowledge sharing about her/his employer producing clothes in Europe and using a laser cutter to create clothing. To endorse her/his employer, ITP 4 purposely shares negative content regarding clothes made in the Far East and locates Twitter conversations about laser cutting to promote the process. Hence, the interviewee controls what information is shared by herself/himself or what knowledge s/he contributes, in order to positively influence others' perception towards her/his employer:

You have to understand that I am completely biased in this, we produce in Europe. And others produce in the Far East which is far cheaper than me. So, what I'm doing is trying to put my finger on everything that is negative with production in the Far East. I'm creating interest on that topic. (ITP 4, Sustainable textile producer)

If I can find a thread where it can be suitable for me to have my opinions of laser cutting of the fabric, I would enjoy and benefit from that thread exploding. Because I want the knowledge of the importance of a laser cutter, for instance, to be out there. In the end, I would like everyone buying a piece of garment to ask the shop clerk, is this garment cut with a laser cutter or not and if it's not cut with a laser you shouldn't buy it. (ITP 4, Sustainable textile producer)

The statements above reveal the time-consuming process of the interviewee circulating content that opposes alternative production in the Far East and spends time locating conversations to add to. An additional driver is evidenced by the interviewee as a rationale behind her/his effort to promote her/his employer, this is due to ITP 4 having concerns regarding the environmental and ethical impacts of the fashion industry. During the interview, the interviewee discussed her/his experience of working in the textile industry for many years, and having visited factories producing garments s/he has seen bad practices. Hence, the interviewee is driven by her/his conscience alongside a desire to promote her/his employer who produces sustainable textiles.

Additionally, an interviewee purposely shares knowledge to promote her/his professional achievements related to green clothing and to depict her/his expert status. Throughout her/his interview, ITP 13 discussed her/his professional achievements and accomplished projects, and dismissed validation of her/his success from other users:

I'm not particularly bothered if it gets retweeted or liked... It doesn't matter to me if someone likes it or not. Because I know what I am doing is something I believe in, so that's what matters to me. (ITP 13, Works within the textile industry)

Because I know what I'm doing, and I know what I'm doing stands on its own... But the rest of the time I don't feel the need to tell everyone everything the step of the way. So, if I tell them after 6 months oh I did this that's okay. But if I don't tell them that's okay too. Because I know that I've done it and the people I did it with. (ITP 13, Works within the textile industry)

Correspondingly, ITP 4 describes her/his comprehensive knowledge from 'working with sustainable textiles for a lot of years', consequently s/he dismisses 'tweets' by 'calling bullshit' when s/he sees it. The interviewee confers her/his judgement on vegans and militants in the OC as being 'a tad naïve', and dismisses their 'tweets' stating 'it's easy to publish unsubstantial tweets'. Similar to ITP 13, ITP 4 portrays an expert status throughout her/his interview by inadvertently dismissing other users' views about sustainable fashion, because s/he perceives herself/himself as being knowledgeable about green clothing as a result of working within the textile industry.

The majority of users within the OC share knowledge for self-promotion or to promote their employer. This is largely due to the interviewee owning that business or having numerous years within the apparel industry. Subsequently, the interviewees demonstrate an expert status when distributing information about their employer's achievements; which often results in dismissing others view because they regard themselves as an expert. Whereas, the minority of users' share knowledge as a result of their deep-rooted environmental conscience that aligns with their employer, as a result, they support their employer. For instance, interviewees reveal that they are inspired by their employer due to closely aligning with their employers green clothing concerns. Users who evidences both types of knowledge sharing to endorse or morally align with their employer act as a filter, this entails, sharing specific 'posts' which they associate with.

5.2.3 Scepticism

The theme refers to scepticism amongst OC users who indicate an apprehension towards superficial information, fake news and unreliable ‘sources’. Interviewees reveal that their scepticism originates from gathering knowledge for their learning or to validate what they know. Interviewees lack of knowledge or confusion about green clothing results in gathering information to gain a better understanding. Alternatively, interviewees gather information to confirm what they know because of their lack of confidence in their knowledge about green clothing. The latter shows that interviewees seek validation from others within the OC. The role of filter is revealed, which entails users sanitising the knowledge gathered before sharing, information is scrutinised for the purpose of overcoming untrustworthy content. Lastly, interviewees overcome scepticism by taking ‘responsibility’ to share reliable knowledge within the OC.

Users evidence a worry towards sharing ‘fake’ information that they have retrieved from gathering information to learn. Users overcome their concern by verifying the content to ensure the information is trustworthy and not ‘fake news’. An interviewee describes her/his sense checking process. The latter entails interviewee 1 scrutinising the content prior to sharing, to ensure the information is reliable and does not originate from a tabloid because of her/his doubtful preconceptions of the ‘source’. If a ‘post’ shared by a tabloid intrigues her/him, the interviewee states that s/he would find another ‘source’ which discusses the subject matter. Thus, the interviewee demonstrates how s/he overcomes the untrustworthy ‘sources’ and still expresses herself/himself by sharing content. During the interview, ITP 1 shares her/his personal experience about sharing a ‘post’ which s/he was unsure about, for instance, s/he sense checks information which evidences her/his apprehensive of a ‘post’ reaching others and spreading fake information. The interviewee reveals that her/his experience has heightened her/his anxiety of fake news and has resulted in a sense of responsibility to share truthful information to OC users:

I remember my younger brother saying you’ve just read this online; how do you know it’s true. So yes, there can be some fake information. I will read the article before I post it on. I won’t always post, if I don’t like this site or post. Similar to a tabloid. I’ll find the article somewhere else or similar, that knowledge somewhere else. Again, because I’m quite aware of that fake news arena and how quickly those things can get out of hand. And then you realise there was no system station for the information that I have shared. And that has happened. I have put something

forward and then you think no that's not accurate. And it's very difficult to catch that back. (ITP 1, Charity shop volunteer)

The statement evidences that the interviewee was influenced by her/his brother's advice regarding the reliability of content online, which as a result, led to ITP 1's heightened awareness of fake news online and a desire to only share truthful content.

An interviewee evidences how s/he sense checks information alongside being careful to not share information that may encourage potential repercussions from 'trolls'. ITP 14 reveals her/his awareness towards 'trolls' and during the interview shares an experience of an encounter with an online 'troll'. As a result, the interviewees alertness has heightened her/his anxiety to share content and restricts her/his from sharing knowledge. ITP14 argues that potential backfire from 'trolls' restrains the 'posts' that s/he disseminates on Twitter, s/he has to be 'careful' to not provoke 'trolls' by sharing conflicting information:

With the information, I am putting out there I always sense check everything that I put out. I'm fairly careful I know at some point we are going to get trolls... We just don't put up anything or stuff up there that will get any trolls on it. (ITP 14, Co-founder of litter picking business)

The statement reveals that the interviewee has given into the expectations of 'trolls', and distributes information which contributes to an echo-chamber of alike thoughts, because opposing opinions may provoke a negative reaction.

The activity of sense checking information in detail is expressed by an interviewee. For instance, ITP 13 argues that her/his scepticism towards 'sources' that share information leads to the interviewee undertaking background research of the 'source', for the purpose of validating the reliability. The interviewee is more aware of magazine and secondary research distributing untrustworthy information, instead the interviewee trusts organisations or think tank's knowledge shared. During the interview, ITP 13 discussed her/his extensive experience in industry, thus, her/his previous knowledge contributes to her/his sense checking of 'sources' and validation process:

Oh, I'm very sceptical. If I read something, I'm very doubtful about the sources. I do the research myself if it's referenced properly and biographed. Then it's someone's opinion, I can write something and put it up... When I see an article, unless I can see the sources whether it's primary or secondary whether its rubbish. Or if it's all secondary research, then I'll be a little more suspicious. And you get a

lot of that in the arena of sustainable fashion... So, I feel when I read an article there is a distinction between what a magazine would write and an organisation or individual or think tank would write. Therefore, I would allay my judgement based on that. (ITP 13, Works in the textile industry)

Interviewees argue that they are an expert about green clothing, due to working within the fashion industry. However, interviewees evidence that they gather knowledge to validate what they know, when collecting information, they use their own expertise to verify the content retrieved. ITP 4 discusses her/his extensive experience from working within the textile industry, and argues that s/he can identify reliable knowledge. Thus, the interviewee overcomes her/his scepticism towards untrustworthy content due to her/his knowledge accumulated from years in industry:

I've been working in the (textile) industry for a number of years. I have been working with sustainable textiles for a lot of years. I've been to most production sites in the world. I've spoken to parties in Europe. I wouldn't say that I know everything, but I can call bullshit when I see it... I mostly gather knowledge about different personas and their way and who is who and where. To see if I can find some people that I can use or learn from. Then we have this chat in a private chat and not public. (ITP 4, Sustainable textile producer)

The statement reveals that the interviewee gathers knowledge to seek validation on what s/he knows and to learn more about green clothing, this is evidenced within the final three lines of the quote. Thus, ITP 4 demonstrates a drive to share information by overcoming her/his scepticism and to seek validation.

ITP 4 further demonstrates her/his scepticism towards 'naïve' and 'unsubstantial' 'tweets', in particular, the interviewee states that these types of 'tweets' are 'easy to publish'. Thus, the latter evidences the interviewee's apprehension towards what s/he gathers and observes within the OC. The interviewee reveals that her/his knowledge accumulated from working has meant that s/he can identify untrustworthy 'tweets' and overlooks them:

From time-to-time Twitter users can be seen as a tad naïve to be honest. So, if you hear what I said about withdraw you'll get my opinion. It can be naïve, it's easy to publish unsubstantial tweets for instance. (ITP 4, Sustainable textile producer)

Likewise, ITP 18 describes her/his expert position related to green clothing due to studying a masters and currently a PhD related to the topic, and because of her/his co-founder role of a

vegan clothing website. Nevertheless, the interviewee conveys that s/he gathers knowledge in order to validate what s/he knows, and distributes information that s/he is 'comfortable' with, thus, evidencing her/his verification of the content. The interviewee states that s/he further authenticates a 'post' by reading the title and confirms the reliability of the content based on her/his knowledge:

If I don't feel comfortable then I won't share it (share a post) ...So, what I do, is that I look at them quickly I look at the titles. Ones that I find interesting I click on them and I read part of the article. And if it's interesting then I retweet it. Sometimes I just retweet it over the title. As I've already read about it and I know what it is about. (ITP 18, PhD and CMO of Vegan clothing website)

The statement demonstrates that the interviewee contributes to an echo-chamber of like-minded thoughts due to 'retweeting' articles that s/he verifies from within the OC. However, the interviewee reveals that s/he gathers and then shares the 'post' to display an expert status that is associated to green clothing.

Similarly, an interviewee discussed within the interviewee that s/he has become knowledgeable about green clothing as a result of working within an organisation that advocates sustainable fashion. As a result of the ITP 7's understanding, s/he uses her/his gut to surmise if information is truthful before sharing. The interviewee indicates doubt and concern towards information shared within the OC, and argued that 'it's a time of fake news' and expresses how others can be naïve to fake information:

It's hard nowadays to find out what is true and what's not. It's a time of fake news, and it's this thing where people assume it's out there and then not believing it when it's true. It's hard nowadays to find out what's the best information to be knowing... You have to trust your gut maybe. (ITP 7, Employee at a textiles company)

An interviewee discusses her/his vast knowledge which originates from studying a masters. As a result, s/he perceives herself/himself as an expert, and has become an influencer within the OC to promote her/his 'sustainable lifestyle' and to raise awareness about green clothing. ITP 3 portrays her/his scepticism when gathering knowledge to learn more due to being a lecturer. However, the interviewee overcomes her/his apprehension towards the reliability of the content by personally verifying posts by using her/his own understanding:

First of all, I need to know the authors already. Sometimes its fate, I know it's going to be true. I always like to compare when I find information about something. For example, I'm a teacher and I want to talk about new stuff all the time with my students. So anytime when I find any new information off websites about sustainable cotton. I always try to go a little bit deeper. I try to find parallel websites when they speak about this stuff. I try to connect with people if it's important, and help you to try to reason. I always double-check, we are investigators. (ITP 3, PhD, eco-influencer, lecturer and sustainability consultant in Tourism)

Users reveal their scepticism towards unreliable content 'posted' within the OC. However, users are driven to overcome unreliable information by sharing knowledge which is perceived as truthful, because the content is supported by science. Subsequently, users' evidence that by sharing genuine information they can raise awareness about green clothing and influence others' mindsets. An interview evidences her/his scepticism towards superficial information, which has led to not trusting certain types of knowledge shared by others. ITP 5 states there is 'a lot of talk more than previous years about this particular issue (green clothing)', this has led to 'a lot of marketing and posts' from celebrities circulating information with 'no knowledge of substance'. The interviewee describes that as a result of superficial knowledge being shared, s/he wants to take responsibility and educate users by sharing her/his research which 'is more approachable for the people within the online community', and will 'reach more people'. ITP 5 argues that s/he wants to take responsibility to distribute 'real knowledge' and raise awareness:

And in particular, I want people to talk about science. Because with research it is hard to reach people out of the research community... It's a bit superficial now. People are not looking for real knowledge so by using Twitter I can share my knowledge in a more accountable way. And this way it reaches more people and raises awareness. (ITP 5, Researcher about microplastics from synthetic clothes)

The interviewee further describes her/his apprehension towards 'superficial' 'posts' and how the content originates. ITP 5 argues that superficial 'tweets' emerge because of Twitter's limited character space on Twitter, which has led to users simplifying knowledge in order to have an impact. Therefore, the shortened content results in users sharing incorrect or exaggerated information:

Superficial because you have a tweet with a limited amount of words, so sometimes you have to simplify a lot... You have to be cautious about what you write and what you want to communicate. Because you have to bring interest but cannot share something that is incorrect or exaggerating. Sometimes I find that people want to

share a tweet with more impact and more like, so they exaggerate, so when you click on the link it's not that scientific. But not all people will click on the link, so I feel that it's a big title but in reality, it's not as they say. This is the main drawback. (ITP 5, Researcher about microplastics from synthetic clothes)

The statement reflects the interviewee's irritation towards superficial content being shared within the OC, and further evidences that her/his annoyance influences her/him to overcome unreliable 'tweets' by sharing the truth.

An interviewee evidences her/his scepticism towards 'fake news' and an apprehension towards 'so much fake news' within the OC. Subsequently, the interviewee demonstrates her/his exasperation towards fake news being circulated, therefore, only shares 'correct' information and avoids contact with fake news. ITP 6 states that s/he is inclined to share knowledge that others can have confidence in, in order 'to raise awareness and to educate' others about green clothing:

Yes, to spread awareness and to educate (reason to share information) ...I intend to share something that is correct. Because there is so much fake news out there. So, I don't want to be in contact with that and spread fake news. (ITP 6, CEO of second-hand textiles company)

Due to the interviewee's job as a CEO, it is in her/his personal interest to avoid fake information and to only share correct information. Therefore, the statement reveals that the interviewee is driven by two aspects, these are, firstly to overcome fake news being shared and to protect her/his professional status within the OC.

Interviewees evidence their scepticism when they gather information from the OC to learn or validate what they know, in particular, they are apprehensive of the reliability of the content and if the 'post' is 'fake'. However, interviewees overcome the obstacle by verifying 'posts' before sharing, verification of 'posts' is undertaken two different ways based on the users' knowledge. Firstly, if the user does not perceive themselves as knowledgeable, they sense check content by reading and comparing against other 'posts', and do not share from certain 'sources'. Secondly, if the user deems themselves as knowledgeable as a result of working in industry or from studying, they authenticate the content based on their own expertise and 'post' content which they perceive as being truthful. Moreover, users demonstrate that they are driven to share

information because they feel a responsibility to share the ‘correct’ knowledge about green clothing, with the hope to raise awareness amongst users within the OC. Users evidence their responsibility to distribute reliable information because of their job within industry or their job which associated with green clothing research. Therefore, users’ passion and knowledge which originates from their job provides them with a sense of duty.

5.2.4 Belonging

The theme refers to users sharing and gathering knowledge within the #sustainablefashion OC which results in a community feeling. The following activities demonstrate users’ circulating and collecting knowledge: sharing information with like-minded users, being supported by like-minded others, gathering knowledge from users they trust, sharing knowledge by asking questions and receiving answers and engaging within the OC. A sense of belonging is heightened when users adopt and carry out certain roles. These roles are: learner, educator, contributor and being perceived as trustworthy. Interviewees discuss how they maintain their role(s), for instance, by regularly sharing knowledge via a manual ‘tweet’ or an ‘automated system’ to be perceived as being active within the OC. A vast number of interviewees’ gather and share knowledge about green clothing within their identified role to raise awareness, educate and change mindsets. Users further convey belonging via association by following important people aligned to green clothing. The OC provides a safe-space for like-minded users to share their concerns freely without the anxiety of criticism, as a result, users become reliant on the community.

Interviewees evidence a desire to reciprocate with like-minded others who share the same concerns towards green clothing. The OC is portrayed within the analysis as a safe-space for users to distribute their personal opinions and thoughts, without the consequence of receiving backlash from opposing views. A sense of purpose and fitting in is revealed by an interviewee when s/he discussed how s/he benefitted from the OC, for instance, by engaging with others on the same wave length. ITP 9 expresses her/his belonging when stating that ‘you’re all reaching for the same cause, you’re all interested in the same thing’, further emphasising that engaging with like-minded others drives her/his sense of belonging:

I am very aware that my social media feeds are an echo-chamber. They are full of people that think like I do and agree with me. So, it’s easy to feel like everybody

feels the same way when clearly most of the population don't. (ITP 9, Podcaster and blogger about sustainability)

Interviewees demonstrate a sense of belonging within the OC when others interact with them, either by 'retweeting' their 'tweet' or exchanging information. Knowledge exchange between the two users often results in a friendship online which entails discussing shared interests and learning from each other. ITP 3 expresses a sense of belonging which resulted from forming a friendship within the OC, which originated from another user 'retweeting' her/his 'tweets' and led to a conversation about her/his common interests related to green clothing. The interviewee states that her/his friendship has stayed online, and reveals that s/he wants to maintain the friendship because they learn from each other and discuss their shared passion:

We are a lot of people that are interested in sustainable fashion. When you share information on Twitter, and a lot of people are retweeting your tweets because you are sharing important information. It's true, some friendships have started through this too. I have a couple of friends that I haven't met yet because we live in two different parts of the world. We met through retweeting. Because there was this one guy who was retweeting quite a lot of what I shared. And I went to his profile and there was quite a lot of interesting stuff too so we started talking. (ITP 3, PhD, eco-influencer, lecturer, and sustainability consultant in Tourism)

A sense of belonging is derived from not just exchanging information about shared interests, but also from having a heated discussion with others and users providing the interviewee with information. ITP 2 shared knowledge within the OC for the purpose of having 'a good rant' and to connect 'with people who are like-minded'. The interviewee shares an analogy about the shared mindset within the OC, 'it's like opening a door to a room where people are speaking about the same thing'. A reliance on the community is portrayed, when ITP 2 states how users are supportive of her/his concerns, compared to negative comments that s/he receives from outside the OC:

You can get negative comments outside the community. Everybody inside of the community tends to be really eager, and willing and helpful. And quite giving with information. (ITP 2, Part-time mature student)

ITP 2 expresses that s/he wants to be supported and to engage with others who share the same concerns, unlike in her/his offline life where s/he receives negative comments. The interviewee further emphasises her/his reliance when describing that a sustainable lifestyle is 'a really boring

way to live' and that 'it can be a really hard way to live'. Hence, ITP 2 frequently shares knowledge to overcome the hardship of her/his lifestyle, for instance, s/he states 'it's definitely great to share the fun victories of what I do'. The 'fun victories' relates to purchasing 'dresses from Monsoon for only £2 each' from a charity shop which would have originally cost '£40 or £50'.

Similarly, an interview expresses that a sense of belonging is felt via engagement by using the #sustainablefashion 'hashtag', as the 'hashtag' gives users a role to contribute their perspective. ITP 8 indicates a desire to encourage others to change their behaviours, and expresses that s/he does not feel alone in her/his journey as there are others who are joining the cause:

Once you use a hashtag, I think everybody has a role. Whether positive or negative. For me I use the positive stance of it. The latest report reading I have done was about the whole environmental change. There's 12 years that we might not be able to turn it around. It's important, I'm a one band woman I need to get it out there. But I'm not a one band woman because there's millions of tweets out there. (ITP 8, Sustainable fashion business owner)

Various personae are evidenced by the interviewees, when they contribute a sense of belonging to the OC. Such roles entail learner, educator, contributor and being perceived as trustworthy. An interviewee demonstrate that a sense of belonging is heightened when s/he is able to learn from others within the OC and when others interact to help them. ITP 2 expresses that her/his role is 'to learn' and that s/he feels 'more like the student than the educator'. The interviewee states 'yes definitely' when asked in the interview if s/he feels a sense of belonging, s/he further shares an experience when others supported her/him by providing literature to help solve her/his problem or misunderstanding. The interviewee indicates her/his trust and reliance on the information shared by others, stating that s/he would trust website links sent to help her/his query:

Yes definitely (feel part of the OC) ...And if they (OC users) suggested try here, I'd definitely give the link a click. I wouldn't go argh what it's going to be is it going to be horrendous is it going to be a virus. That wouldn't really enter my head, to be honest with you. (ITP 2, Part-time mature student)

Alternatively, the role of educator is expressed by interviewees as they are driven to help and support OC users, which results in raising awareness about green clothing and strengthens their

belonging. ITP 19 discusses how s/he answers other users' questions in order to build a relationship, and evidences a sense of fulfilment as a result of helping. The interviewee's drive to assist others is due to her/his job that entails collecting information to inform her/his clients. A desire to acquire a professional progression is revealed by the interviewee, however, the aspect of helping others and to feel part of the community is a prominent driver:

But I really like the fact that you can really help people as well. That's what I would say I use it for mostly... I think relationship building is important especially when you're a freelancer...the more you can be a helpful person there's a benefit in it for me. I can help people and they might do something for me and introduce someone to me in return, or pass on a little piece of business or recommendation or something. (ITP 19, Freelance photographer and social media manager)

Likewise, an interviewee evidences the roles of helper and educator when sharing knowledge about green clothing. ITP 20 argues that s/he has met 'interesting people' within the 'sustainable fashion industry' as a result of the OC. The interviewee states that this has led to sharing free advice to a start-up company in her/his spare time on the weekend. During the interview, ITP 20 states that s/he feels a sense of belonging due to her/his profession within the sustainable fashion industry, consequently, s/he feels part of the movement. The interviewee expresses her/his drive to be part of the OC, which is due to her/his passion for ensuring the industry is more transparent and active:

Hashtag sustainable fashion, yes definitely. I feel a part of it, reasons why is because I am working right now with this project, and I am working... And I am a small part in this at this movement. I am someone who's trying to make the industry more transparent and sustainable. By spreading messages, and trying to initiate initiatives on the ground... And sometimes they talk to so there's engagement there. There I try to get back to them in 24 to 48 hours, even though I just have the 4,000 followers I try to engage with them if they talk to me. I get the message on my cell phone, so if I've got time, I'll definitely try to engage with them. (ITP 20, Programme manager)

The role of contributor provides interviewees with a sense of belonging, in particular, it gives them a purpose that contributes to the movement of raising awareness about green clothing. ITP 8 identifies herself/himself as 'not just part of it, I'm driving with it'. The interviewee contributes within the OC by 'retweeting' users that s/he agreed with, and 'promoting it (sharing knowledge about green clothing) as a good cause as something that we should all be acknowledging'. ITP 8 discusses that as a result of contributing her/his knowledge s/he feels a part of the OC:

I'm a one band women I need to get it out there. But I'm not a one band woman because there's millions of tweets out there. (ITP 8, Sustainable fashion business owner)

Interviewees portray their desire to gain others' trust, this heightens their sense of belonging. ITP 9 expresses a hope for others to perceive her/him as being trustworthy, this is demonstrated when the interviewee states that s/he wants others to trust her/him because s/he hopes to raise awareness about what s/he sells:

It's a brilliant way of building that trust with the community with potential customers if you have products or services to sell. It's a way of people getting to know you and your opinions. And whether they resonate with them. I don't know whether I need to trust them? But I want them to trust me. (ITP 9, Podcaster and blogger about sustainability)

Users describe a sense of belonging to sub-communities (SCs) within the #sustainablefashion OC. The latter is due to the SCs discussing particular aspects that associate to green clothing, such as, #ethicalhour, #whomademyclothes and #fashionrevolution. As a result of sharing information within the OCs, users indicate their hope to portray a strong attachment and receive validation for being linked to green clothing. ITP 8 indicates that s/he is influenced by others when choosing a SC. The interviewee reveals that s/he uses the #sustainablefashion alongside a SC 'hashtag' to contribute to the OC, and states 'well it's (#sustainablefashion) very well used, I always use it', which demonstrates her/his main belonging to the OC. ITP 8 expresses a belonging within the SC 'hashtags', as both SCs fit her/his green clothing interests:

If I see they (other users) use a hashtag and I think that might be useful, so I might pop into the hashtag have a quick look and think yeah, I'll use that. If they are on the same kind of path that I am. (ITP 8, Sustainable fashion business owner)

The statement reveals the interviewees inclination to trust OC users by clicking on the SCs they use. ITP 8 further evidences a desire to belong with the OC, therefore, s/he keeps herself/himself updated by observing others' behaviour and follows what they are doing.

Interviewees demonstrate a desire to keep updated with information related to green clothing, by gathering knowledge from the SCs for their own learning. Seeking validation is another desired outcome of using a SC 'hashtag', for instance, the interviewee hopes that others will associate them with green clothing because of the content that they share. ITP 15 expresses

her/his use of SC ‘hashtags’ is driven by a desire to learn more about green clothing, in particular, by observing ‘others designers’ who have the same ‘kind of passion’. The interviewee reveals her/his delight that her/his followers perceive her/him as being related to sustainability, which confirms her/his hope of gaining association within the OC:

I use those hashtags on purpose so that I can click on them and see other designers and other people who share the same kind of passion... But I do get other people say oh yeah, I know your big on your sustainability, yes, I'm going to recycle my bottle and stuff like that. Just because I've been hash tagging posts over and over again. (ITP 15, Design and technology teacher)

Interviewees demonstrate that SCs within #sustainablefashion OC consist of green clothing topics which are discussed at depth, this allows them to be part of a focused campaign and permits them to share their opinions on a single issue. By using the SC ‘hashtag’ alongside the #sustainablefashion ‘hashtag’, the interviewee portrays a desire for others to perceive them as being linked to a specific green clothing aspect and potentially as an expert. ITP 9 uses SC ‘hashtags’ when ‘tweeting’ alongside #sustainablefashion, stating that the #sustainablefashion is a very broad ‘hashtag’ that can encompass lots of other aspects’ and feels closer to the SCs. The interviewee demonstrates her/his belonging to #ethicalhour and #whomademyclothes, due to the ‘hashtags’ focused campaigns that interest her/him. Whereas, ITP 17 evidences a belonging to #whomademyclothes alongside #fashionrevolution because of her/his sense of alignment with the SCs, and due to the specific content that s/he is interested in:

I think some of the other hashtags like #whomademyclothes, you feel more part of a community and you have a role to disseminate specific message there. As it's a focused campaign, it feels more niche which isn't the right word. But more specific. Whereas #sustainablefashion is a very broad hashtag that can encompass lots of other aspects, I guess... Ethical hour (#ethicalhour) which is a prominent hashtag on Monday night. Sustainable fashion (#sustainablefashion) doesn't feel like it has someone behind it. (ITP 9, Podcaster and blogger about sustainability)

I have connected with a lot of organisations globally. We kind of understand what they are doing and we align towards that. For example, the #fashionrevolution and #whomademyclothes. These types of hashtags are global hashtags, and we have aligned ourselves to that. So, it's been very informative in that way. (ITP 17, Fashion consultant and business owner upcycling garments)

An interviewee evidences a strong desire to belong to the #sustainablefashion OC and associated ‘hashtags’, and portrays her/his reliance on the support that is given by OC and SC users. For instance, ITP 11 provides an analogy describing her/his sense of belonging within the SC ‘hashtags’ and #sustainablefashion OC, which entails, the opportunity to locate and interact with like-minded others:

And the reason to use them (SC hashtags and #sustainablefashion) is, that everyone you know and want to talk to is in a hotel and you don’t have any way of knowing what room they are in. So, you might miss the opportunity of talking to them if you don’t know their room number. And what a hashtag does is says we’re both interested in talking about this so it’s a way for you to locate them. And then that’s why we use quite a broad range of hashtags to cover a huge range of issues. (ITP 11, Co-founder of a sustainable bags and accessory business)

The statement reveals the interviewee’s dependency within both the #sustainablefashion OC and similar SCs, this is due to her/his desire to engage with like-minded others.

Users within the OC express that belonging is important to them when sharing and gathering knowledge. In particular, a sense of belonging is heightened when users can share knowledge in a safe-space, which entails reciprocating with like-minded users without the fear of receiving criticism. Users convey their belonging when adopting various roles within the OC, this demonstrates how they want to be identified by other users. A minority of users discuss their sense of belonging with SCs within the #sustainablefashion OC, because the SC aligns with a particular topic linked to green clothing which interests them.

5.3 Factors that Empower Users to Share Knowledge

This sub-section examines the prior themes (these are: lobbying, work agenda, scepticism and belonging) that emerged within users’ drive to share knowledge, in order to understand the overarching aspects that empowered interviewees to share knowledge within #sustainablefashion.

5.3.1 Green Concerns

Interviewees’ environmental conscience is a factor that is present within all the themes discussed in Section 5.2, as an aspect that empowered them to share knowledge. In particular, interviewees’ green concerns influenced what type of content was distributed and how. For instance, interviewees evidence that their concerns for sustainable fashion empowered them to lobby other users within the OC. The purpose of lobbying was to heighten users’ conscience of

what green clothing entails, raise awareness about alternative consumption activities and persuade others to adopt behaviours that reduce their environmental impact. A sense of empowerment is evidenced by interviewees who discuss a drive to lobby because of their personal experiences that associates with green clothing. The latter entails the interviewees discussing how they upcycle, mend, reuse, and use what they have.

Interviewees who share knowledge with a work agenda reveal that a green concern influences them to circulate content that promotes their professional position or employer. For instance, interviewees are empowered to share knowledge to make others more aware of green clothing, and to change others' rationale or mindset. The analysis evidenced that users who are empowered by their environmental conscience is due to working within a sustainable clothing industry or creating their own business that uses sustainable practices. During the interviews, the majority of interviewees discussed that they work within the textile industry or have created their own business because of their concerns to make the fashion industry greener, and because of their innate concerns. Regarding the latter, interviewees discuss that their concerns originated from studying or from viewing unsustainable actions in the fashion industry. As a result, the interviewees demonstrate a sense of duty and a desire to create a greener clothing industry. The interviewees who share information about their employer, however, with no intention to promote their employer, indicate that their strong moral conscience empowers them to share content about the company's activities and to support the initiatives that are being done. Thus, the analysis indicates that interviewees who hold strong concerns are more likely to interact with companies online who present a philanthropic image and communicate their environmental schemes. The analysis further evidences that the interviewees whose business aligns with green clothing, are empowered to use Twitter as a platform to communicate their work that promotes sustainable practices.

Interviewees who have deep-rooted concerns for green fashion, as a result of studying or working within the industry for many years, actively share content that they perceive as truthful to overcome false claims and reduce scepticism within the OC. A sense of responsibility is revealed by interviewees, as an underlying aspect that empowers them to share factual information, to raise awareness and overcome the superficial content that is being circulated. ITP 5 reveals that s/he shares information that originates from her/his research about

microplastics, and is empowered by her/his awareness of the negative impacts on the environment to share knowledge that s/he perceives as factual. Whereas, the majority of interviewees evidence that they 'retweet' or share knowledge that they know to be truthful to overcome fake news being present within the OC. Interviewees draw on their experience within industry to validate information prior to sharing, and distribute content that advocates green clothing.

Lastly, interviewees evidence their empowerment to exchange knowledge with others about green clothing, because they perceive the OC as a safe-space and have a desire to contribute to the echo-chamber of alike thoughts. Consequently, the analysis indicates that a sense of belonging within the #sustainablefashion OC is achieved, when users are influenced by their green concerns and when other users enthuse others via engagement and helping others. The latter, indicates that other OC users empower the interviewees to share knowledge, because the interviewees felt a sense of fitting-in with like-minded others.

5.3.2 Engagement

The analysis evidences that an exchange of knowledge between OC users empowered users to contribute to the conversation and empowered a desire to raise awareness about green clothing. For instance, interviewees demonstrate a desire to engage with others and how they would prefer someone to comment rather than 'like' or 'retweet' their comment. As a result of an interaction, interviewees evidence that they are empowered to establish online relationships and continue sharing their common green clothing interests. Also, interviewees indicate that as a result of the exchange of knowledge, interviewees are empowered to raise awareness about green clothing.

Interviewees reveal that engagement within the OC is increased when personal experiences are shared. The analysis reveals that both interviewees 14 and 16, who shared personal experiences received more interaction from others and others joined their lobbying against GOSH and H&M. The interviewees evidenced that they are driven to share knowledge on Twitter because of the interaction they receive, and because others will listen to them. Thus, it can be suggested that the aspect of engagement empowers the interviewee to continue sharing knowledge, and the opportunity of engagement empowered the other OC users to join the lobby against the organisations and to comment on the interviewees' 'tweet'.

5.3.3 Online Tools

This sub-section examines how Twitter's online tools empower users to produce user-generated-content, use 'hashtags' and encourage knowledge exchange. Subsequently, users are empowered to express themselves, produce content that has a global reach and provoke engagement. The analysis indicates that the tools facilitate users' desire to raise awareness about green clothing, network with like-minded users and elevate their status as an influencer. Users evidence empowerment via the following tools on Twitter, these are, an 'automated system' called Buffer and 'cross-posting' between social media platforms.

Interviewees reveal the use of a 'hashtag' enables them to raise awareness about green clothing and allows them to share their opinions within the conversation. An interviewee expresses that s/he uses #sustainablefashion because it is a 'trending' and popular 'hashtag', by using the 'hashtag' the interviewee hopes to raise awareness about her/his green clothing concerns. ITP 10 researches what the 'trending' and relevant 'hashtags' are prior to using them within her/his 'tweets', observations confirm that #sustainablefashion is an important 'hashtag' related to green clothing. Therefore, the interviewee is empowered to use the 'hashtag' when voicing her/his opinions, because of the potential global reach:

I research hashtags quite a bit... I research on Google. There are some websites that you can see the most talked about hashtags. Also, when you search on Twitter you can see which ones are used the most and which ones are more relevant... Yeah (#sustainablefashion) it's really important. (ITP 10, Artist)

ITP 10 portrays a desire to be involved within a successful community and potentially associate with the thriving community via her/his prior research to establish the best 'hashtag' to use.

An interviewee further evidences a desire to partake within a prosperous OC, when stating the benefits of exchanging information, such as, 'reaching a global audience that you wouldn't reach face-to-face normally'. Another advantage stated by ITP 14 is that 'you can jump on the hashtags; you're touching people lives who you wouldn't have normally touched'. Thus, demonstrating that the interviewee is empowered to share information via 'hashtags' to gain these potential outcomes. The interviewee reveals that her/his awareness of the benefits associated to the 'hashtags', led to sharing a 'post' about the unsustainable disposal of Santa costumes to raise awareness to a broader audience to change users' mindsets:

The reason for sharing it was to raise awareness. Was to tell people that they need to stop doing it (littering). They need to make a change, we needed to make an impact. And we can start to turn people around on one platform (Twitter). (ITP 14, Co-founder of litter picking business)

Interviewees express themselves by creating their own SC ‘hashtag’ to use alongside #sustainablefashion. Subsequently, interviewees can raise awareness about their concerns or share their personal experiences. ITP 12 created #charityshopbop to share her/his personal experiences related to buying in charity shops rather than consuming fast fashion. The interviewee states that her/his own ‘hashtag’ has ‘not massively taken off or anything but I can use that and click on the hashtag and see all my sort of things’. Consequently, ITP 12 uses her/his original ‘hashtag’ to keep track of what s/he shares her/his opinions about. Alternatively, ITP 3 created a ‘hashtag’ to use alongside #sustainablefashion because ‘other hashtags were overwhelmed with posts and pictures’. The interviewee argued that s/he wanted to ‘create something that was different and something to give my brand a personality’, and to raise awareness about herself/himself as an ‘eco-influencer’. Thus, demonstrating the interviewee’s desire to express herself/himself via the self-created ‘hashtag’.

Interviewees discuss that Twitter enables them to network with a broader audience about green clothing, in particular, the online platform is perceived to be far more superior to other social media platforms because of this benefit. ITP 16 describes how Twitter allows her/him to contact users directly, in turn allowing the interviewee to have a closer connection with another user. In particular, s/he highlights that the platform benefits herself/himself as an academic, as it breaks down the barrier of contacting other academics or potential future employers related to green clothing:

So, if you share a tweet about someone then they will like it or share it. So, you feel like you have a connection with that individual in a much closer way. With academics you can contact them quite directly which I don’t think would happen on Facebook it’s a different thing... I contacted (an organisation) and wanted to do some research with them... So, you can often contact that person which you can’t contact through like other media. I mean you can on LinkedIn. But I feel that Twitter is more direct and immediate. (ITP 16, Fashion lecturer and researcher)

The statement reveals that Twitter empowers the interviewee to share information for the purpose of contacting users directly, in particular, ITP 16 argues that this led her/him to create a business proposal with a potential employer. Twitter is argued as being better than other social media platforms, because it enables the user to contact someone ‘more direct and immediate’, ITP 16 argues that s/he doesn’t ‘think this would happen on Facebook’.

Interviewees ‘cross-post’ knowledge from other social media platforms onto Twitter to complement their information sharing, thus, evidencing how the ability to ‘cross-post’ empowers her/him to exchange information on Twitter. Interviewees argue that they ‘cross-post’ in the hope to raise awareness about green clothing to a wider audience. ITP 1 describes how Twitter is her/his predominant platform to share knowledge about the charity shop where s/he volunteers. The interviewee states that s/he uses Facebook to complement her/his knowledge sharing on Twitter, by tagging a collaborator's Facebook page within a ‘tweet’ if the individual does not have a Twitter page. ITP 1 argues that s/he does not use Facebook and Instagram because her/his knowledge would not ‘reach a big audience because it's more closed’, compared to Twitter which extends to a broader set of users. The interviewee ‘cross-posts’ between Twitter and Facebook to raise awareness about green clothing knowledge related to her/his employer, and to Facebook friends who share her/his concerns:

Because our collaborators don't have the Twitter page. So, I can't hashtag them or add them. So, I'll put a link (within the Tweet) to their Facebook page to say thank you, and highlight that we are working together... I would say it's mainly Twitter to Facebook (cross-posting). So, I'd put something on the (charity shop) Twitter page, and tweet it onto my Facebook page. That is because I know that it reaches a lot of people that are fairly close by. So, my friends around here. And it shows an interest to my friends from all over the world that might be interested in that element. (ITP 1, Charity shop volunteer)

An interviewee reveals that s/he ‘posts’ similar ‘tweets’ between Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, to present a consistent image as an eco-influencer and to raise awareness about green clothing. Instead of ‘cross-posting’, ITP 3 uses an ‘automated system’ called Buffer to ‘post’ the alike information on each platform, the tool empowers her/him to disseminate a consistent persona and to leverage her/his influencer role. The interviewee argues that the tool enables her/him to share information to fit the purpose of each individual platform. For instance, ITP 3

shares professional knowledge on Twitter, photographs of clothes on Instagram and news articles on Facebook:

I don't have them (social media platforms) inter-connected I don't say check out my Facebook post and stuff like this. Nowadays if they want to find you, because I work as an eco-influencer. My name is always the same in all the social media platforms. I don't do cross-posting between social media. I post the same stuff on social media using another tool called Buffer. So, I post this post on Instagram and I use Buffer to repost this to Twitter and Facebook. But the information is different. As Twitter there is more professional talk. And more information about sustainability in general. Even though I share some stuff on brands too. I share my pictures with the outfits that I do with Instagram. On Facebook I post more news relating to sustainability. (ITP 3, PhD, eco-influencer, lecturer and sustainability consultant in Tourism)

Interviewees reveal that their empowerment to share information within the OC originates from two aspects, these are, self-expression via user-generated-content, and Twitter tools. The analysis indicates that the interviewees are empowered to express themselves and reciprocate with others via user-generated-content, in particular, when using 'hashtags'. The #sustainablefashion 'hashtag' is discussed as being an important 'hashtag' which connects like-minded others together who have concerns for green clothing. Interviewees argue that they use the 'hashtag' for the purpose of raising awareness about green clothing, due to their strong concerns and desire to make a positive impact. Whereas interviewees evidence that Twitter tools enable them to share information, which empowers them to express their opinion and leverage their online status. In particular, the interviewees benefit from the platform as it enables a global reach and networking, and the ability to spread their knowledge across various platforms to raise awareness.

5.4 Reflections and Conclusions

This chapter examined the aspects that drive users' knowledge sharing within the #sustainablefashion OC, and revealed what factors empower users to share and exchange knowledge about green clothing.

The interviewees environmental conscience is an important factor that empowers them to share knowledge and engage. The majority of the interviewees evidence a desire to share knowledge for the purpose of raising awareness about green clothing amongst other Twitter users, and to contribute to conversations that discuss the concept. Furthermore, interviewees experience that

has accumulated from studying, creating their own business or working at an organisation or charity that advocates sustainable fashion, empowers' interviewees to share personal experiences online. Alongside, interviewees sense of duty to validate content about green clothing, empowers' interviewees to share information that is factual and to communicate reliable information about green clothing.

An echo-chamber is demonstrated within the findings, this entails the interviewees sharing knowledge which is similar and aligns to other users' opinions within the OC. Three of the themes that drive users' knowledge sharing express an echo-chamber, these are, lobbying, scepticism and belonging. An echo-chamber is indicated across these themes when users, filter information in order to present specific 'tweets' within the OC, are driven to exchange information with like-minded others, and share similar information to discourage online repercussion. The analysis demonstrates that an echo-chamber is an important aspect of the #sustainablefashion OC. For instance, interviewees evidence a sense of empowerment to share knowledge about their green concerns or personal experiences related to sustainable fashion, because they feel empowered to contribute to an online platform that comprises of opinions and thoughts that coincide with their own. In particular, ITP 9 states in her/his interview that s/he is aware of the echo-chamber that s/he contributes to, and expresses her/his contentment that the echo-chamber shares her/his opinion even if the rest of the population do not. Therefore, an echo-chamber demonstrates a pivotal factor that contributes to users' drive to share knowledge and evidences an influence on users' empowerment to distribute information.

The analysis reveals that a sense of belonging is heightened amongst interviewees, when they are able to share knowledge within a perceived safe-space within an OC. In particular, an interviewee indicates that s/he is empowered to exchange information with others because of her/his sense of acceptance from others, and perception of fitting in within the OC. During the interview ITP 2 discussed her/his negative online experiences, that consisted of receiving backlash in regards to content that s/he shared about her/his green conscience, and because s/he did not feel that others had the same sustainable and green concerns. Subsequently, the interviewee felt that the #sustainablefashion OC was a safe-space because s/he did not encounter opposing views, and s/he was able to interact with like-minded others and share her/his activities related to green clothing. Thus, a safe-space is an important factor that contributes to users'

empowerment, and the concept is indicated by users who are driven by a desire to belong to the OC.

The analysis indicates that users are disempowered to share knowledge within the #sustainablefashion OC. The interviewees reveal that they are discouraged, because of their apprehension towards fake news and superficial information and unreliable 'sources' that distribute content. Interviewees' scepticism acts as barrier to their interaction with content shared by 'sources' perceived as doubtful, such as, 'automated systems', magazines and tabloids. As a result, interviewees express a reluctance to 'retweet' or interact within information shared by the latter 'sources'. A sense of uncertainty towards 'trolls' is further revealed by interviewees. The analysis reveals that an anxiety towards 'trolls' has led to an interviewee sharing knowledge that does not conflict with others views and is careful about 'posting' information. Hence, the latter evidences the interviewees disempowerment to share her/his opinions and express herself/himself in relation to green clothing, because s/he does not want to provoke negative comments from 'trolls'. The analysis shows that a minority of interviewees are driven by their awareness of fake and unreliable content or 'sources'. The interviewees reveal a sense of responsibility to overcome the content by sharing factual and scientific information that originates from their prior studying or from their job which is green clothing related.

The next chapter synthesises the key insights that have emerged from chapters 4 and 5, drawing from the RQs to frame the discussion.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Findings

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretically-informed, critical discussion of the key findings arising from Chapter 4 ('Initial scoping') and Chapter 5 ('Further exploration'). The chapter offers a critical synthesis of the main concepts that were discussed by the participants and interviewees, for the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the evidence and how such evidence addresses the three research questions (RQs) of this thesis. The chapter further examines the key findings in the light of existing literature and related theoretical concepts.

The chapter is organised as follows. Section 6.2 discusses the key findings that emerged from the 'Initial Scoping' and 'Further Exploration' chapters. Section 6.3 examines how the findings compare to those identified in the literature review alongside supplementary literature, in order to establish the novel contributions of this study. Section 6.4 concludes by highlighting the academic and managerial contributions from the findings.

6.2 Key Findings

6.2.1 Lobbying: Raising Awareness and a Desire for Change

The concept of users' lobbying online community (OC) users in relation to green clothing, was a main concept that emerged from the findings. Users demonstrated a variety of motivations which led to lobbying. They were, a desire to raise awareness, help others, enthuse and enlighten, change others' mindsets and behaviours, alongside being motivated by their moral concerns associated with green clothing, altruism, anonymity, anger and frustration.

The findings revealed that users lobbied OC users in order to raise awareness about green clothing and champion alternative consumption methods such as 'use what you have', 'mending', 'upcycling', 'DIY', 'charity shopping' and 'to make'. The analysis unveiled that users encompassed deep-seated concerns for the environment, which has subsequently shaped users' moral sense of right and wrong (an 'innate conscience') with regard to pro-environmental behaviour, leading to their interest in green clothing. The latter explanation provides an insight into why the analysis indicated that users share knowledge about green clothing in order to enthuse others, enhance their understanding and appreciation of green clothing, help others and enlighten their reasoning for shifting towards 'greening' their apparel consumption.

Users who revealed a motivation to share knowledge led by their conscience, did not indicate an intention to lobby others, instead the information distributed acted as a guidance and informed others about green clothing. The findings demonstrated that potential mindset and behavioural change occurred as a result of users holding a moral inclination to share. For instance, users evidenced that their personal 'tweets' related to 'greening' their consumption received much interaction. Hence, it can be suggested that the heightened interaction on 'posts' where users displayed their pro-environmental behaviour, could potentially have an influence on other users' rationale towards green clothing. However, further investigation into other users' mindset and behavioural change as a result of interacting on 'posts' is necessary to confirm the validity of the findings. Users' profound concerns are evidenced in the analysis as a motivation to lobby, for the purpose of educating others and to encourage a movement of people who will make the world a better place. Users evidenced a sense of duty and responsibility to share knowledge about green clothing within the OC. It can be inferred that users who evidenced 'an innate conscience' demonstrated feelings of 'duty' and 'responsibility'. A sense of altruism was indicated by users when sharing knowledge in order to help others. For instance, users emphasised that their intention was not for the purpose of being popular, rather they wanted to raise awareness amongst others, for the greater good. Thus, the analysis presents a moral concern as a motivator to lobby that entails a sense of duty and responsibility, alongside an altruistic act driven by a desire to educate.

The findings also revealed that users were motivated by anger and frustration towards organisations that did not abide by their sustainability initiatives. Other motivations included a drive to lobby for the purpose of changing users', organisations' and policy makers' mindsets and behaviours in relation to, green clothing, alternative consumption and sustainability schemes. The findings evidenced that users were motivated to lobby organisations because of their anger and frustration towards the brand and charity in question, whose behaviours run counter to their environmental values. Users shared photographs as well as 'tweets' to expose organisations' 'bad behaviour' and added in the company's Twitter handle to direct the lobby. The analysis revealed that the users' 'tweets' directed at the organisation also influenced other Twitter users, who joined the lobby by commenting, 'retweeting' and 'liking' the original 'tweets'. Hence, the power of lobbying is shown, as the directed 'post' gained traction within the OC and on Twitter, a process culminating in one of the user's 'tweets' going 'viral'. The

analysis evidenced that the users who lobbied with the intention of creating change, did have green clothing concerns and worked within a profession that aligned with sustainable fashion and pro-environmental behaviour. Thus, it could be suggested that users' tacit knowledge accumulated through their job, resulted in an 'innate conscience', that drove their anger and frustration towards organisations that do not engage in sustainable practices. Users' feelings and their knowledge regarding green fashion, makes them feel empowered to demand change and point out the perpetrator with a direct 'tweet'. One user went as far as taking on the role of a 'troll' and 'keyboard warrior' to lobby others. The analysis showed that the user felt empowered to educate others whose views differed from her/his own, thanks to the anonymity granted by the online medium. Nevertheless, the majority of users engaged in lobbying with a purpose, without necessarily taking an extreme position online by adopting the role of a 'troll'.

An explanation as to why the findings demonstrate that some users with green clothing concerns who lobby are driven by a desire to raise awareness rather than necessarily by the intention of instigating change, is due to the users' perception of self. The analysis indicates that users who lobby to raise awareness and to support others are driven by altruism, they are learners within the OC and gather knowledge to enhance their understanding. These users' jobs are only loosely related to green clothing, with limited professional experience related to sustainability. As a result, users do not perceive themselves as someone who can share knowledge to provoke change, rather they feel comfortable in raising awareness and helping others with what they have learned, staying within their comfort zone. On the other hand, users who share knowledge with the aim of instigating change and who are driven by feelings of anger and frustration towards organisations that they view as not being sustainable, possess green clothing concerns alongside a job closely linked to green clothing and sustainability. Such users have vast experience within industries connected to green clothing. Thus, they perceive themselves as knowledgeable, having the right to demand change and call others out when failing to act 'sustainable'. Hence, the findings evidence an interesting dynamic, or power play, between users' self-perception and how they share knowledge online.

6.2.2 Aspects that Resulted in an Empowered Consumer

The findings demonstrate that users feel empowered and are more inclined to share knowledge as a result of three aspects: past personal online experiences, green concerns, and online tools that facilitate their knowledge sharing.

Users' previous experiences influence how they share knowledge at present and in the future within the OC. The analysis also shows that users' experiences entail observing how specific online tools can facilitate their knowledge sharing, and how personal experiences foster interaction within the OC, alongside the support and help that users can gain from the OC. The analysis also unveils that users were influenced to use specific online tools to promote their job, such as creating their own online platform, 'retweeting' and engaging with others via a comment. Also, users' observations resulted in users continuing to share personal experiences related to green clothing in order to engage with like-minded users, due to personal experiences attracting further online interaction. Users gathered knowledge from the OC to learn about green clothing, due to the available content shared by others. As a result of the OC providing positive experiences, users felt a heightened sense of belonging. In particular, belonging was fostered when users were able to exchange knowledge and interact with users by sharing personal 'posts' and content. The latter entailed photographs, offline experiences, and information about how users 'greened' their clothing consumption. The analysis demonstrates that users' sense of belonging empowered them to share more knowledge with the OC.

Users' green concerns were a pivotal factor that empowered them to share knowledge about green clothing and how they 'greened' their consumption, for example, via 'mending' and 'making' apparel. A possible explanation of why users were empowered by their conscience was due to their association with the #sustainablefashion OC, which attracted Twitter users with green clothing and sustainability concerns. The analysis indicates that users are empowered by their concerns to contribute to an echo-chamber, that comprises of alike thoughts and opinions. A 'safe-space' emerges as a concept that associates to the users' sense of empowerment to share within the echo-chamber. For instance, the analysis shows that users with strongly-held green concerns who do not have a network offline they can relate to, are therefore reliant on the OC as a 'safe-space' that provides them with a sense of acceptance and a place to interact with like-minded others. Users emphasise how their 'green conscience' results in a dependence on the OC. For instance, users indicate their feeling of loss when their online like-minded friends are on holiday. The OC represents an escape from users' offline world where others do not empathise with their values. The findings present two additional outcomes stemming from users' empowerment to contribute to and within an echo-chamber as a result of their concerns,

namely, their trust towards content shared, and increased confidence as a result of others' support.

6.2.3 Factors that Led to a Disempowered Consumer

The majority of users display their disempowerment to share knowledge within the OC. The concept of users' disempowerment is nuanced within the findings as the analysis reveals that users are deterred and discouraged from sharing knowledge due to several reasons: past personal online experiences, reference groups, their professional role alongside employer's restrictions, scepticism towards the reliability of content 'posted' and a lack of confidence.

The findings reveal users' sense of discouragement to share knowledge because of previous outcomes that they have experienced or observed. For example, users' 'posts' being misinterpreted or causing offence via a misuse of 'emojis', or 'troll's' negative comments on users' 'posts'. The analysis demonstrates that users feel responsible for offending others via the improper use of 'emojis' or content. Hence, subsequent to users' online experience, they are apprehensive towards sharing content, and deterred from sharing 'posts' because of potential backfire. However, the analysis also suggests that some users tend to shift the blame towards the users reading their content, arguing that others' negative perception of the 'emoji' or 'post' is due to their misinterpretation of the message. Despite this, the findings also show users' sense of guilt for offending others, which results in trepidation towards sharing content, or not sharing at all because of such apprehension. Moreover, the analysis evidences that users' hesitation leads them to be more inclined to 'like' and 'retweet' content rather than to exchange new knowledge. The analysis reveals that negative past experiences generate increased scepticism towards online users, thus refraining users from sharing knowledge. For instance, a user revealed how they exchanged knowledge with an 'automated system' in the past, and the disappointment that followed due to the lack of interaction from the recipient. The user's online experience led to increased scepticism towards 'automated systems' and the value of sharing content online, resulting in a conscious decision to not engage with 'automated systems' in the future as it is a 'waste of time'. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that users are more likely to share knowledge that contributes to an echo-chamber of similarly minded users within the OC, so as to avoid 'trolls' negative comments on their 'posts'. Thus, the findings indicate users' apprehension towards sharing alternative opinions that can encourage criticism from 'trolls' who have a desire to challenge and discredit users' thoughts. Users who present a professional

identity online are most affected by the consequences of ‘trolls’. The evidence shows that users with a desire to portray a professional image, are inclined to prevent negative comments from being shown on their profile. This inclination is due to users’ apprehension towards potential viewers, including clients and future employers, judging the user.

Users reveal that advice from family and friends concerning their negative experience when sharing knowledge on social media and the possible consequences on their profession, discouraged them from subsequent knowledge exchanges online. In particular, the analysis shows that users displayed a heightened sense of anxiety when sharing specific content on their personal and professional online platforms. An example given by a user revealed that friends’ and colleagues’ advice concerning content that was ‘posted’ on the wrong platform, caused problems associated with their job. The analysis indicates that users holding jobs that require a high standard of professionalism, followed advice given from reference groups and resorted to using only a professional account in order to minimise potential ‘cross-posting’. Thus, it can be suggested that the reference groups have not only deterred the user from sharing content that could backfire, but also disempowered users from sharing personal information and influenced them to maintain a professional account. Moreover, reference groups contribute to users’ scepticism towards online content, which results in the users’ suspicions about the trustworthiness of the content they gather to learn about green clothing, and the questioning of the reliability even to ‘retweet’ or ‘like’. The latter is evidenced by a user who discussed the advice received from her/his brother who questioned the trustworthiness of content shared online. As a result, the user became sceptical towards online content and proceeded to sense check information before re-sharing or gathering for her/his own learning.

The users’ profession emerges from the analysis as an important influencing feature on users’ online image. Users appear to be discouraged from sharing knowledge that does not align with their job. The analysis indicates that users are motivated to protect their job by not sharing inflammatory ‘posts’, are driven to promote their professionalism and employer, alongside an intention to minimise users’ potential misinterpretation of ‘posts’ relating to their job. Additional factors, other than their job, contribute to users becoming disempowered to share knowledge. For instance, the analysis shows that users’ experiences online and advice from reference bodies are factors that interplay with their desire to project a professional image

online. As a result, users reveal a sense of trepidation when sharing content and resort to ‘liking’ and ‘retweeting’ content that presents their desired professional identity, rather than sharing ‘posts’ because of potential consequences. The findings further evidence that users are motivated to present an image to their social media followers that expresses their professionalism and expert status, in addition to the purpose of gaining clients and networking with other professionals. The analysis revealed users’ desire to share knowledge that promoted their affiliation to their employer and the company’s sustainable initiatives that resonate with the users’ values. The users revealed that they monitor and filter previous content shared online to reflect their desired professional image, by deleting previous content considered as unprofessional, such as ‘posts’ related to their life as a teenager or during their student years. The activity of monitoring and filtering is also evidenced by users who delete past content that may be susceptible to misinterpretation and provoke a repercussion, due to the potentially controversial nature of the comment or ‘post’. Furthermore, the analysis unveils that restrictions imposed by the user’s employer can play a significant role. High status jobs that require a high standard of professionalism such as in medicine, entail social media constraints enforced by the medical authority. The analysis demonstrated that such employers actively discourage employees from sharing content that could be misinterpreted by others and, instead, encourage purely professional ‘posts’ on a public online platform. The findings evidence a user whose job required the latter. Accordingly, the user added a disclaimer on their public profile to minimise potential misunderstandings, alongside only sharing professionally related content that aligned with the values of their organisation. Thus, the analysis indicates how the user managed their online platforms in relation to what content s/he is prepared to share on a private personal platform versus a public professional platform.

The analysis demonstrates that users’ lack of confidence deterred their knowledge sharing; this aspect is evidenced via two different lenses. First, a lack of expertise regarding the OC’s green clothing context. Second, validation seeking to confirm their understanding. Users’ evidence that they lack confidence in their own knowledge, consequently, their self-perception prevents them from sharing knowledge and exchanging knowledge on other users’ ‘posts’. Instead, the users preferred to gather knowledge online to develop and enhance their understanding. However, users who lacked self-belief did share knowledge when the subject of conversation was of interest to them and/or they were familiar with the topic. One user stated that the majority

of her/his activity was ‘retweeting’ or ‘liking’ content rather than creating or sharing their own knowledge. The users who evidenced a lack of confidence, primarily worked within a profession not related to the fashion industry, despite having an interest towards sustainability and clothes. Such users gathered knowledge to validate what they already know. For instance, users indicated that they observe online conversations and gather knowledge about aspects related to green clothing to ‘inform their intellect’. The users who claimed know-how and sought further validation of their existing knowledge, worked within the green clothing industry, hence their profession justified the self-perception of being an expert. It can be suggested that the different lenses are a result of the users’ professional backgrounds. Users who lacked confidence were individuals who did not work within the fashion industry and used the OC to learn via gathering knowledge. Compared to the users with working experience within the fashion industry or an organisation that promotes sustainability, viewed themselves as experts and used the OC to gather information in order to validate what they already know.

6.3 Indication of the Study’s Contributions

6.3.1 Desire to Support Others and Belong to the Online Community

The analysis reveals that the majority of participants and interviewees are driven by a social participatory benefit (SPB), a psychological participatory benefit (PPB) and a functional participatory benefit (FPB) to share knowledge. Whereas, a minority expressed a hedonic participatory benefit (HPB). A SPB is indicated when users share knowledge for the purpose of providing help to other OC users, forming relationships and sharing ideas along with personal experiences (Preece, 2000; Wang et al., 2002; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). A PPB is evidenced when users portray a desire to distribute information to demonstrate their belonging or association to the OC, and to share specialised language or concepts related to the OC (Rheingold, 1993; Walther, 1996; Kozinets, 1999; Bressler and Grantham, 2000; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). A FPB is displayed by users who are driven to gather information from the OC to inform their decision-making in addition to the purpose of convenience and ease, and to discuss consumption activities (Hagel and Armstrong, 1997; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004).

The study’s findings contrast to previous studies. For example, Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) argue that a HPB and a SPB are two pivotal participatory benefits that drive users’ knowledge sharing. Chan and Li (2010) concur by stating that hedonic social relationships and enjoyment are determinants of OC engagement. A FPB and a PPB are found within Wang and

Fesenmaier's (2004) study as insignificant drivers to knowledge sharing. However, the study suggests that other OC contexts such as support communities, may require a sense of belonging, affection, relationship and affiliation. Considering the present study's exploration of knowledge sharing within the #sustainablefashion OC, the analysis evidences that the OC encouraged users to support one-another and fostered a sense of belonging amongst users. A rationale to support the importance of a PPB entails that the #sustainablefashion OC provides users who have green concerns with a safe-space to discuss their opinions and share information about how others can reduce their environmental footprint. For instance, users exchanged knowledge to support others by raising awareness about green clothing, and they asked for help or gathered information to learn more. Also, the analysis reveals that OC users require others to support their green concerns and beliefs and wish to associate with similarly minded users who can empathise with them. Thus, the findings provide an in-depth understanding that builds upon Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) study. For instance, the findings underscore the importance of a PPB as a driver that leads to users' knowledge sharing, which is due to users belonging to a green clothing OC that provides support and a sense of affiliation. Additional research may be required to further explore users' knowledge sharing within a green context OC, in order to establish the importance of a PPB and ascertain if a pro-environmental focus does indeed foster a sense of belonging, affiliation and a stronger bond amongst users.

A SPB is evidenced within the findings, exemplified by users' altruistic act of sharing knowledge to help others know more about and better understand green clothing, alongside users gathering information to inform their learning. Prior studies demonstrate that altruism, moral obligation and care for the community are important drivers of users' knowledge sharing (von Krogh, 1998; Wasko and Faraj, 2000; Utz, 2009). Specifically, users' knowledge sharing for no personal or monetary reward, is symptomatic of what is referred to in the literature as knowledge embedded within an OC for the purpose of 'public good' (Wasko and Faraj, 2000). Information shared for 'public good' entails 'posts' that provide support or ask for help, the sharing of personal experiences, and discussions relevant to the community's interest (Wasko and Faraj, 2000). The latter is evident within the analysis, which shows the existence of users who are driven by a SPB purpose to share 'tweets', podcasts and blogs to help others, alongside 'retweeting' articles which may be of interest to others. Interviewees further display SPB connotations when sharing or relaying personal experiences related to organisations or

companies that have reneged on their sustainable initiatives and sustainability promises. The analysis indicates their desire to lobby which is further explored within Section 6.3.3. Therefore, on this account, the findings support previous studies that view altruism as an important factor driving knowledge sharing. However, the present study highlights important implications for a deeper academic understanding about the concept of a SPB that entails altruism, how the participatory benefit aligns with the concept, and how altruism interplays with others factors within SPB, such as forming relationships, sharing ideas and personal experiences.

Previous studies demonstrate a dyadic interplay between consumers sharing knowledge driven by their altruistic behaviour and the outcome of belonging to an OC (Eddleston and Kellermanns, 2007; Ma and Chan, 2014). In particular, Ma and Chan (2014) argue that altruism is an important aspect that helps form cohesion within the OC, bringing users together and providing a space where users can feel that they belong. The findings reveal users' sense of belonging to the OC, as a result of sharing knowledge to help other users and gathering information to learn. Hence, demonstrating the inter-relationship between a SPB and a PPB. The analysis further indicates that users trust content shared by others to help them and are willing to establish online relationships with users who provide such support. The findings of this thesis support prior studies' evidence pointing to a relationship between altruism and belonging. They also offer valuable insights to develop a better understanding of the inter-relationship between a SPB and a PPB. A useful avenue for future work would be to investigate further and provide a clarification of how a SPB and a PPB relate to each other, and the importance of altruism as a concept that connects both participatory benefits.

A sense of belonging is strongly evidenced within the analysis, interviewees indicate a drive to share knowledge because of a PPB. Users reveal that they share specialised language and concepts about green clothing within the OC (Kozinets, 1999; Wang and Fesenamier, 2004). The concepts and language discussed include: 'mending', 'making', 'using what they have', 'DIY', 'not buying', 'charity shopping', 'recycling', 'upcycling', 'environmental', 'sustainable' and 'darning'. The analysis finds that users were using specific terminologies within the OC that related to green clothing in order to raise awareness, and the interviewees evidenced that they used these concepts and nomenclature during discussions. The findings contribute to a previous study by Shen et al. (2014), which highlighted a limited selection of terminology used

by consumers such as fair trade, artisan, custom, vegan, vintage, locally made and organic. This study's findings provide additional green clothing terms used by OC consumers, and demonstrate the growth of consumers' awareness towards 'greening' their clothing consumption due to the use of terms that associate with sustainable activities such as 'mending'.

The initial scoping evidenced that all participants were aware of sustainability and environmental impacts in general. However, only a minority exhibited a green clothing conscience. Whereas, the further exploration demonstrated the interviewees' strong green clothing concerns via the discussions and language used online, alongside activities they undertook to reduce their impact on the environment. The analysis demonstrates that users are aware of specific, expert terms related to green clothing, and it is possible that they started using the same terminology in order to adjust to the OC group norms (Williams et al., 2015). The latter finding connects to and corroborates an aspect of the multi-faceted communication exchange theory. Users adapt their linguistics, in particular, their written 'speech', to fit with the OC's use of terminology and to achieve a sense of belonging (Gallois et al., 2005; Gilesa and Ogay, 2007). The findings raise an important question regarding users' use of terminology to belong to the OC. A further study with greater, specific research focus on OC users' linguistics, exploring users' speech and belonging, would provide further insights into the present study's finding.

Consistent with the findings highlighted by Dubois and Blank (2018), based on the idea that online sources can provide an environment where individuals select and use varied media in a way that produces the echo-chamber effect rather than engagement with diverse ideas, people and perspectives. The majority of the interviewees stated that exchanging knowledge with like-minded others who shared their interest for green fashion, gave them a sense of belonging and encouraged them to share knowledge, thereby contributing to an echo-chamber effect. Previous studies evidence that an echo-chamber effect occurs as a result of people sharing the same views and interests within a group, and exchange knowledge to conform to group norms (Jamieson and Cappella, 2008; Sunstein, 2009). The analysis indicates that users are motivated to share knowledge within an echo-chamber in order to both belong and avoid unwanted repercussions online. The latter is further explained within Section 6.3.2, which explores the concept of users sharing knowledge in an echo-chamber to reduce dissonance, alongside the theory of selective

exposure to explain the users' behaviour (Festinger, 1957; Klapper, 1960). The findings are supported by previous studies. However, prior literature focuses mostly on the concept of an echo-chamber within a political context (Dubois and Blank, 2018, is a case in point). Therefore, additional research is called for to explore in greater depth how an echo-chamber is represented within a green OC, to shed further light on the present findings.

The findings also bring to the fore the concept of a 'safe-space' when users are driven by a PPB to share knowledge. The analysis evidences that users indicate a PPB when sharing knowledge for the purpose of contributing to a 'safe-space' that is conducive to exchanging knowledge with like-minded users who are less likely to criticise the user's thoughts and opinions. Indeed, one user revealed that her/his reliance on the OC stemmed from the fact that the OC platform was the only interlocutor or 'place' (along with her/his partner and children), that understood her/his 'green conscience'. Whereas outside the OC, people offended the user by sharing disapproving comments and views that run counter to the user's values. From this evidence it can be deduced that the OC represents a safe-space for users to share knowledge about green clothing, allowing them the opportunity to engage with like-minded others and avoid harsh criticism. As a result, the safe-space provides users with a sense of belonging, due to the prospect of affiliating with users holding similar views who would, therefore, be sympathetic to their concerns. Hence, the analysis demonstrates that users share knowledge with others who share a collective identity and a common understanding about green clothing. They seek reassurance within a safe OC space to avoid a personal fear of being misunderstood, as a result, a sense of belonging to the OC is augmented (Myslik, 1996; Day, 1999; Roestone Collective, 2014). The findings are supported by prior literature that explores the notion of a safe-space within OCs. However, former studies investigate safe-spaces within OC contexts regarding women's rights, anti-racism, feminism and sexuality. The present study offered evidence regarding the drivers and importance of 'safe-space' within a green context, to understand how and why users with strong pro-environmental concerns use the OC to affiliate to like-minded others, thus paving the way for further studies along these lines.

The analysis demonstrates that a FPB drives users' knowledge sharing within an OC. The findings are in stark contrast to those by Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) study, which dismisses the role of a FPB. On the other hand, the findings correlate with those by Cervellon and

Wernerfelt (2012), who found that users' motivation to share knowledge is for functional reasons. For example, users share factual and scientific information alongside content related to consuming green fashion, and search for knowledge about green alternatives. Several past studies have suggested that users who gather information within an OC are 'lurkers' (Kozinets, 1999; Nonnecke and Preece, 1999; Mo and Coulson, 2010). The findings contribute to Nonnecke and Preece's (1999) study, by providing an understanding into how users 'lurk' in order to gather information because they lack confidence or want to learn. Users are shown within the analysis to 'de-lurk' once they perceive themselves as knowledgeable, and subsequently, share knowledge to support others and distribute information related to green clothing concepts. However, the analysis shows that users return to 'lurking' to validate what they know. Thus, the findings offer additional, important insights regarding the activity of a 'lurker' within an OC. A further exploration of 'lurkers' behaviour within different OC contexts could determine if 'lurkers' 'de-lurk' and if they return to 'lurking' to confirm what they know, also in other settings.

The previous paragraph demonstrates the interplay between FPB, SPB and PPB and a non-linear journey of an OC user since users tend to return to 'lurking' to corroborate their understanding. For instance, the user is initially driven by a FPB to gather information in order to learn, followed by a SPB due to sharing knowledge to support others once the user perceives herself/himself as knowledgeable, resulting in a PPB, because the user distributes green clothing specialist concepts to affiliate with the OC. The findings broadly align to those of prior studies (see, for example, Kozinets, 1999; and Yoo and Gretzel, 2011) that suggest that 'lurkers' browse information to learn because they are new OC users, and gradually evolve to share knowledge. However, the findings evidence that users return to 'lurking' to validate what they know. The analysis opposes the subsequent stage of a 'lurker' as described by Kozinets (1999), who suggests that a user proceeds to other platforms for information to learn about others' experiences alongside contacting other users. In contrast, this study's analysis shows that 'lurkers' do not go to another OC to share knowledge, rather 'lurkers' continue within the OC to develop their sense of belonging and to support others who have provided them with help. Hence, the concept of reciprocating due to their sense of obligation is evidenced within the findings (on this point, see also Whiteley and McKensie, 2005; and Maiter et al., 2008). Thus,

the findings provide additional insights into users that ‘lurk’ within an OC, making a significant contribution to academic understanding of ‘lurkers’ behaviour within a green clothing OC.

Furthermore, a past study (Mo and Coulson, 2010) argued that ‘lurkers’ who gather information in order to learn, are as empowered as the user sharing knowledge. The present analysis demonstrates that users collect information to learn more about green clothing because they are new to the OC and perceive themselves as learners, alongside educating themselves to confirm their expertise. Empowerment is demonstrated when users who in the past gathered information now perceive themselves as an educator within the OC; users feel ‘empowered’ when they confirm their rationale and continue to share their know-how. Empowerment is further evidenced when users discuss how gathering information from an ‘echo-chamber’ of alike thoughts, provides them with a sense of belonging to a group of like-minded others and encourages them to share further knowledge. The findings, therefore, shed further light on users’ empowerment as a result of ‘lurking’, and support Mo and Coulson’s (2010) study that explores ‘lurking’ and empowerment within a supportive OC. However, further exploration may be warranted to exhaustively understand the concept of ‘lurkers’ and empowerment within a green context, since most previous studies explore such phenomena exclusively within health-related support OCs.

However, the analysis revealed that a HPB was not a relevant driver that led to users’ knowledge sharing within the OC. A possible explanation as to why OC users do not share knowledge for the purpose of enjoyment and fun (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004), may be due to the context of the OC being a serious and worrying aspect for the majority of users. The analysis revealed that users have strong environmental concerns and a desire to raise awareness about green clothing in order to ‘save the world’. An urgency about the impact of clothing on the environment is evidenced strongly by users. For instance, users reveal a hope to share knowledge in order to bring OC users together as a movement, to encourage other users, companies and policy makers to change their mindsets and behaviours. The latter is further discussed within sections 6.2.1 and 6.3.3, that provide an insight into users’ motivation for lobbying. Therefore, the findings extend previous studies’ understanding (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Chan and Li, 2010) by providing a rationale towards why a HPB is not relevant within OCs that are serious and support centered. Further studies exploring

knowledge sharing within a support OC related to health and green concerns, are encouraged to build on the present study's findings.

6.3.2 Users' Empowerment and Disempowerment to Share Knowledge

Both concepts of consumer empowerment and a disempowered consumer are evidenced within the analysis, particularly in relation to users' desire to share or not to share knowledge, along with the empowered consumer as an outcome of knowledge sharing.

The findings align with Quinton's (2013) concept of a power shift online, which entails an empowered consumer who contributes within a two-way conversation with an organisation, rather than a one-way conversation from an organisation to a consumer. For instance, the analysis indicates that interviewees share direct 'tweets' to lobby companies and brands because of the organisations' inconsistent practices with sustainable initiatives. Users indicate that their purpose of using Twitter is to make companies listen to them, alongside using the organisation's Twitter handle to direct the 'tweet' to raise awareness of their unmoral conduct. However, the findings differ from Quinton's (2013) study, whose main concern relates to individual behaviour. In contrast, the present analysis reveals a collective behaviour as a result of the power shift. The findings demonstrate that other users joined the original 'post' that contained the company's Twitter handle, in order to join the lobby or share their opinions. Hence, a power shift is indicated as having the ability to influence others' knowledge sharing within an OC, for the purpose of lobbying a company (Rokka and Moisander, 2009). The latter indicates co-produced as well as co-consumed knowledge sharing within an OC (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). A possible explanation for the latter effect derives from the green clothing OC context associating with the fashion industry and pro-environmental charities. Thus, consumers with strong concerns are likely to express themselves if organisations are not acting sustainably (Romani et al., 2015). The findings reveal that co-consumed and co-produced knowledge sharing are inter-twined, thus contributing to prior studies' understanding of the two types of knowledge sharing which are discussed, by and large, as separate entities (Pitta and Fowler, 2005; Libert and Spector, 2007; Füller et al., 2008; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012).

Furthermore, regarding Quinton and Simkin's (2016) model presented in Figure 2.1, the authors indicate that the final fourth phase reveals an empowered consumer as a result of the power shift. The present study's findings align with their model. For instance, the analysis reveals that

as a result of users' sharing knowledge about companies' unmoral behaviour and subsequently receiving interaction from OC users and companies, users' evidence a desire to continue lobbying organisations because of the engagement from others. Therefore, the findings provide an additional understanding as to why users are empowered because of the powershift. The concept of engagement is a pivotal aspect that empowers users and plays an important influence on their enduring knowledge sharing. Further research is warranted to explore users' sense of empowerment as a result of the powershift with a consumer focus, due to the prior study by Quinton and Simkin (2016) providing a managerial perspective into the phenomena.

Engagement is demonstrated within the analysis as an important concept that encourages consumers to share knowledge within the OC. For instance, the interviewees evidence a sense of empowerment to raise awareness about green clothing when they engage with other users. A desire for engagement is demonstrated when interviewees state that they prefer users to comment on their 'tweets' rather than users 'retweeting' their 'posts'; the latter is expressed as not being a 'real interaction'. As a result, the analysis evidences that users are enthused to engage with OC users, alongside their encouragement to continue sharing knowledge about green clothing. The latter indicates an iterative process of engagement and a sense of empowerment. The circular process between engagement and sense of empowerment is demonstrated by Brodie et al.'s (2013) study, that evidences an iterative engagement process with the outcome of consumer empowerment. The iterative process involves additional consequences in addition to empowerment, which are "loyalty and satisfaction", "connection and emotional bonds" and "trust and commitment" (Brodie et al., 2013). However, this study's analysis indicates a stronger interplay between users' engagement and users' empowerment within the OC. Thus, this study supports past studies that indicate empowerment as an outcome of engagement (Gruen et al., 2006; Schau et al., 2009), and provides an additional insight into users' desire to engage because they want to raise awareness alongside their hope to interact with OC users.

Considering Brodie et al.'s (2013) additional outcome of engagement that is "connection and emotional bond" (mentioned above), this study's findings contrast with this aspect resulting as a consequence of engagement. Instead, the analysis evidences that 'connection and emotional bond' are factors that users indicate prior to knowledge sharing within an OC. Thus, this study

aligns with Chan and Li's (2010) findings, which show social bond experiential interactivity (SBEI) as an important aspect that leads to reciprocating behaviours. For instance, the analysis evidences that users are driven by a desire for a sense of camaraderie, security and closeness within the OC prior to undertaking participatory behaviours. However, the findings oppose an aspect of the SBEI construct indicated by Chan and Li (2010), namely, that users are driven by enjoyment alongside camaraderie, security and closeness. An explanation of why users are not driven by enjoyment could be that, as revealed by this study's analysis, users are solely driven by PPBs, SPBs and FPBs rather than HPBs, due to users not being motivated by fun and enjoyment (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004).

The analysis also shows that users' engagement levels vary depending on the users' level of interest with the conversation topic, alongside the recipient with whom they interact. More specifically, users are encouraged to share knowledge when the discussion is interesting to them as it aligns with their green clothing views, and when they know the user. For instance, the analysis reveals that users are empowered to share knowledge if the content 'blows their mind' or 'tickles them', in addition to conversing with someone they know and with whom they have personal ties, for example, family or friends. Thus, the findings support and contribute to past studies by confirming that engagement plays a pivotal role in the process of knowledge sharing when users are interested in the conversation and are familiar with the interlocutor, consequently, users feel a sense of empowerment (Brodie et al., 2011; Brodie et al., 2013).

Twitter's online tools also emerge from the evidence as a source of empowerment to OC users. The analysis demonstrates that, 'hashtags', the ability to 'cross-post' between social media platforms and 'automated systems' such as Buffer, encourage users to share knowledge. In particular, interviewees reveal that they use established 'hashtags' and create their own, to raise awareness about green clothing and to contribute to the OC. Interviewees portray their empowerment to create their own 'hashtag' along with using #sustainablefashion, due to the main OC 'hashtag' being overwhelmed in the sense that the 'hashtag' has too many conversations and not all tweets relate to green clothing aspects that users are interested in. Alongside the purpose of sharing personal experiences via the 'hashtag' because the content relates to the users' green clothing conscience. Thus, the latter evidences the users' sense of empowerment in addition to self-expression, by means of sharing personal thoughts and

opinions related to green clothing. An example of the analysis reflecting the latter is a user who created their own 'hashtag' to share details about their charity shop purchases, in order to raise awareness of the benefits of charity shopping and to promote their second-hand clothing blog. Furthermore, a sense of enthusiasm is indicated by users who use established sub-community 'hashtags' to discuss and raise the profile of particular aspects of their green clothing experiences. The analysis indicates the following sub-community 'hashtags': #ethicalhour, #fashionrevolution and #whomademyclothes. The findings align with Labrecque et al.'s (2013) information-based power (IBP), shown in Figure 2.2. For instance, IBP indicates that users are empowered by technological advances online, which allow self-expression, praise or complaints about companies' undesirable practices, and the promotion of a social cause that they believe in (Hirshman, 1970; Schau and Gilly, 2003; Gregoire et al., 2010; Mariën and Prodnik, 2014). Furthermore, the analysis evidences that network-based power (NBP) was indicated by the majority of users (see also Labrecque et al., 2013). For instance, users revealed a sense of empowerment as a result of using a plethora of tools to share knowledge, such as 'hashtags', 'likes' and 'retweets', 'automated systems', alongside sharing personal blogs and podcasts (Hennig-Thurauer et al., 2010; James et al., 2011; Goldenberg et al., 2012). NBP was further evidenced, when users displayed their empowerment in sharing knowledge in order to influence others (Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson, 2012). For instance, users evidenced their empowerment to change users', organisations' and charities' mindsets towards green clothing in order to encourage greener behaviours with a reduced deleterious impact on the environment. The findings demonstrate an important understanding into what power sources users evidenced, building upon Labrecque et al.'s (2013) study that states four power sources denoting crowd-based power (CBP) as the most applicable in the present day. The findings reveal that users within a green clothing OC are empowered to share knowledge because of the technological advances that facilitate their online interactions in conjunction with the ability to influence others' rationale towards pro-environmental behaviour.

Only a minority of users evidenced demand-based power (DBP) and CBP (see also Labrecque et al., 2013). The analysis demonstrates that users are not empowered by the initial aggregation of the internet and social media which was discussed within DBP, that comprises of an empowerment to share knowledge because of the real-time communication and the lack of geographical boundaries (Kozinets, 1999; Day, 2011; Labrecque et al., 2013). In contrast, the

present analysis demonstrates that users are empowered beyond the initial aggregation; instead, tools such as ‘liking’ and ‘retweeting’ enthused users. Moreover, CBP was not relevant as users were not empowered to produce their own platforms (Seog and Hyun, 2009), rather, users displayed a desire to belong within an established OC. Also, users were not empowered to purchase services and products from the OC, rather users evidenced a FPB to gather information related to green clothing consumption (as found by Hagel and Armstrong, 1997). The findings provide a rationale as to why DBP and CBP are not relevant within the green clothing OC and indicate the importance of IBP and NBP. However, further research is warranted to explore users’ empowerment within an OC, particularly within a platform that encourages others to develop their own mediums and who may find CBP relevant. As a result, the findings may provide an increased understanding into how different OC contexts infer additional power sourced discussed by Labrecque et al. (2013).

The analysis indicates that users are empowered by their green clothing concerns and that they feel a duty to advocate green consumption activities and an obligation to raise awareness about green clothing initiatives and concepts. A rationale as to why users indicate heightened green concerns can be provided by their participation within the #sustainablefashion OC that entailed knowledge exchange related to green clothing and the environment. A sense of responsibility to share knowledge aligns with previous literature that discusses ecological citizenship (EC). An ecological citizen refers to an individual who voices her/his obligation to raise awareness about how citizens have a responsibility to protect the environment and society for future generations (van Steenberg, 1994; Dobson, 2000; Sáiz, 2000; Gabrielson, 2008). The findings contribute to past studies’ vision of an ecological citizen, as the analysis shows that users do not want to only promote others to take responsibility but also to raise awareness about green clothing and encourage a shift in mindset (Dobson, 2003). For instance, the interviewees evidence that they share information about activities and ‘retweet’ information in order to encourage others to think differently and inform others’ rationale about the benefits of green clothing. The latter further demonstrates the user as an ‘environmental activist’, which was a term used to describe an ecological citizen’s behaviour (Falk, 1992). Also, the analysis reveals that users acquire their ‘green conscience’ as a result of studying or working within an organisation or charity that aligns with sustainability and/or green clothing. Subsequently, users share knowledge about their employer’s sustainable initiatives and distribute factual

information that is informed by their profession. The findings add to Labrecque et al.'s (2013) study by demonstrating that users are encouraged to share knowledge because of their sense of duty to circulate reliable information, alongside their desire to promote their professional position or employer related to green clothing.

Furthermore, interviewees use their knowledge acquired from studying and working to validate information before sharing the content within the OC and distribute green clothing related knowledge that aligns with their profession and/or employer. Examples of the latter include one user who aligned her/his personal Twitter page with that of her/his employer to advocate the charity's sustainable initiatives, and another user who shared specific content related to the sustainable clothing production undertaken by her/his employer to endorse the manufacturing process. Thus, the findings contribute to a better understanding of consumers' pro-environmental conscience and how their knowledge empowers them to share their green concerns and calls for more responsible behaviours (Shim, 1995; Paulin and Hillery, 2009). The findings contribute to past literature also by demonstrating that users work for organisations that align with their green values, and subsequently share knowledge about their association with their employer and promote the organisation's sustainable initiatives. A task for future research may be to investigate further users' knowledge sharing about their employer, particularly from the still obscure angle of how users' personal green values interplay with their desire to share knowledge about the organisation they work for.

A pivotal study that explores the levels of consumer power within an online platform highlights users' disempowerment (Labrecque et al., 2013). Disempowerment is also evidenced within this study's analysis. For instance, users are overwhelmed to keep up appearances with their friends online and develop a sense of disempowerment and entrapment because of the desire to maintain an active profile (Mick and Fournier, 1998; Hoffman et al., 2004; Labrecque et al., 2011; Markos et al., 2012; Labrecque et al., 2013). This study contributes to Labrecque et al. (2013) by showing that users are disempowered by additional factors and by aspects that align with the causes mentioned above. However, this study did not find that users became disempowered as a result of knowing that marketers are using the information that they share. The findings further contribute to prior studies that discuss two aspects that disempower users: vulnerability and privacy (Pierson, 2012; Mariën et al., 2016). Moreover, in contrast to Pierson's

(2012) findings, the evidence of the present study demonstrates that users are deterred from sharing knowledge because they are 'self-consciousness' and fear potential repercussions within the OC that may result from misinterpretation, being afraid of offending someone, lacking in confidence, or as a result of the advice from reference groups, of past personal experiences online, employers' restrictions and scepticism towards content reliability. The analysis aligns with Ardichvili et al.'s (2009) study, which suggests that users internalise knowledge from their experiences online. The analysis demonstrates that users learn from their negative experiences from sharing knowledge online, which results in becoming disempowered to exchange information. The analysis also reveals that users are not inclined to share personal information. Instead, users prefer to share knowledge perceived as professional that aligns to their job in order to reduce negative online repercussions, other users' misinterpretations and potential detrimental consequences for their job. Monitoring and filtering 'posts' emerges from the analysis as a mechanism that reduces users' anxiety of potential negative consequences online. The analysis is consistent with previous studies that use cognitive dissonance theory to explain users' behaviours to reduce anxiety. For instance, the findings support Stone and Cooper's (2003) study that used the 'self-standards model' to explain users' dissonance emerging when an individual self-evaluated their behaviour dependent on her/his personal standard of judgement. The findings, therefore, provide a valuable insight into how users reduce their anxiety via monitoring and filtering past 'posts' on Twitter. Nevertheless, further research is warranted to explore users' strategy to minimise anxiety by adopting Stone and Cooper's (2013) self-standard model to better understand users' dissonance and their personal standard of judgement. Such work would offer most needed answers as to how cognitive dissonance theory can be used to explain why users monitor and filter information online, which is the significant finding of the present study.

Moreover, the findings show that users who were disempowered to share their own views due to potential negative comments from 'trolls', intentionally shared knowledge that did not oppose the OC's views. This finding is consistent with Sunstein (2009) by indicating that users contribute to an echo-chamber with similar views (also in fear of online repercussions), rather than voicing dissenting views or opposing comments.

Reference groups influenced users' disempowerment to share knowledge. For instance, the findings indicate that when friends and family shared their negative experiences about information exchange on online platforms, the latter disempowered users' knowledge sharing. Previous studies discuss the concept of reference groups with regard to the influence on consumers' brand and service consumption (Park and Lessig, 1977; Bearden and Etzel, 1982; Childers and Rao, 1992). There is a lack of understanding of the impact of reference groups on OC users' deterred knowledge sharing. The findings reveal the users' independence on friends and family as they regard the references as being reliable, this results in the users sharing certain knowledge to reduce potential conflict. The findings support Deutsch and Gerard's (1955) study that found that individuals use references because they are deemed as credible and as a source of influence for an uncertain person to gather information from to avoid punishment. However, the analysis evidences that users gather knowledge from online OC users in addition to reference groups from outside the OC. An interesting question for future research would be to ascertain why users use both offline and online reference groups to inform their rationale with regard to knowledge sharing.

Scepticism towards content shared by others within the OC is shown within the analysis as an aspect that disempowers users' knowledge sharing. Users exhibit a sense of anxiety and apprehension towards 'fake news' and unreliable 'posts'. The latter results in users' discouragement to share knowledge, and a desire to find trustworthy and reliable information. The analysis demonstrates that once users perceive content to be reliable, as a result of using their own knowledge about the subject, they will then share knowledge or 'retweet' the 'post'. The findings align with Valentino et al. (2009), who find that online users' anxiety drives them to seek information that is useful and that informs their understanding. The evidence presented here adds to that by Valentino et al.'s (2009) study by showing how users use their tacit knowledge related to green clothing that has accumulated from their profession related to the context in order to determine content reliability. The concept of tacit knowledge supporting users' understanding is also discussed by Oztok (2013), who argues that consumers' personal experiences and prior learning contribute to their tacit knowledge.

6.3.3 Intention to Lobby

The analysis reveals that lobbying is a prevalent behaviour that users undertake within the OC. Lobbying is evidenced by users who expressed their green clothing concerns in order to raise

awareness, alongside users who shared information for the purpose of influencing users', companies' and policy makers' mindsets and behaviours. Users revealed their hope for OC users to come together to drive change, with the expectation that users, companies and policy makers will alter their outlook on green clothing. The findings contribute to prior understanding of altruistic behaviour, as the analysis indicates that users go beyond a desire to help others because of their green concerns, users also want to 'improve the world' by encouraging an online movement to lobby users, companies and policy makers. The latter unveils a seed of online activism due to the OC users voicing their moral responsibilities (accompanied by their frustration and anger) to expose a company's injustice that they view as unethical or exploitative (Hollenbeck and Zinkman, 2006; Romani et al., 2015). The findings also contribute to previous studies that discuss 'hate' as a factor that drives consumers to express their thoughts towards brands and companies that act in an unmoral way (Rhodes, 1993; Steenberg, 2003). A moral concern emerges from the findings as a pivotal driver to users' lobbying. A recent study (Romani et al., 2015) emphasises that "hate" is not the only driver, instead "empathy" and "moral concern" are fundamental drivers that motivate consumers to voice their opinions against companies or brands. The latter study called for a need for future exploration into the drivers of moral concern and empathy, and how they can lead to activism. The present study addresses in part this call by contributing to the paucity of literature regarding moral concern as well as delivering an insight into how a minority of users demonstrate 'hate' when driven by their frustration and anger towards an organisation. An explanation for the reason of why activism would be present within the OC, is due to the context being related to an on-going global debate about the environment and how 'we' as consumers should be reducing our environmental footprint, alongside encouraging companies and policy makers to change their ways (Zahid et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). The analysis connects to the concept of EC when users' lobby. EC theory refers to a consumer (also referred to as an 'environmental activist') who is passionate about the environment and actively promotes environmental beliefs with an accompanying desire to change others' behaviour (Falk, 1992; Dobson, 2000). The findings contribute to previous studies' understanding of an ecological citizen in the present-day, who lobbies due to a moral concern and a frustration towards organisations' unmoral practices.

Social capital theory (SCT) can be used to explain users' pro-social behaviours within the findings, as exemplified by their collective action to lobby against users, companies and policy

makers that do not align with their shared values (Chow and Chan, 2008). SCT, therefore, provides a rationale for OC users' collective behaviour of lobbying (Coleman, 1988). The cognitive dimension of SCT provides a reasoning underlying users' lobbying, pointing to users' shared goals and culture as important factors that lead to collective action (Wasko and Faraj, 2005). The findings provide a rationale as to why users' lobby by building upon SCT as well as Wasko and Faraj's (2005) study, for instance, users' united green concerns that entail a desire for change and to raise awareness, are cognitive aspects that drive users' lobbying.

The analysis illustrates that users share scientific and factual knowledge in order to distribute reliable green clothing information to raise awareness amongst users. Users share scientific knowledge that originates from their profession related to green clothing, because of their sense of responsibility to share truthful information. The findings show that the majority of OC users' lobby with the intention of distributing objective information to encourage change in both rationale and behaviour. Such findings support previous studies (Ewing, 2008; Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Kong et al., 2016) that show that, nowadays, OC users share precise, concrete and objective knowledge and scientific facts. Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) identified that the dissemination of objective knowledge is a result of OC users gaining expertise about green clothing and feeding the OC with this information. Thus, the findings contribute to a deeper understanding about the type of knowledge users share within OCs, alongside the fact that they are driven by a desire to raise awareness about green clothing.

6.3.4 A Desire to Present a Perceived-Self Online

The findings evidence users' desire to portray a professional identity within the OC, alongside users who share knowledge and unintentionally evidence an online persona. The majority of users demonstrate that they hope to be perceived as experts in relation to green clothing. The findings support Belk's (2013) study that discusses users' "extension of self" via sharing. For instance, online platforms enable users to show off by talking about their success which would have once been perceived as rude if shared offline (Belk, 2013). However, users' sharing of achievements indicate how users wish to present themselves online, which is deemed as acceptable within online platforms (Zhao, 2005). Belk (2013:487) refers to the latter practice of sharing as users "actively managing identities". Furthermore, users seek validation from others to confirm their desired persona. Seeking validation is discussed by O'Regan (2009), who states that the comments and feedback that users receive on their 'posts' contribute to their sense of

validation. The findings contribute to existing knowledge by demonstrating that users gain validation for their green clothing expertise when other experts of sustainability or green clothing follow them on Twitter.

Various roles are presented within the analysis by users, and as a result of their perceived role users' evidence that they feel a sense of belonging to the OC. The role of educator is presented by interviewees who perceive themselves as being knowledgeable from their work experience or through studying. The analysis evidences that users share knowledge about green clothing to help others and support others' understanding, along with a desire to gain potential clients and expand their network. Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) discuss the role of "market maven", which entails the user educating newcomers to the OC. The analysis demonstrates that it is difficult to evidence if the users who assume the perceived persona of educator, are in fact teaching the newcomers. For instance, the OC fluctuates with users who use the 'hashtag' #sustainablefashion, thus, it is not clear who is new. Hence, the findings build upon Cervellon and Wernerfelt's (2012) discussion about a "market maven" by unveiling that users are not just educating newcomers, they are also educating others to raise awareness about green clothing. Furthermore, a recent study by Oztok (2013: 23) argues that tacit knowledge acquired from prior experiences (Tee and Karney, 2015), can be used to support the development of an "online learning environment" where users support others with what they know in addition to fostering a sense of belonging. The latter too is evidenced within the analysis. The findings provide an insight into users' tacit knowledge that is gained from their profession, leading them to perceive themselves as experts and, subsequently, to share knowledge to help others.

Users denote a tendency to manage their personae across online platforms. Users present a professional and personal identity within specific online platforms and share knowledge that reflects that character. Previous studies support the finding, suggesting that individuals do not have a singular and linear identity instead they have a set of identities that they portray in different contexts and situations (During, 2005; Carusi, 2006; Hughes, 2007). The findings reveal that OC users find it difficult to manage their personal and professional online identity, because of 'cross-posting' by mistake and having to control and portray two different selves. As a result, some users argue that they only present a professional online persona to make it easier for them and to reduce potential negative repercussions. The findings align with those by

Tian and Belk (2005), who suggest that users perceive the managing of a “work self” and a “home self” as a battle, and as a result, the boundaries can melt into one. The latter is evidenced by users who ‘cross-post’ between their professional and personal online platforms, because they share similar content related to green clothing. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that users’ current online identity differs to their past online personae. In order to portray their current self which aligns with their job, the user filters past ‘posts’ and deletes content that does not reflect their present views. The findings support Belk’s (1988) study and contribute to the understanding of a current OC user. For instance, they evidence that a user’s extended-self changes due to their developing, unfolding life, alongside the individual’s emotions which influence their varying perceived personae.

The analysis evidences that users portray an online identity that is inconsistent with their offline persona. For instance, a user revealed that her/his green concerns contrast to her/his friends and family, except for immediate family members, and as a result, they feel a sense of unacceptance. However, a sense of belonging is achieved within the OC as the user can talk to like-minded others, exchange information regarding green clothing activities, and learn from others by gathering information. Thus, the findings demonstrate that the user presents an alternative persona online, someone who is accepted by users with the same views. The notion of “reembodiment” supports this finding. Belk (2013) discusses how users identify with their online avatar and embody the avatar’s character, which results in the user presenting an extension of self online (Tronstad, 2008). However, the latter entails users using virtual worlds such as Second life or World of War Craft, to create an online avatar and develop its features (Boellstorff, 2008; Tronstad, 2008). Instead, the analysis evidences that users do not have a visual online avatar within a virtual word, they create an imaginary avatar online who they can present their true-self through. The user presents a fantasy avatar who s/he can use to express green concerns and present someone who is popular. Thus, the findings contribute to the concept of ‘reembodiment’ by showing that an avatar can be an imagined online persona that has the characteristics of a digital avatar, which users portray to be the person they wish to be seen as.

Prior studies support the notion that an avatar allows the user to have the freedom to express their “ideal selves” (Kozinets and Kedzior, 2009) or “aspirational selves” (Wood and Solomon, 2010). Bartle’s (2004:161) statement “virtual worlds let you find out who you are by letting you

know who you want to be” aligns with the present analysis that demonstrates that users who perceive themselves as learners have a desire to become an educator in the future, when they are more knowledgeable. Moreover, previous studies demonstrate a rationale that explains why users share knowledge within the OC. Forest and Wood (2012) argue that people who are less emotionally stable are more inclined to enhance their well-being by sharing knowledge. The analysis evidences a user’s reliance on the OC, when a user argued that s/he felt lonely when online friends were not using Twitter. Thus, it can be suggested that the user uses the OC to support her/his feelings of happiness and comfort. Moreover, the concept of “third place” is present within the analysis, due to users’ habit of using the OC as a place to “hang out”, develop a sense of acceptance and be themselves (Oldenburg, 1999; Steinkuehler and Williams, 2006). The findings contribute to previous understandings of users who present their ideal-self online, alongside users’ reliance on the OC as a place to gain a sense of belonging.

The findings indicate that users’ sense of anonymity allows them to express their “true self”. However, the latter can lead to the users’ disinhibition resulting in “flaming others” (Tosun, 2012; Belk, 2013). The analysis demonstrates how users use their online anonymity to share knowledge that they perceive as being correct and oppose others’ comments that anger them. The analysis evidences that a user refers to herself/himself as a ‘troll’ and a ‘keyboard warrior’. However, the findings oppose previous studies that find that disinhibition leads to a greater amount of knowledge sharing within online platforms (Belk, 2013). Instead, the analysis indicates that a user stopped sharing knowledge driven by her/his disinhibition, because others were not listening to her/him and the user did not achieve the aim of educating others. Thus, the findings add to Belk’s (2013) study by suggesting that disinhibition is relevant when the user feels a sense of influence over others.

6.4 Reflections and Conclusions

This chapter discussed the key findings that emerged from the ‘Initial Scoping’ and ‘Further Exploration’ chapters. These were, users’ lobbying with the intention of raising awareness and of influencing users’, companies’ and policy makers’ mindsets and behaviours. Furthermore, both empowerment and disempowerment revealed a multitude of sub-themes, such as green concerns, personal experiences, belonging, identity and scepticism.

Section 6.3 provided a thorough explanation regarding how the key findings aligned to and differed from those identified from the literature review, and highlighted this study's novel contributions. Additional concepts and theories were discussed to provide an explanation for the findings, including: communication exchange theory, social capital theory, reference groups, cognitive dissonance, echo-chamber, safe-space, empowerment of technical advances, online activism, extension of self and managing online identity. Sub-sections 6.3.1 to 6.3.4 indicate potential academic and managerial implications for this study, which are discussed below.

Starting with the academic implications, the findings of the study make several significant contributions to knowledge. First, the study contributes to Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) work regarding the pivotal participatory benefits that drive OC users' knowledge sharing, which are, a SPB, a PPB and a FPB. In particular, the findings suggest the importance of the concept of altruism, an aspect within a SPB that motivates users to share knowledge. The analysis also contributes to prior studies' understanding that discuss altruism as a factor that leads to users' belonging within the OC (Ma and Chan, 2014). In particular, the findings provide implications for future studies to explore altruism alongside a SPB, as the analysis demonstrates the interplay between the two. The notion of an "echo-chamber" is evidenced within the findings, extending the applicability of the concept to contexts other than the political one upon which previous studies have focused (see Sunstein, 2009; Dubois and Blank, 2018). In addition, the concept of a 'safe-space' is revealed as an important factor that associates to users' intention to share knowledge because of a PPB. The findings suggest that further research is warranted to explore a 'safe-space' within a green context to confirm the conclusions, due to previous literature focusing almost exclusively on other contexts (Roestone Collective, 2014). Further investigation is also necessary to understand users' knowledge sharing in a 'safe-space', both when empowered and when disempowered. In another vein, the findings contribute to past studies that discuss 'lurkers' and 'de-lurking' (for example, Mo and Coulson, 2010). The analysis reveals that the latter is an iterative process; users start by 'lurking' to learn, followed by 'de-lurking' when they perceive themselves to be knowledgeable, subsequently, users return to 'lurking' to validate what they know. Furthermore, the study provides an insight into the two key concepts that empower users discussed by Labrecque et al.'s (2013) study, namely, IBP and NBP. Likewise, the findings provide a contribution to academic knowledge relating to the

interplay between engagement and consumer empowerment (see, for example, Brodie et al., 2011; Brodie et al., 2013). The findings further demonstrate that users are empowered by the online technological tools, their personal experiences and green concerns. Hence, they offer insights into the contemporary empowered user within a green clothing OC.

Alternatively, a disempowered consumer is a concept that emerged from the analysis. The findings also contribute to a small body of literature that discusses the notion of disempowerment. The findings contrast Pierson's (2012) view that vulnerability and privacy are pivotal determinants to disempowerment. The findings provide an understanding into users being disempowered by their self-consciousness, and by fear of repercussions within the OC that are a consequence of misinterpretation, offending other users, lack of confidence, reference groups, personal experiences online, employers' restrictions, and scepticism towards content reliability. Moreover, the findings support Stone and Cooper's (2013) study that discussed how users employ a strategy to minimise repercussions online. The analysis contributes to the latter study by evidencing that users' anxiety deters their knowledge sharing, which results in users monitoring and filtering past information to reduce their sense of apprehension. The findings also contribute to extant academic knowledge regarding users' drive to lobby. Specifically, users indicate "hate" alongside their "moral concerns", the latter is evidenced as a pivotal driver (Romani et al., 2015; Steenberg, 2003).

The concept of lobbying is discussed within the findings, and further demonstrates the contribution to social capital theory due to the users' intention to raise awareness which leads to lobbying (Wasko and Faraj, 2005). Furthermore, the aspect of an imagined avatar is evidenced within the analysis, thereby contributing to Belk's (2013) study that discusses an actual digital avatar. The findings have implications for future research exploring users' extension of self within an OC, with a focus on "reembodiment" (Belk, 2013). Similarly, the findings contribute to the concept of disinhibition, which is an aspect of the "extended self" (Tosun, 2012; Belk, 2013). The analysis evidenced that users who use their online anonymity to share knowledge reveal a disinhibition. The findings oppose those of prior studies by showing that users do not share more knowledge as a result of their disinhibition. Instead, users are deterred from sharing knowledge because they are unable to fulfil their aim of educating others, which was the purpose of their disinhibition.

The managerial implications comprise implications for industry, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and policy. Concerning industry implications, the findings enhance social media managers' understanding regarding harnessing an OC. The findings demonstrate that users are deterred from sharing opposing opinions due to their apprehension towards 'trolls'. Thus, social media managers should regulate the OC by employing a gatekeeper to observe online discussions to prevent 'trolls' from offending the OC with negative replies. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that users are driven by 'hate' and 'moral concerns' to lobby companies who they perceive as acting in an unmoral way, in particular, moral concerns are an important influencer. Thus, it is important that the apparel industry is transparent with their customers about the environmental impact of their supply chain. Companies should also enforce a greener process to minimise users' lobbying. The findings show that when an online user lobbies, it is probable that other users will join the lobby, causing further negative publicity to the company in question. Therefore, it is important that social media managers suppress lobbying by joining the conversation and stating how the company is 'green' by signposting their sustainability webpage, alongside asking customers how the company could improve. The latter demonstrates co-production which entails the user providing feedback to the company, to help green the company also via investments in research and development (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). Moreover, the findings demonstrate that users portray an extension of self within an OC to gain a sense of belonging, because they lack a network of like-minded others offline. Thus, it is important that social media managers foster a sense of belonging by encouraging users to interact with like-minded users and facilitate discussion via a variety of online tools, for example, photo sharing, a comments section, 'emojis', and the ability to upload links that refer to the users' blogs or podcasts.

Implications for NGOs entail contributing to clothing and environmental charities' understanding on how to manage an OC. The findings demonstrate that consumers are empowered by their concerns in order to share knowledge about green clothing and pro-environmental behaviours. The analysis further demonstrates that users share their concerns with like-minded others within an OC to develop a sense of belonging. Thus, charities should encourage users to share their green concerns by 'posting' content that invites discussion, with the aim of fostering users' participation and sense of belonging. The findings demonstrate that users are driven to share objective, factual green clothing information in order to raise awareness

within the OC. Therefore, it is important that charities distribute factual information regarding companies' green behaviour alongside green clothing activities and information, so as to educate users and encourage them to share knowledge they can trust. In the same vein, the findings raise the question regarding users' linguistics within the OC, shedding further light on terms concerning green clothing activities being frequently used within online discussions. These findings have implications for charities' use of such terminology when sharing factual green clothing knowledge, allowing, in turn, users adopt the terms when exchanging knowledge. Subsequently, the circulation of factual terminology will educate users and develop users' thinking concerning green clothing.

Regarding policy implications, the findings provide a contribution to DEFRA's (2011) report that discussed consumers' green clothing terminology. This analysis revealed a vast amount of terminology shared by users, thus reflecting users' growing green clothing awareness and consciousness of pro-environmental behaviours. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate an implication for the European Commission's (2012) report, that illustrates a model of pro-environmental behaviour³². The findings contribute to the model by suggesting additional factors of 'consumer empowerment' and 'consumer disempowerment' to be placed within the "internal factors" element of the model. This extension stems from the analysis, which indicates that consumers are empowered and disempowered to share knowledge due to their offline experiences, reference groups, green concerns and online tools. An outcome of the latter is users' *deterred* and *encouraged* knowledge sharing, which can lead to pro-environmental behaviour. The findings align with Quinton and Simkin's (2016) study that discussed an empowered consumer as an outcome to users' knowledge sharing within an OC, thus justifying the additional concept within the European Commission (2012) report. The findings contribute to the model via a perspective on an OC, though further research is called for to explore whether the study's findings support an offline context.

To conclude, this study delivers a comprehension into the main participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing which are a SPB and a PPB, hence users are driven to support others, form relationships, share personal experiences, affiliate and associate to the #sustainablefashion OC and distribute concepts, language and norms that associate to the OC.

³² Appendix 45 presents the model of pro-environmental behaviour by the European Commission (2012).

This thesis contributes to Wang and Fesenamier (2004) and Chan and Li's (2010) studies that unveil opposing findings, that entail a HPB and a SPB as two pivotal drivers. The present findings demonstrate that users show reciprocating behaviours within the OC due to their desire for camaraderie, to support others and form relationships, as a result this study confirms Chan and Li's (2010) findings that suggest social bond experiential interactivity leads to reciprocity which can result in knowledge sharing. The aspect of "enjoyment" which was an alternative factor within the "route of experiential interactivity" was not shown within this study's findings, which is due to the analysis not demonstrating a HPB that entailed users' drive to share knowledge for enjoyment and fun (Chan and Li, 2010).

The concept of belonging was prevalent within this study's findings, users revealed a sense of belonging as a result of sharing knowledge with like-minded others within an OC that was perceived as a 'safe-space'. Users deemed the OC as a 'safe-space' because users within the online medium did not criticise the users' green concerns and alternative activities that 'greened' their clothing consumption. Instead, the other users within the OC showed their understanding and supported the user by engaging with them or by sharing content to further inform the users' understanding about green clothing. The notion of an 'echo-chamber' was further indicated as a result of users sharing knowledge with users who empathised with the users' green concerns and supported their pro-environmental behaviour. Hence, the present findings unveil an interplay between the two concepts of 'safe-space' and 'echo-chamber' and contribute to prior studies understanding about the notions (Myslik, 1996; Day, 1999; Sunstein, 2009; Roestone Collective, 2014; Dubois and Blank, 2018).

Both concepts of consumer empowerment and disempowerment emerge, alongside the aspect of an empowered consumer. The present findings reveal that users are empowered by a multitude of factors that are online tools, their personal experiences and green concerns. Hence, the analysis indicates that users are encouraged to share knowledge because of IBP and NBP which are two power-sources discussed within Labrecque et al.'s (2013) study. The latter infers that users are driven by a desire to engage with others and to voice their opinions via experiences, alongside using online tools to share their opinions related to green clothing. Disempowerment is evidenced within the analysis when users feel a sense of scepticism, a lack of confidence, profession, reference groups and personal experiences. Users demonstrate that

they undertake strategies to reduce their discouragement to share knowledge by sense checking information prior to 'retweeting' or 'liking' and monitoring and filtering past 'posts' that they shared. This study's findings contribute to prior studies comprehension towards the factors that result in disempowerment (Pierson, 2012; Mariën et al., 2016). An empowered consumer is indicated within the findings as a final outcome of users' knowledge sharing within the OC, users' sense of empowerment is due to their ability to share knowledge about their green concerns and from using online tools that facilitate their knowledge sharing. The latter entails, 'hashtags', 'likes', 'retweets', 'automated systems', photographs, 'cross-posting', blogs and podcasts. This study's findings evidence that users that become empowered as a result of sharing knowledge, are more likely to continue reciprocating behaviours and share more knowledge. Therefore, the former unveils a curricular process from empowered consumers back to reciprocating and knowledges sharing within the OC. The present findings contribute to Quinton and Simkin's (2016) findings that demonstrate knowledge sharing leads to an empowered consumer, this study's analysis further shows that users who indicate an empowered consumer return to reciprocating behaviours and knowledge sharing.

The concept of consumers' attitude and behaviour change as a result of sharing knowledge is not confirmed within this study's findings (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). However, the present analysis indicates that users who are motivated to lobby within the OC to raise awareness about green clothing and change users', companies' and policy makers' mindsets and behaviours, show potential attitude and behaviour change. Thus, the findings allude that users' may have changed users', companies' and policy makers' attitude and behaviour, due to the users need for change led by their strong 'green' conscience.

The next chapter (Chapter 7) highlights how the findings addressed this study's three RQs, and illustrates an updated conceptual framework that is informed by Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 7 also highlights the academic contributions, which comprise theoretical and methodological implications, and the managerial contributions of the findings, which entail the implications for the apparel industry, NGOs and policy makers.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This final chapter explains how the findings addressed this study's aims and the three research questions. It also states the study's academic contributions, including the empirical, theoretical and methodological implications, along with the contribution in terms of managerial implications for industry, NGOs and policy makers. The study aimed to understand consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community, and what factors drive consumers' knowledge sharing about their pro-environmental behaviour and green concerns. The study also sought to explore how consumer empowerment and consumers' knowledge sharing interplay within a green clothing online community, how consumers' drive to share knowledge influences their empowerment to share knowledge, and why and to what extent consumers are empowered when sharing knowledge within a green clothing online community. Three research questions (RQs) were developed to address the study's research aims:

1. What roles do hedonic, social, functional participatory benefits play within consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community?
2. How do consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing inter-relate, within consumers' narrative of a green clothing online community?
3. What is the relationship between the participatory benefits in RQ 1, consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing?

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 7.2 presents the study's overall key findings from both Chapters 4 and 5, alongside a separate discussion of the main findings that emerged from Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Section 7.3 discusses the empirical contributions of this study, which comprises of how the findings addressed the three research questions. Alongside an updated conceptual framework that is shown in Figure 7.1, which contributes to the initial proposed conceptual framework shown in Figure 7.2. Section 7.4 presents the theoretical contributions derived from the findings, that include academic knowledge over and above that offered by previous studies. This will, in turn, guide future research. Section 7.5 delivers the managerial contributions and specifies the implications to industry, NGOs and policy makers. Section 7.6 discusses the limitations of the study and states the directions for future research. Section 7.7

concludes, with a reflection of the researcher's PhD journey, methodological approach, thesis contribution, and hindsight on their personal and academic developments.

7.2 Main Findings

Chapters 4 and 5 presented the findings, and Chapter 6 critically discussed the key findings that emerged from both prior chapters while pinpointing the study's main contributions to knowledge.

The main findings include the aspect of lobbying by users against other users, companies and brands. Lobbying is undertaken for the purpose of raising awareness, changing others' mindset and instigating pro-environmental behaviour. Additionally, users' empowerment within the online community was discussed alongside three factors that determined their empowerment. These were users' ability to share their green concerns within a safe-space with like-minded others, without the threat of negative repercussions from others who oppose their green conscience, and users' desire to share personal experiences that they have offline. Users evidenced that they felt a sense of encouragement to share their personal experiences, as a result of receiving interaction from others, users were empowered to share more experiences alongside further knowledge. Twitter's online tools are found to facilitate users' empowerment. Such tools grant the use of a 'hashtag', 'retweeting', 'liking', sharing photographs, 'automated systems', and the opportunity to network with expert users who would be hard to connect with offline. Disempowerment is another key finding that emerged. The analysis demonstrates that users are discouraged to share knowledge because of previous online negative experiences. Such experiences include unintentionally offending someone by sharing the wrong 'emoji' or content, alongside causing users' misinterpretation of their post. The analysis also shows that users monitor and filter past and present content to reduce their apprehension. Advice given from reference bodies contributes to users' sense of disempowerment. The latter entails the users' friends and family providing information about the negative encounters they had when sharing knowledge online. The analysis reveals that users listen to the reference bodies' guidance and, in turn, share knowledge with caution to prevent potential mistakes. Users' professional role is unveiled as a factor that disempowers users. Disempowering constraints are users' desire to portray a professional identity online, and users' employers, who may enforce restrictions on the content that users are allowed to share. The latter is particularly pronounced in the case of users whose job requires a higher level of professionalism. For example, the

analysis evidenced that a participant within the medical field was restricted by their employer from sharing personal information or knowledge that may be misinterpreted by the public. Scepticism was also found as a factor that disempowered users, a consequence of users' apprehension towards other users' posts and source reliability/credibility online. As a result, users tend to sense check information before using it for their own learning or prior to 'retweeting'. Lastly, lack of confidence emerged as an aspect that disempowered users to share knowledge. Users tend to prefer gathering knowledge instead of sharing, in order to use such information to validate what they already know or to educate themselves about green clothing.

Chapter 4's main findings shed light on the three external factors that influence users and deter their knowledge sharing on social media. These factors are: i) professional regulations that constrain a user's creation of an online persona; ii) a user's job role related to prestigious professions, for example, academia, law, or medicine and iii) advice from friends and family that impacts on consumers' knowledge sharing behaviour and attitudes. A variety of internal influences that impact consumers' knowledge sharing on social media also emerged from the analysis. Internal influences include personal knowledge acquired on social media, a risk-averse orientation by users, a lack of self-belief, and a desire to help others.

Chapters 5's main findings underscore a wide array of aspects that empowered users to share and exchange knowledge about green clothing. The factors include interviewees' environmental conscience that empowered them to share knowledge and engage, and an 'echo-chamber' effect, that emerged as a pivotal factor contributing to users' drive to share knowledge and disseminate information with like-minded others. The findings further reveal that a sense of belonging was heightened amongst interviewees, when they were able to share knowledge within the perceived 'safe-space' of the online community. Chapter 5 concludes by highlighting the finding that users are disempowered to share knowledge within the #sustainablefashion online community. Disempowerment occurs as a result of interviewees' discouragement because of their apprehension towards fake news, superficial information and unreliable 'sources' that disseminate content. Interviewees' scepticism acts as a barrier to their interaction with content shared by 'sources' perceived as doubtful or not credible, such as 'automated systems', magazines and tabloids. A sense of uncertainty was further portrayed by interviewees, towards 'trolls'. The latter led to the interviewees disempowerment to share their opinions and express

themselves in relation to green clothing, because they did not want to provoke negative comments from ‘trolls’.

7.3 Empirical Contributions

This thesis sought to understand consumers’ knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community, with the intention of understanding what factors drive consumers’ knowledge sharing about their pro-environmental behaviour and green concerns. The thesis also aimed to explore how consumer empowerment and consumers’ knowledge sharing interplay, in order to gain a deeper appreciation of the factors that influence the two concepts within a green clothing online community. Finally, the study intended to ascertain why and to what extent consumers are empowered when sharing knowledge within a green clothing online community, and how consumers’ drive to share knowledge influenced their empowerment to share knowledge. Three research questions were developed to address this study’s research aims:

1. What roles do hedonic, social, functional participatory benefits play within consumers’ knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community?
2. How do consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing inter-relate, within consumers’ narrative of a green clothing online community?
3. What is the relationship between the participatory benefits in RQ 1, consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing?

The analysis demonstrates that consumers are driven by social, psychological and functional participatory benefits when sharing knowledge within the #sustainablefashion online community. A social participatory benefit means that users are driven by a desire to share knowledge in order to help others, form relationships, disseminate ideas and share personal experiences (Preece, 2000; Wang et al., 2002; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). In addition, a psychological participatory benefit is observed. Users share knowledge for the purpose of communicating their cultural norms, language and concepts related to green clothing, and have a longing for affiliation, group-identity and belonging within the #sustainablefashion online community (Rheingold, 1993; Walther, 1996; Kozinets, 1999; Bressler and Grantham, 2000; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). Lastly, a functional participatory benefit is evidenced via users sharing knowledge related to their green clothing consumption activities, to gather information for their decision-making and learning, and the desire to ask for information for convenience

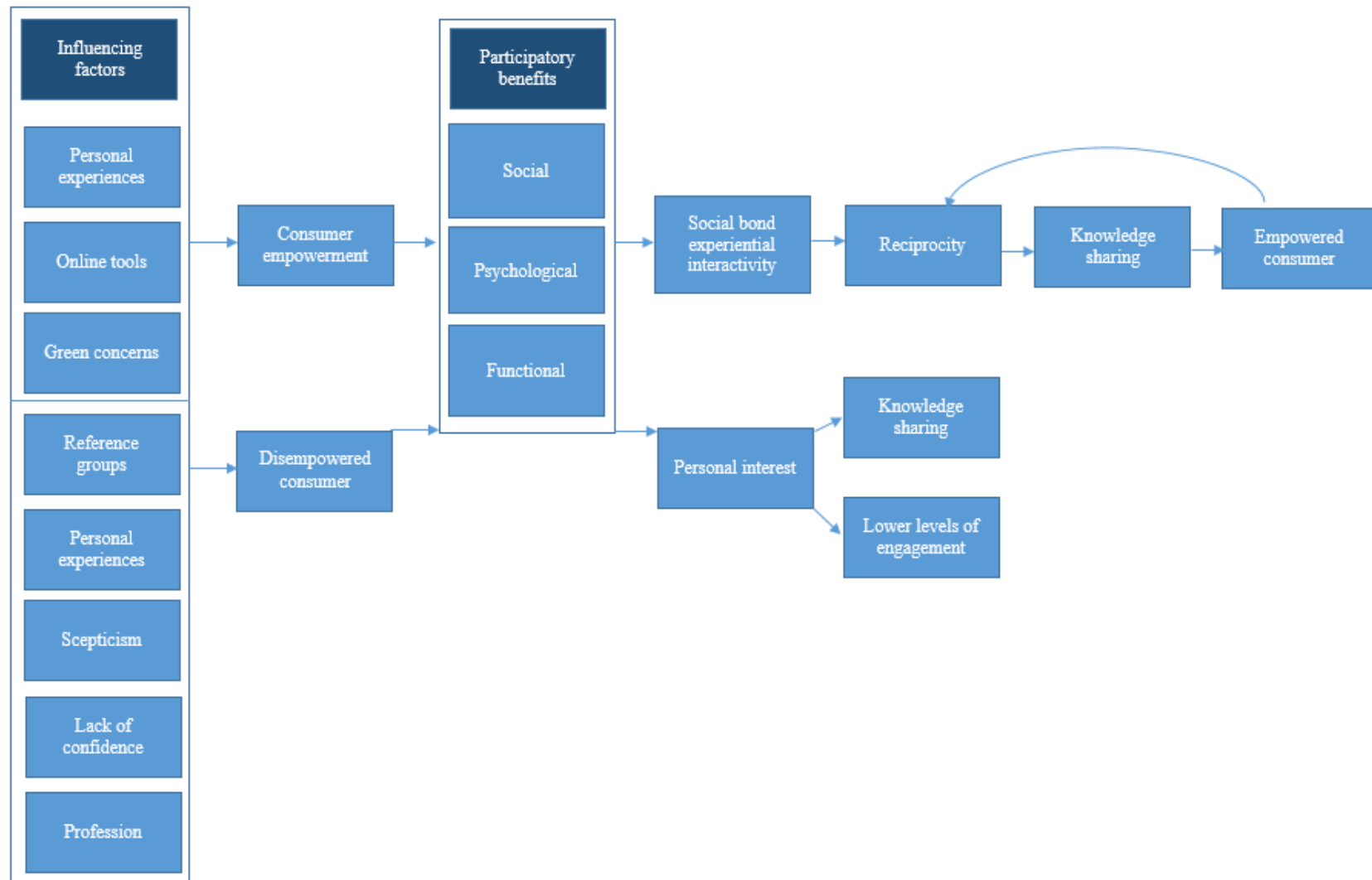
(Hagel and Armstrong, 1997; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). The analysis did not find a hedonic participatory benefit to be a predominant driver to consumers' knowledge sharing contrary to what was suggested in previous literature (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Chan and Li, 2010). Instead, the findings highlighted the interplay between social, psychological and functional participatory benefits.

The findings show that a variety of factors led to consumer empowerment and a disempowered consumer: online personal experiences, online tools, green concerns, reference groups, scepticism, a lack of confidence and the user's profession. An empowered consumer is an outcome of users' receiving interaction, the facilitation of online tools and the ability to share their green concerns. The analysis evidenced that consumer empowerment entails users who are more likely to create their own 'tweets' when sharing knowledge and have a desire to exchange knowledge with other users. Crucially, an empowered consumer reciprocates with other users, in order to fulfil their desire for camaraderie and to support others, thus evidencing the concept of social bond experiential interactivity that, in turn, leads to reciprocating behaviours. On the other hand, a disempowered consumer emerges as a result of users' previous negative online experiences, scepticism, a lack of confidence, and can be also determined by users' profession and the advice of reference groups. The analysis demonstrates that a disempowered consumer is less likely to 'tweet' to share knowledge, and resorts to merely 'liking' and 'retweeting' others' posts, thus displaying a lower level of engagement. The analysis demonstrates that a disempowered consumer evidences the same three participatory benefits as an empowered consumer. However, a disempowered consumer does not experience or exhibit social bond experiential interactivity or reciprocate with other users.

An interplay between the participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing, consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing is demonstrated within the analysis. For instance, an empowered consumer is evidenced as an outcome of consumers' knowledge sharing whom is driven by social, psychological and functional participatory benefits. An empowered consumer emerges as a result of sharing knowledge about their personal experiences and receiving interaction from like-minded others. Subsequently, an empowered consumer is demonstrated, whom is influenced to further reciprocate with others and to continue sharing knowledge, thus, indicating a cyclical behaviour.

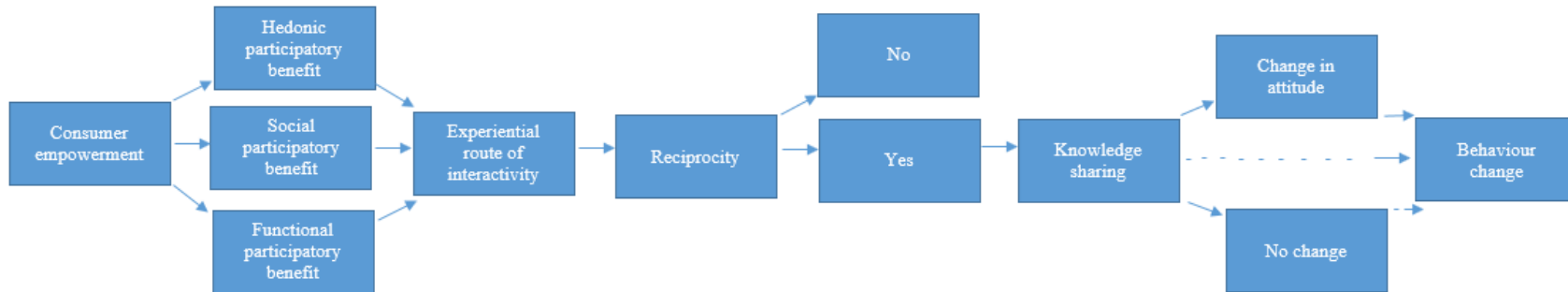
Based on the discussion above, Figure 7.1 illustrates the updated conceptual framework that is informed by the findings, which builds upon the initially proposed conceptual framework replicated in Figure 7.2. The latter was based on this study's literature review. Figure 7.1 demonstrates that a psychological participatory benefit has replaced a hedonic participatory benefit, due to users indicating social, functional and psychological participatory benefits instead. The key developments highlighted within Figure 7.1 are shown in the column of 'Influencing factors', reflecting the three factors that lead to 'Consumer empowerment': 'Personal experiences', 'Online tools' and 'Green concerns'. The 'Influencing factors' column also lists the five factors identified by this study as the determinants of a 'Disempowered consumer', namely, 'Reference groups', 'Personal experiences', 'Scepticism', 'Lack of confidence' and 'Profession'. Following the initial construct of 'Influencing factors', two paths are illustrated: 'Consumer empowerment' and a 'Disempowered consumer'. Concerning the first direction that starts with 'Consumer empowerment', a psychological participatory benefit replaces a hedonic participatory benefit. Also, participatory benefits are placed within a column, due to the construct of a 'Disempowered consumer' relating to the same set of participatory benefits. The added concept of 'Social bond experiential interactivity' replaces 'Experiential route of interactivity'. The 'No' and 'Yes' are removed from the original framework as the analysis unveils that 'Reciprocity' leads to 'Knowledge sharing'. Additionally, the following concepts are removed from the original framework: 'Change in attitude', 'No change' and 'Behaviour change'. This directional path ends with the added concept of an 'Empowered consumer'. Regarding the second direction, the construct of a 'Disempowered consumer' is added. The latter proceeds to 'Personal interest', which results in a 'Lower level of engagement' or 'Knowledge sharing'. The following section provides a thorough rationale as to why the updated conceptual framework shown in Figure 7.1, added new, relevant concepts and removed some of the originally proposed constructs.

Figure 7.1: Updated Conceptual Framework



(Sourced from: Author, 2019)

Figure 7.2: Originally Proposed Conceptual Framework



(Sourced from: Author, 2016)

The updated conceptual framework shown in Figure 7.1, adds the construct ‘Influencing factors’. The latter entails three factors that lead to the ensuing concept of ‘Consumer empowerment’, and five aspects that result in a ‘Disempowered consumer’ construct. The three notions that lead to ‘Consumer empowerment’ are: ‘Personal experiences’, ‘Online tools’ and ‘Green concerns’. The findings contribute to existing studies that explore the antecedents of consumer empowerment online (Quinton, 2013; Labrecque et al., 2013). In particular, the findings have implications for future studies that explore consumer empowerment within a green context online community, due to users’ ‘Green concerns’ influencing their empowerment (Schau and Gilly, 2003). The analysis indicates that users are empowered by “information-based” and “network-based” power, two concepts that originate from Labrecque et al.’s (2013) study that specifies four power sources that lead to empowerment online. The added construct of ‘Personal experiences’ in Figure 7.1, aligns with the information-based power source because users are empowered by their ability to express themselves online and voice their opinions (Labrecque et al., 2013). The findings contribute to previous literature by showing that users are also empowered from their involvement in offline personal experiences that lead to knowledge sharing, in addition to being empowered by the interaction that users receive from sharing their offline personal experience within the online community. With respect to the added concept ‘Online tools’, the latter indicates network-based power due to users’ empowerment deriving from the technological advancements online that allow their engagement with others (Labrecque et al., 2013). Such technological developments entail users benefiting from ‘retweets’, ‘liking’, ‘hashtags’, cross-posting, ‘automated-systems’ and the ability to network with other users (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Goldenberg et al., 2012).

The following five concepts that are part of the added construct ‘Influencing factors’ are aspects that lead to a ‘Disempowered consumer’. They are: ‘Reference groups’, ‘Personal experiences’, ‘Lack of confidence’, ‘Scepticism’ and ‘Profession’. This study’s findings oppose those of prior studies that suggested different and fewer factors that lead to a disempowered consumer, vulnerability and privacy (Pierson, 2012; Mariën et al., 2016). The five constructs illustrated within Figure 7.1 provide a more comprehensive and hence accurate profile of the present-day disempowered consumer online. Users who are disempowered by advice given from ‘Reference groups’, are influenced by their friends’ and familys’ prior experiences online that lead to users adopting an apprehensive attitude towards what content they post. Users’ ‘Personal experiences’

online also contribute to increased anxiety about what to share (or not to share) online, due to past occurrences that caused misinterpretation by, or offence towards another user. The analysis demonstrates that users are deterred from sharing knowledge also because of their 'Lack of confidence', which leads to seeking validation of their existing knowledge, 'Scepticism' towards the reliability of posts and sources sharing content, and their 'Profession' that restricts them from sharing certain information.

Considering the first path that leads from the construct of 'Consumer empowerment', the following concept of participatory benefits has been altered due to a psychological participatory benefit replacing a hedonic participatory benefit. Alongside the added participatory benefit, is a functional participatory benefit and a social participatory benefit. The findings demonstrate that users do not indicate a hedonic participatory benefit because within the online community users are not driven by their need for fun and enjoyment to share knowledge (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). Rather, the analysis demonstrates that users are driven by a psychological participatory benefit, due to their desire to share knowledge about concepts, language and cultural norms related to green clothing (Bressler and Grantham, 2000; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004), their need to associate, to develop a shared identity and affiliate with the #sustainablefashion online community (Rheingold, 1993; Walther, 1996). Moreover, the analysis evidences that users are driven by a social participatory benefit because of their desire to share knowledge to support others, share personal experiences and form relationships (Preece, 2000; Wang et al., 2002; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). A functional participatory benefit emerges from users' drive to gather knowledge to aid their decision-making and for convenience, and to share knowledge about their consumption activity (Hagel and Armstrong, 1997; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004).

The concept of 'Social bond experiential interactivity' replaces 'Experiential route of interactivity', due to users' desire for camaraderie and to support others. The findings show that the concept results in 'Reciprocity' and 'Knowledge sharing'. These findings align with Chan and Li (2010), who argued that 'Social bond experiential interactivity' is an important factor that leads to reciprocating behaviours (Mathwick et al., 2007).

Concerning the following concepts of consumers' attitude and behaviour change, the findings cannot confirm the former. However, the analysis suggests that users within the

#sustainablefashion online community, do have favourable attitudes towards green clothing and pursue pro-environmental behaviours as a result of gathering knowledge. The findings further unveil that consumers who lobby other users, companies and policy makers for the purpose of changing their rationale and behaviour, could have achieved the attitude and behaviour changes towards green clothing that were desired. Although, admittedly, future research is warranted to confirm the latter findings. Lastly, an ‘Empowered consumer’ is added at the end of the framework shown in Figure 7.1. The analysis demonstrates that a consumer becomes empowered because of sharing knowledge about a personal interest, green clothing in this case, and as a result of receiving interaction from other users. The added aspect of an empowered consumer aligns with Quinton and Simkin’s (2016) study, which illustrates “the digital journey map”, suggesting that an empowered consumer is a consequence of the power shift online. This study adds to the insights of the latter study by evidencing that users are not only empowered because of the power shift that allows a two-way conversation with an organisation. Users are also empowered as a result of receiving interaction, and due to sharing knowledge about a concept they are passionate about. Furthermore, Figure 7.1 illustrates an arrow from an ‘Empowered consumer’ to ‘Reciprocity’. The analysis indicates that as a result of users receiving interaction from others, which results in their empowerment, users are encouraged to reciprocate with the user who engages with them. Thus, a circular, virtuous process from an ‘Empowered consumer’ to ‘Reciprocity’ takes place. Inevitably, it is the task of future research to validate the novel proposition of a circular process from an ‘Empowered consumer’ to ‘Reciprocity’, to confirm the validity of the added concepts that are illustrated within this study’s updated conceptual framework.

Regarding the second path that commences with a ‘Disempowered consumer’, the findings demonstrate that a disempowered consumer is driven by the same participatory benefits, namely, psychological, functional and social. Figure 7.1 further illustrates that the former leads to the added concept of ‘Personal interest’, ‘Lower levels of engagement’ and ‘Knowledge sharing’. The analysis evidences that users are driven to share knowledge because of their personal interest towards the topic of the conversation and the individual with whom that content is shared with. Additionally, as a result of users’ ‘Personal interest’, the former leads to ‘Lower level of engagement’, which entails ‘liking’ and ‘retweeting’ content rather than sharing new knowledge.

7.4 Theoretical Contributions

This thesis makes several theoretical contributions. To begin with, the findings contribute to previous studies' understanding of consumers' knowledge sharing within an online community (Ardichvili et al., 2009; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Shen et al., 2014). The analysis indicates that users' knowledge sharing comprises of a variety of factors that support and contribute to prior understandings. For instance, knowledge sharing entails social interaction between users (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Shen et al., 2014) who gather knowledge from one-another to learn about green clothing or to validate what they know. Users further evidence knowledge sharing when sharing personal experiences (Ardichvili et al., 2009), for the purpose of supporting others, to raise awareness and to lobby. The findings further evidence co-consumption and co-production within an online community via users' drive to engage with other consumers (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012), alongside their desire to lobby companies and policy makers for the purpose of encouraging pro-environmental rationales and behaviours. This study offers implications for future studies that explore knowledge sharing within an online community, to test this study's original findings that unveil additional factors embedded within the concept of knowledge sharing.

The former indicates the further contribution to prior literature concerning the participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing. Specifically, this study contributes to Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) propositions regarding the participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing. This study's analysis evidences that social, psychological and functional participatory benefits are the predominant drivers of consumers' knowledge sharing. A hedonic participatory benefit was evidenced as a minor driver. The findings contrast prior studies that indicate social and hedonic participatory benefits as important factors (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Chan and Li, 2010). Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) found that functional and psychological participatory benefits were insignificant drivers to consumers' knowledge sharing. Nevertheless, this study did respond to Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) call for research into users' knowledge sharing within support OCs. This study's context of a green clothing online community indicated a supportive environment, that fostered users' sense of identity and affiliation. Hence, a psychological participatory was indicated within the #sustainablefashion online community.

The findings have implications for future studies that intend to explore a social participatory benefit, as the analysis contributes to previous studies that examined the concept (Preece, 2000; Wang et al., 2002; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). For instance, this study revealed that users are driven to share a multitude of personal experiences, including their offline experiences related to the topic of the online community. Users share both positive and negative offline experiences in order to engage with like-minded others and contribute within an echo-chamber. Furthermore, considering a functional participatory benefit, this study's analysis brings to the fore additional factors that define the term (Hagel and Armstrong, 1997; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). The findings demonstrate that users within the #sustainablefashion online community, share knowledge about their alternative consumption and pro-environmental activities such as 'mending', 'using what you have', 'upcycling', 'charity shopping' and 'not buying new clothes'. Additionally, users indicate that they gather knowledge not only for convenience and to inform their decision-making, but also to validate what they know and to collect information to learn more. Users demonstrate a desire to learn more, in order to become knowledgeable about green clothing for their own benefit and to gain knowledge in order to disseminate information amongst their followers on Twitter, alongside using the knowledge for professional reasons. This study further contributes to past studies that have defined the concept of a psychological participatory benefit (Rheingold, 1993; Walther, 1996; Kozinets, 1999; Bressler and Grantham, 2000; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). The analysis evidences that users are driven by a desire to associate to the online community, because they want to avoid the criticism likely to be met from others who oppose their green concerns. Thus, users are driven by a psychological participatory benefit to share knowledge due to the online community being a safe-space, which ensures that the user can interact with like-minded others who support them. The findings further reveal that users are driven to share specific language related to the #sustainablefashion online community. Such language entails 'mending', 'using what you have', 'making', 'DIY', 'darning', 'charity shopping', 'recycling', 'upcycling', 'environmental', 'sustainable' and 'not buying'. The terminology related to consumers' green concerns and pro-environmental behaviour contributes to prior studies' understanding regarding consumers' environmental awareness and the clothing-related green consumption activities that are undertaken (Moisander, 2007; Cervellon and Carey, 2011; Shen et al., 2012; Jaiswal, 2012; Lu et al., 2015).

Altruism emerges as a key factor that influences users' desire to support others. The findings demonstrate that the concept of altruism aligns with a social participatory benefit. Thus, this study contributes to future studies that explore consumers' drive of a social participatory benefit to share knowledge. Due to the concept of altruism being a key determinant that led to users' desire to help and support others, because of the users' moral obligation and care for the online community (von Krogh, 1998; Wasko and Faraj, 2000; Utz, 2009). The analysis further reveals that users who engage in an altruistic act, do so for the purpose of belonging to the online community. The latter supports Ma and Chan's (2014) study, which concluded that altruism was a factor associated with a sense of belongingness. This study contributes to the understanding of prior research, as the findings demonstrate that users pursue an altruistic act due to being driven by a social participatory benefit alongside the need for belonging. Hence, the findings indicate an interplay between the social and psychological participatory benefits, due to a desire to support others being a factor within a social participatory benefit and a drive to belong as an aspect within a psychological participatory benefit. An implication for future studies is to explore further the interplay between social and psychological participatory benefits, as this study's findings reveal an inter-relationship between consumers' drive to support others in order to belong.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that certain roles emerge during users' knowledge sharing within an online community, these are 'lurker' and 'de-lurker'. Previous literature examines the roles of 'lurker' and 'de-lurker' indicating that users 'lurk' to gather knowledge, and 'de-lurk' by discontinuing their collection of knowledge because they perceive themselves as knowledgeable (Nonnecke and Preece, 1999; Kozinets, 1999; Mo and Coulson, 2010). The role of 'lurker' is evidenced within the findings, when users are driven by a functional participatory benefit, for the purpose of gathering knowledge because they lack confidence or have a desire to learn more about green clothing. 'De-lurking' is an activity that aligns with users who stop gathering knowledge and proceed to share knowledge that they accumulated. The former is evidenced within the analysis by users who perceive themselves as knowledgeable, alongside users who identify as educators as a result of collecting information online. This thesis contributes to Mo and Coulson's (2010) study that indicates an interplay between the two roles, due to the findings demonstrating that users 'lurk' and 'de-lurk' followed by 'lurking'. The analysis reveals that users adopt a 'lurking' behaviour again in order to

validate what they already know or to learn more. Therefore, the findings contribute to theoretical understanding regarding the cyclical behaviour of ‘lurking’ and ‘de-lurking’ online. Furthermore, the analysis unveils that ‘de-lurkers’ evidence a desire to educate others because they perceive themselves to be knowledgeable. The former relates to the concept of a “market maven” who teaches others within the online community. However, the findings raise questions about the definition of a “market maven” as the analysis does not show that users only educate newcomers to the community (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012). Nevertheless, the findings contribute to knowledge about the role of an educator within an online community, as the analysis shows that the role of ‘de-lurker’ and educator interplay, and that an educator comprises of users who teach anyone within the online community, not necessarily the newcomers.

Engagement is evidenced within the analysis, and this study adds to previous studies’ comprehension of the construct. The findings demonstrate that engagement is an important factor that leads to users’ knowledge sharing. In particular, social bond experiential interactivity is found to play a pivotal role in encouraging engagement alongside reciprocity (Chan and Li, 2010). The analysis indicates social bond experiential interactivity when users share knowledge because of their desire for camaraderie online, to form relationships, a sense of security, and to interact and provide support (Rheingold, 1993; Wikström et al., 2002; Wasko and Faraj, 2005; Mathwick et al., 2007). The latter demonstrates similarities with the definition of a social participatory benefit as a driver to knowledge sharing, as the participatory benefit comprises of users’ motivation to share knowledge because they want to develop online relationships and support others. Thus, the findings indicate an association between a social participatory benefit and engagement, though further research is warranted to corroborate this finding. Additionally, engagement emerges from the analysis as a factor that leads to an empowered consumer (Brodie et al., 2011; Brodie et al., 2013). The latter concept is shown at the end of the updated conceptual framework in Figure 7.1. Users are empowered because they receive engagement from other users on their posts concerning green clothing, engagement entails reciprocity, ‘likes’ and ‘retweets’.

Both concepts of an echo-chamber and safe-space are evidenced within the analysis, in particular, both aspects are shown to inter-relate. The findings provide an insight into users that contribute to an echo-chamber because of their desire to share knowledge with like-minded

others, alongside their desire to reduce negative repercussions by sharing alike knowledge which adds to an echo-chamber. Previous studies explore an echo-chamber within a political sense, and similarly evidence that an echo-chamber is formed online as a result of people who discuss shared interests and views and contribute to the online community's cultural norms (Sunstein, 2009; Dubois and Blank, 2018). This study has implications for future studies, as the analysis delivers a comprehensive explanation towards how an echo-chamber is created within a green clothing online community (rather than a political context, as done by several previous studies). Furthermore, a safe-space is demonstrated as an aspect that interplays with the notion of an echo-chamber. Users indicate that they contribute knowledge to an echo-chamber of similar thoughts, because they perceive the online community to be a safe-space. The analysis indicates that an online community is seen as a safe-space for users, because they feel permitted to disseminate their opinions related to pro-environmental behaviour without the risk of receiving criticism from others with opposing views. The findings add to previous studies that have explored the notion of safe-space within contexts related to sexuality, women's rights, anti-racism and feminism (Kenney, 2001; Roestone Collective, 2014). The analysis provides an in-depth understanding towards a safe-space in the context of pro-environmental concerns, and users' motivations to share knowledge within an online community perceived to be a safe-space.

Lobbying is a key theme within the findings. The analysis reveals that users are driven by their hate towards the 'not sustainable' organisations (Steenberg, 2003), alongside their moral concerns for pro-environmental behaviour (Romani et al., 2015). This study reveals that a moral concern is found to be the most important factor that drives users' behaviour to lobby. It can be suggested that the user reflects an ecological citizen when driven by her/his own environmental conscience. An ecological citizen [user] is one who lobbies others because s/he wants to change the world and champion others to take responsibility for their actions, in order to reduce the impact on the environment (van Steenbergen, 1994; Dobson, 2000). Hence, the findings contribute to prior studies that discuss moral concerns and the wider literature of ecological citizenship, as both concepts inter-relate (van Steenbergen, 1994; Dobson, 2000; Steenberg, 2003; Dobson et al., 2005; Romani et al., 2015). Additionally, the findings contribute to Wasko and Faraj's (2005) study that used social capital theory to understand collective lobbying, and in so doing, they provide a rationale for future studies to employ ecological citizenship to comprehend users with a pro-environmental conscience who collectively lobby.

This study's findings contribute to previous literature that explores consumer empowerment online. The power shift discussed by Quinton (2013) is apparent within the analysis as a factor that empowered users online. This study contributes to the former study's understanding by demonstrating that additional aspects enthruse users. Users are empowered by the power shift, gaining a sense of empowerment via conversations with other users and the organisation in question when lobbying, alongside encouraging others to join their conversation with the company or policy maker. Thus, the power shift not only entails consumers' empowerment as a result of a reciprocal discussion between one individual and a company. Users are also empowered as a result of other users who join their conversation and share their opinions about the organisation in question. Hence, the power shift allows a multifaceted, multi-lateral conversation rather than just a two-way exchange. As shown in Figure 7.1, the findings reveal that three factors lead to consumer empowerment: consumers' 'Personal experiences', their 'Green concerns', and 'Online tools'. Additionally, the figure illustrates the concept of an 'Empowered consumer' as a result of knowledge sharing, alongside two aspects that lead to an 'Empowered consumer': receiving interaction from others, and the ability to share knowledge about their green clothing concerns and pro-environmental behaviour. Thus, this study adds to previous knowledge and has implications for future studies exploring consumer empowerment, by demonstrating the existence of additional factors that should be considered when measuring or examining consumer empowerment, or when considering the outcome of an empowered consumer within a green context online community.

Furthermore, the findings have specific implications for Labrecque et al.'s (2013) study that discusses consumer power sources online. The analysis demonstrates that users are empowered by information-based power and network-based power. The latter entails users' drive to share knowledge due to the ability to express themselves and share their opinion, alongside technological advancements that entail online tools such as 'hashtags', 'retweets', 'likes', 'automated systems' and to share their own podcasts and blogs (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; James et al., 2011; Goldenberg et al., 2012). Both demand-based power and crowd-based power are drivers that are indicated by a minority of users within the analysis. Only few users are influenced by the initial changes of the internet such as real-time and no geographical boundaries, or driven to create their own platforms. Thus, the findings offer a better understanding of present-day users in terms of how they are empowered to share knowledge

within a pro-environmental context online community. Furthermore, engagement emerges as a factor that empowers users. Specifically, users are encouraged to share knowledge when other users reciprocate and interact with their content. The analysis also reveals that users who are empowered by engagement, indicate how interaction on their posts results in a sense of belonging within the online community. The latter aligns with Brodie et al. (2011) and Brodie et al. (2013) and provides novel insights into why users are empowered by engagement.

The concept of a disempowered consumer also emerges from the findings. Users are disempowered due to previous personal negative experiences online, employers' restrictions, misinterpretation, offending other users, lack of confidence, reference groups, and scepticism towards content reliability. The findings contribute to Pierson's (2012) study that suggested only two aspects that disempower a consumer, namely, vulnerability and security. Moreover, the findings demonstrate that users employ methods to overcome factors that deter their knowledge sharing. They employ strategies such as monitoring and filtering past posts to reduce other users' misinterpretation of their online content, thus lowering the probability of negative repercussions and to minimise their anxiety towards negative consequences. The findings contribute to Stone and Cooper's (2013) study that employed "dissonance theory" and "the self-standards model" to examine users' attempt to reduce online anxiety by identifying additional consequences that users contemplate and strategies that users employ to alleviate such online anxiety.

The findings demonstrate that 'extension of self' is an important concept. It is found to stem from users' hope to present a desired-self due to a lack of support offline, a users' profession and the concept of anonymity that drives users' desire to educate other users. The analysis contributes to Belk's (2013) study that examined online users' "extended self", in particular, with respect to the aspects of "reembodiment" and "anonymity" driven by disinhibition. For example, it has been suggested that a user seeks to reflect a desired self via an imagined online avatar rather than a digital avatar that is exemplified within online mediums such as Second Life and World of War Craft. Instead, the present analysis indicates that a user wishes to demonstrate another self within the online community who is popular and has a network of like-minded affiliates. Alongside a user who hopes to be perceived as a professional, in order to advocate their employer, minimise misinterpretation related to their job and to abide restrictions

imposed by their employer. The findings reveal that the aspect of anonymity drives users to share knowledge, in order to educate others and to share knowledge to inform others whose views oppose to their own. The analysis has implications for a past studies that found that users' anonymity that is driven by disinhibition leads users to share more knowledge (see Tosun, 2012; and Belk. 2013). In contrast, the present analysis demonstrates that users stop sharing knowledge because they are unable to achieve the ability to educate others, which was the aim of their anonymity.

The study employs ecological citizenship as a theory to understand why consumers' collectively share knowledge about green clothing within an online community (van Steenberg, 1994; Dobson, 2000; Dobson, 2003; Dobson et al., 2005; Sáiz, 2005; Gabrielson, 2008). Previous literature called for a more in-depth study of the modern-day ecological citizen. This study contributes to this literature by identifying key traits of the ecological citizen. For example, the analysis shows that an ecological citizen within the #sustainablefashion online community champions green values and demands change by lobbying other users, companies and policy makers. The ability to promote pro-environmental behaviour is demonstrated by the use of online tools that allow them to share their experiences with ease, for example, via photographs and by using a Twitter handle to direct 'tweets' to specific recipients. Facilitation of online tools is indicated when users 'retweet' and 'like' content to share with other users, in order to present a perceived image of themselves which advocates green clothing and an environmental conscience. The analysis further evidences that users want others to take responsibility and change the world for the better; they indicate a desire to raise awareness about green clothing by sharing factual and scientific information related to the 'greening' of consumption or about the apparels' impact on the environment. On this account, the findings align with previous literature that discusses an ecological citizen who advocates liberal views, and who shows care and compassion for the environment alongside a desire to champion the proper way to life, not just to live (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994; Dobson, 2000). The findings further portray an ecological citizen who lobbies for change and who is driven by a sense of urgency about the environment (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994).

7.5 Managerial Contributions

The findings delivered managerial contributions that have implications for industry, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and policy makers. First, the findings offer valuable insights to social media managers associated with a brand that prides itself of a sustainable supply chain and claims to encourage pro-environmental behaviour. For instance, the findings show how social media managers can harness the online community to empower users to share knowledge. To accomplish this goal, a gatekeeper should be employed to observe users' discussions and seek out 'trolls' who may cause disruption. Such a gatekeeper's intervention can minimise users' apprehension towards the possibility of negative repercussions from 'trolls' and ensure a smoother, more fluid online conversation between users. The analysis reveals that a varied online discussion is prevented because of users' anxiety towards sharing opposing views which may invite 'trolls', instead, users are driven to contribute to an echo-chamber of similar thoughts to avoid repercussion rather than to engage with like-minded others. The findings present interviewees who relish discussions in which they can gather information for their own learning, to increase understanding. Hence, a 'troll'-free and more fluid dialogue provides a richer amount of content for users. The benefit of the deployment of a gatekeeper to harness an online community, also provides social media managers with the opportunity to reduce lobbying against their brand. The findings show that users' lobby because of their hate towards an organisation's immoral behaviour, and their innate moral concern towards green clothing. In this respect, an environmental conscience is a critical motivator. Therefore, the social media manager can use a gatekeeper to observe users' lobbying behaviour and interact with the lobbyist in order to understand their frustration and to discourage their activism. In the case of the user lobbying about the brand's unsustainable behaviour, the social media manager could develop communication strategies to be exercised within the online community, to better publicise the brand's sustainable agenda and environmentally-friendly initiatives. As a result of deploying a customer-centric approach alongside developing the brand's sustainable communication strategy, the organisation has the potential to empower users online and reduce negative publicity that could taint the organisation's sustainable brand image.

Moreover, the importance of empowering online community users is evidenced within the findings. Empowered users gain a sense of belonging to the community. Previous reports emphasise the importance of retaining users and providing a platform that fosters belonging, as

studies show that users become brand loyal and are prone to spreading positive word-of-mouth recommendations (McKinsey, 2013; Forbes, 2018; Entrepreneur, 2019). The analysis reveals that consumer empowerment is fostered via their personal experiences, facilitation of online tools and their green concerns. Whereas, an empowered consumer is one who obtains interaction from others and has the ability to share knowledge about green concerns. Thus, to achieve consumer empowerment, social media managers should develop consumer-centric strategies that entail receiving feedback from users regarding how to improve their experience, alongside promoting a two-way, user-friendly system for the user and gatekeeper to communicate. The latter should go hand-in-hand with the development of online tools that meets the users' expectations and empowers them to voice their thoughts and opinions. The online tools should also facilitate online communication between users via comment sections as a means to share content, the ability to share their own podcasts, blogs and vlogs, thereby encouraging inter-connectivity between social media platforms and empowering users.

Implications for NGOs, specifically, charities and civil societies with a sustainable agenda and which endorse pro-environmental behaviour amongst the public, include how the charities and civil societies' gatekeeper should harness the online community. The analysis evidences that users are empowered by their green concerns and the ability to interact with like-minded others (who share their values). As a result of the latter, users have a strong sense of belonging with the online community. The gatekeeper of an NGO online community should strive for users' sense of belonging within their online community, due to the competitive nature of NGOs as non-profit organisations that require funding in order to survive (Aldashev and Verdier, 2010; Nunnenkamp and Öhler, 2012). Thus, the gatekeeper of the NGO online community should encourage users to share their pro-environmental behaviours and develop an environmental conscience via sharing posts that foster interaction from users and create discussion. However, the gatekeeper should be mindful of the importance of getting the balance right between sharing enough content to foster belonging and, concomitantly, not distributing too many posts that may deter users from sharing knowledge. The gatekeeper should also consider sharing a multitude of green clothing content to encourage and embolden users who lack confidence, and to nurture interaction between different users within the online community. The analysis further indicates that users hope to gather information about green clothing to learn and improve their understanding. Thus, the online community should circulate information that includes links to

their website or stakeholders, to deliver educational content to users that require such knowledge. Moreover, the findings reveal that users have a desire to raise awareness about green clothing via factual information, hence, implicating the type of content that is shared by NGOs with their online community. For instance, to fulfil users' desire of sharing objective and scientific information which they perceive to be trustworthy, the NGO should sense check information prior to sharing to raise awareness about facts and reports associated to green clothing. Sharing only trustworthy information would minimise users' anxiety towards content reliability and empower users to re-share content because they can trust the knowledge. The sharing of factual information could result in a knock-on effect of users developing their green clothing terminology and adapting to the language used, the latter could positively impact on users' green clothing awareness and learning.

Several policy implications can be highlighted. First, the analysis adds to a report distributed by DEFRA (2011) regarding consumers' green clothing terminology. The report highlighted that consumers have a basic vocabulary concerning green clothing that is limited to the following words, "seasonal", "refashioned" and "fair trade", and only a minority of consumers associated clothing with the aspect of recycling (DEFRA, 2011). The report also states that consumers lack an awareness of the impact of clothing on the environment, including the carbon footprint of apparel. This study found that users have a wider range of green clothing terminology, that encompasses pro-environmental behaviour activities and environmental concerns. However, the findings did not indicate consumers' terminology with specific reference to their carbon footprint. Hence, this study's analysis contributes to DEFRA's (2011) understanding regarding the present-day and much expanded consumers' green clothing terminology. Furthermore, the findings provide implications for the European Commission's (2012) report that discussed consumers' pro-environmental behaviour. The report illustrates a model sourced from Kollmuss and Agyeman's (2002) study³³. This PhD study contributes to their model by showing that an empowered consumer leads to knowledge sharing, and as a result of receiving interaction and discussing their concerns, an empowered consumer is developed. The empowered consumer is found within the analysis as a user that returns to reciprocating behaviours, which leads to further knowledge sharing. Therefore, this study's updated conceptual framework shown in

³³ Appendix 45 illustrates the model from the European Commission (2012) report.

Figure 7.1 informs and extends Kollmuss and Agyeman's (2002) model as well as the European Commission's (2012) understanding of consumers' knowledge sharing that results in pro-environmental behaviour.

7.6 Limitations and Future Research

Despite the significance and intrinsic worth of the findings of this PhD study, some limitations ought to be acknowledged. First, the preliminary research methodology employed originally entailed netnography alongside focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Netnography was conducted for six months during the early stages of data collection, but this process was not fruitful, resulting in inadequate data to address the research questions. For instance, the data detailed 'what' the users were sharing, however, lacked content on the 'why' and 'how' in relation to the reasons underlying the knowledge shared. Thus, the data collected via netnography had to be discarded, and was not used for the analysis of findings. Instead, the understanding of netnography prompted the researcher to undertake initial observations prior to the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The latter was used for the purpose of understanding users' green clothing terminology and behaviour, to inform the focus group questions and stimuli, and to identify a green clothing online community from which to contact interviewees for the semi-structured interviews.

Second, the initial consideration for the focus groups was to contact participants who presented a pro-environmental behaviour by being both an avid charity shopper and an active social media user. However, subsequent to the researcher reaching out to charity shoppers and talking to them after gaining permission from the charity shop manager, only very few consumers met the criteria and the total number of two prospective participants did not suffice for a focus group to be undertaken. Consequently, the focus groups were undertaken with social media users and were contacted via a 'Call for Participants' via the researcher's professional Twitter and Facebook page³⁴.

The findings deliver important theoretical, methodological and managerial contributions. Nonetheless, the study presents questions that warrant further research. First, the findings show that social, psychological and functional participatory benefits were the main drivers to

³⁴ Section 3.5.2.1 discusses the sampling for the two focus groups. Appendix 15 and 16 illustrate the 'Call for Participants' used via the researcher's professional Twitter and Facebook social media.

consumers' knowledge sharing within an online community. These findings run counter to some previous studies, however, aligned with Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) suggestion of the need for further research into users' participatory benefits that drive knowledge sharing within a supportive online community. Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) predicted that a supportive online community is based on consumers' drive to share knowledge because of a psychological participatory benefit. Thus, this study suggests that future academic work should explore users' intention to share knowledge in relation to participatory benefits within an online community context that concerns pro-environmental behaviour and green concerns.

Another fruitful area for future research pertains to a 'lurker's' journey within an online community, especially the exploration of factors that influence users' 'lurking' and 'de-lurking' behaviour, and whether a 'lurker's' behaviour is cyclical, and if so, why? This question stems from the present analysis that indicates that users 'lurk' to gather information to learn and then 'de-lurk' because they perceive themselves to be knowledgeable and proceed to educate others. Subsequently, users return to 'lurking' because they lack confidence or do so to validate what they know. Additional questions are raised from the findings, since the analysis demonstrates the association of 'lurking' with a functional participatory benefit when users gather to learn, 'delurking' with a social participatory benefit when users support others and a psychological participatory benefit when users distribute green clothing specialist concepts. Thus, future studies may wish to explore the concept of 'lurking' and 'de-lurking' with specific reference to Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) participatory benefits. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that users who 'de-lurk' present a desire to educate others. Therefore, additional research is needed to examine consumers' online 'de-lurking' behaviour in relation to their intention to 'educate' others.

A further study should assess the interplay between altruism and a sense of belonging, which is found within this study, consistent with the finding of Ma and Chan (2014). A subsequent study is warranted to explore the inter-relationship within a pro-environmental online community in order to confirm this study's findings. Questions brought to the fore by the study that require specific validation include, the extent to which users' altruism leads to a sense of belonging and whether there are additional factors that contribute to users' sense of belonging in parallel to users' altruism.

The initially proposed conceptual framework illustrated within Figure 2.4 and Figure 7.2, aimed to understand if users' attitude and behaviour lead to a positive change towards green consumption of clothing as a result of knowledge sharing within the online community. This study's findings could not confirm attitude or behavioural change, however, the analysis indicates that users who lobby may have influenced the recipient's attitude or behaviour. Further research, therefore, is needed to examine the condition identified above in order to provide a comprehensive understanding to validate this study's suggestion, and to validate prior literature that discusses attitude and behaviour change occurring as a consequence of knowledge sharing (Williams and Cothrell, 2000; Kim et al., 2008; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012).

To conclude, a follow-up study that uses a quantitative method such as a survey, could be employed to empirically validate the updated conceptual framework (see Figure 7.1) proposed by this PhD study. Such a future study should focus on measuring the participatory benefits that drive consumers' knowledge sharing within the #sustainablefashion online community, the three aspects that lead to consumer empowerment and the five factors that result in a disempowered consumer. However, it can be assumed that the participatory benefits may differ due to the social trends at the time of the research, and the users' enhanced or reduced awareness about green clothing.

7.7 Concluding Remarks

The PhD journey entailed a meandering passage that has led to interesting, original findings, significant contributions, and a multitude of personal and academic developments and achievements along the way.

During the PhD there were some steep learning curves, as a result of challenges during data collection, and during feedback concerning my academic writing. I believe I managed to overcome the challenges through reflection. I pondered on the reasons why the activity proved so difficult at times or not as successful as I wished for. But, significantly, I did not stand still just 'blaming' myself. Instead, I tried to learn from my mistakes and the process, which - I would like to think - helped me mature and strengthened my focus on accomplishing the task at hand. Such a positive and forward-looking stance also helped me to develop critical skills and valuable thought-processes as a researcher, whilst maintaining a healthy and rationale rather than purely emotional outlook on problems I faced. Enthusiasm for my research topic and for

research more generally, has always been my main driver to overcome the difficulties I faced. I remember fondly my first meeting with my supervisors, when Prof. Lyndon Simkin told me “*Your [my] enthusiasm will get you [me] through*”. I am still excited about this research to this day, and I hope that I will always remember the importance of how loving what one does can serve as a crucial motivator for success, also in my future academic career.

Reflecting on the challenges that I experienced, I now like to think of them as ‘blessings’ that made me the researcher I am now. They shaped my way of thinking about problems, how to deal with them, and my grasp of what research really is. I am grateful for those complications because, without them, I do not think that I would have the great passion and respect for research that I hold today. My perseverance and headstrong attitude have got me through this bumpy, difficult and yet very often fulfilling and rewarding journey. Of course, I owe much to many people. Indeed, I would not have accomplished this thesis without the support of my supervisory team and family. I am thankful to my supervisory team who kept my spirits up during times of harsh reflection on challenges that arose, and for their constant reassurances that ‘this’ was all part of the journey, and that I would get through it. I am also grateful to my Nan, Grandad and Auntie Louise, who gave me confidence, hope and the strength to pursue my goal and deal with the challenges, and to my Nan especially for listening and sharing her words of wisdom, which sparked solutions on how to go about rectifying the problems I encountered.

Reflecting on my initial thoughts towards this study’s research methods, ‘netnography’ was initially selected as a strategy due to the many past papers that explored knowledge sharing on an online platform using this method. Advantages of the method include the ability to retrieve a rich amount of data online and the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding. I learnt much from a variety of authors that had used netnography (Kozinets, 1999; Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Chan and Li, 2010; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Shen et al., 2014). In particular, Kozinets (1999; et al., 2010; 2015) helped me to better understand how to undertake a netnographic study. However, the data I obtained from the netnographic observations on Twitter did not provide the rich amount of data that this PhD study called for. Specifically, the data content lacked the ability to inform on the ‘why’ and ‘how’ users shared knowledge and indicated empowerment. After six months of conducting netnography, therefore, I was presented with a challenge, namely, how to overcome the problem of inadequate data that failed

to address this study's research questions. This led to the decision to extend the methodological reach of the research by undertaking 20 semi-structured interviews to gather the richer data needed to address the research questions. However, the problem posed by my use of netnography, provided me with the insight into how observations can deliver the 'what' question, which led to the identification of the online community for the interviews. Thus, as I reflect, I owe a great deal to the failed netnographic approach since it led to exploring further opportunities, greater learning and, subsequently, to the adoption of better suited approaches, that I could not have envisaged had I not, first, failed. The latter sums up the beauty of research for me, the mistakes that are made are often the roads that lead to learning and new discoveries.

In hindsight prior to conducting netnography, a pilot netnographic study should have been undertaken to understand if the data retrieved would have addressed this study's research questions. The pilot could have potentially provided me with the problems that I would have faced and revealed the imminent challenges of doing netnography by using NVivo to retrieve the data. When using the NVivo N-capture tool to collect data I encountered problems such as, the software not always gathering all the 'tweets' on the webpage and the tool not being able to acquire large quantities of 'tweets' at a time. Using NVivo was problematic when storing large quantities of data, due to the software not being able to cope and consequently being very slow or 'crashing'. If I were to conduct netnography again with the purpose of retrieving large quantities of data to analyse and depending on the project's research questions, I would use the software tools Python or R. Subsequent to researching about how past researchers conducted netnography and from speaking to a PhD colleague that was doing a similar project, both Python and R were suitable tools that could retrieve hundreds of thousands of 'tweets' at a time and the software had the capacity to store the data without shutting down. However, this study's research questions warranted a qualitative research design and analysis procedure, thus, the use of Python and R was not appropriate for this study. Additionally, as a result of the time I could have saved by doing the netnographic pilot study and starting the interviews sooner, this study could have benefited from a follow up quantitative study to confirm the qualitative findings. The latter would have meant that this thesis would have undertaken a mixed-method study to confirm the qualitative findings. This study would have built upon previous studies that used an online survey to measure the factors that influenced consumers' knowledge sharing, consumer empowerment and a disempowered consumer (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; De Valck et al.,

2009; Chan and Li, 2010). This thesis calls for future research to conduct a quantitative study to confirm this study's findings, in particular, the three participatory benefits found to be pivotal determinants to consumers' knowledge sharing, the three aspects that influence consumer empowerment and the five factors that result in a disempowered consumer.

During both undertakings of data collection, I enjoyed talking with the participants and interviewees, gaining a first-hand understanding of their knowledge sharing on online platforms and their concerns about green clothing. On reflection, I thrived when I was able to listen to users and probe them to reach a deeper understanding. Both focus groups allowed for fascinating discussions with every participant. The beauty of doing the focus groups, was epitomised by the occasions when the dialogue transformed from initial, tentative thoughts to an explosion of discussion, contrasting views and deliberations. As a result, both focus groups delivered a rich amount of data that provided preliminary understandings about research questions 1 and 2. During and after the focus groups, I kept analytical memos concerning the participants' discussion points and what sparked a shift in dialogue, alongside my own reflections on the overall feelings of the focus groups. At the point of my reflection, I was able to contemplate the success of the focus groups and what aspects warranted improvement; the feedback forms from participants also contributed to my learning and future amendments. Considering the semi-structured interviews, I found the ability to speak with interviewees from the #sustainablefashion online community a privilege; thanks to the opportunity that I had as a researcher to directly explore users' knowledge sharing within a green clothing community, and because I myself have strong concerns towards the environment and I pro-actively engage in pro-environmental behaviour. I found it a joy to listen to the interviewees, observe their enthusiasm and passion for sustainable fashion, and have the opportunity to ask questions about why and how they shared knowledge, and about their 'green conscience'. I was enthralled to hear about what factors motivated users' knowledge sharing within the online community, also because of my personal investment in the PhD as the thesis had become (as I'd like to think) an extension of myself. I had a genuine desire to understand why users were driven to share knowledge and to comprehend their empowerment online.

I felt a great sense of achievement at completion of the 20 semi-structured interviews. First, because I had finally succeeded in collecting data that usefully and purposefully addressed this

study's research questions, which was of vital importance as the previous attempt using 'netnography' had failed. Second, because the significant insights obtained genuinely enriched my understanding and enhanced the appreciation of the findings derived from the two focus groups. Finally, because of the opportunity to speak directly with people who shared my green conscience and my enthusiasm for clothing (in particular, charity shopping), which was a personally fulfilling experience by itself. It was a delight to see participants displaying the same facial expressions of excitement that I have when shopping in charity shops or upcycling a pre-loved item. Similarly, I empathised with their feeling of despair when talking about the overwhelming issue of climate change, and what 'we' can do to reduce our environmental impact. However, I constantly tried to discipline myself to refrain from expressing my empathy or opposing view towards the interviewees' answers to my questions, as I did not want to place any bias onto the discussion. Overall, and with the benefit of hindsight, I believe I managed to remain as objective as I possibly could during the data collection process. Considering this study's philosophical underpinning and epistemological and ontological positioning, as a researcher, I wanted the interviewees' dialogue to be completely organic and derive from their own rationale and behaviour.

Subsequent to collecting and transcribing the 20 semi-structured interviews, the ensuing task was to conduct a thematic analysis of the interviews. During my third Progress Review Examination I received constructive feedback on my initial thematic analysis of the interviews. The internal examiner, Prof. Sally Dibb, stated that the analysis warranted a deeper analysis of the data to understand the underlying themes and suggested that a 'thematic analysis workshop' with my supervisory team would help me understand how I should undertake a more in-depth thematic analysis. The thematic analysis workshop took place on the 16/05/2019 with my Director of Studies, Dr. Anvita Kumar, and my supervisor, Prof. Lyndon Simkin. The workshop was a success and provided me with a better understanding into how to undertake a deeper thematic analysis and comprehend the underlying themes. On reflection, the workshop was a great opportunity for me to have a few hours with two academic experts who provided me with invaluable knowledge, and I had the chance to hear their ideas and thoughts about the analysis. During the workshop we all read the same two interview transcripts, using 'magic white board paper' we wrote up the most 'interesting' and relevant aspects that addressed this study's research aims and questions, from each transcript. Subsequent to each individual writing up

their thoughts about the two transcripts, we spoke about each transcript and discussed our rationale behind the themes that emerged. The practice that I undertook within the workshop informed the following thematic analysis for the rest of the interviews.

On reflection, I feel that the focus groups and semi-structured interviews complemented each other very well. The focus groups not only provided this study with an initial scoping that paved the way to and provided direction for the semi-structured interviews, they also brought me closer to the research itself, enabling me to hear real people's thoughts and ask probing questions that aligned with my research. The experience of undertaking the focus groups certainly sharpened my skills as a researcher. For example, the planning of the focus groups, the ethical considerations the focus groups prompted, a cogent rationale for the questions to be asked, a 'Call for Participants', issues pertaining to contacting prospective participants, booking the room and keeping in contact with participants. Are all steps that provided me with the tacit knowledge involved in conducting a successful collection of data, knowledge that is not readily available from books.

Nevertheless, in retrospect I did encounter problems when collecting interviewees from the #sustainablefashion online community for the 20 semi-structured interviews. For instance, I had to contact 69 users in total to retrieve 20 interviewees. During the two months of contacting interviewees and undertaking the interviews, I encountered many setbacks as prospective interviewees lost interest in partaking within the study and could no longer participate due to personal reasons. As a result, I had to contact more online community users and inform the interested individuals with information about the study. I made sure that I was not causing annoyance to online community users by not contacting too many people at one time, as I did not want to be perceived as an 'automated system' on Twitter whom was sending out the same message to users. Also, I was careful not to bother a prospective participant with too much follow up contact, I only sent one follow up message after initial contact and if the individual did not reply then I noted the user as 'not interested' within my analytical memos. Appendices 2 and 23 further clarify the process that I undertook when contacting interviewees.

I reflect on the observations I made prior to choosing Twitter to identify an online community. I assessed the suitability of alternative online platforms that this study could have used to explore consumers' knowledge sharing within a green context, such as, creating my own online

community or using a situated online community within Instagram, YouTube or Facebook. There were philosophical issues related to creating my own online community, for example, in order to gather a deeper understanding, I could have encouraged responses by commenting on participants posts and by inviting discussion by sharing a post. The former may have resulted in biasing the participants' knowledge sharing or reciprocating behaviours, as a result they would not have shown their 'true' behaviours that would be evidenced within an established online community. There were probable sampling problems associated to creating my own online community, for instance, identifying suitable participants interested in sustainable fashion who wanted to partake, finding enough participants to form an online community, ensuring that a mix of demographics were included and creating a thriving community that encouraged discussion. As I reflect on the latter and on this study's findings, I would have missed a very important aspect that drives consumers' knowledge sharing, belonging. By creating my own online community and conducting the observations shortly after, there would have been a lack of belonging and community between the users.

Alternatively, choosing an established online community on Instagram would have incurred various conceptual issues, as the online community was deficient in consumers' knowledge sharing and reciprocating behaviours due to Instagram being a predominant medium for photo and image sharing. During my observations I found that online communities on Facebook and YouTube were mainly private, which would have caused problems with the philosophy of axiology and ethical issues for this study. A consequence of contacting the gatekeeper of the online community could have led to the individual rejecting or restricting the researcher's access to discussions. Also, by complying with Coventry University Ethics all the online community users would have to be informed about the researcher observing them and potentially asking probing questions on comments to understand 'why' and 'how' they share knowledge. The latter may have resulted in biased answers and 'fictitious' behaviours to fit the researchers aims. Considering the exploratory nature of this study's research design, the observations and probing questions on participants' comments which would have taken place within my own online community or additional social media platforms, may have restricted the rich and in-depth understanding that was warranted. Thus, demonstrating how the alternative platforms were not suitable for this study as they did not meet the philosophical and conceptual nature of this study and proposed many ethical problems. Twitter was a suitable social media to identify an online

community because of the public nature of the medium, which reduces the potential ethical issues and minimises bias as I would not have to contact a gatekeeper. The chosen #sustainablefashion online community is a thriving platform that consists of over 200 tweets a day and entails a variety of discussions about green clothing aspects from a global reach of users, thus demonstrating the applicability to this study that explores consumers' knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community.

Nevertheless, as I reflect on the participants' and interviewees' attitudes towards Twitter and their use of alternative online platforms, I am aware that Twitter was not the most important platform for them, when sharing information related to green clothing. The focus groups' participants voiced a range of online platforms, these were, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Reddit, Facebook and Instagram. The participants unveiled that they shared or gathered information about green clothing primarily from Facebook and Twitter. The participants demonstrated that they use Facebook because they were able to see videos and images about green clothing. The interviewees revealed that they desired to share additional content other than knowledge related to the four stages of green clothing, for examples, via photographs, images, videos and vlogs. The interviewees evidenced that they distributed and viewed images of apparel made from recycled materials or upcycled garments via Instagram, interviewees expressed that Instagram is tailored to sharing and viewing photographs and facilitates their distribution. Additionally, the sharing or viewing of videos and/or vlogs about shopping in charity shops, upcycling garments or making clothing was discussed by interviewees, they preferred to share or view the latter content via Facebook and YouTube due to the mediums enabling this type of content. LinkedIn was discussed by interviewees as another online platform that they would visit to gather information rather than share information, in order to be informed about companies' latest green initiatives. Overall, the interviewees expressed that the character limit on Twitter restricted them from sharing photographs, videos and vlogs, and perceived the online platform as a medium that did not share the former content, rather Twitter was for sharing or gathering information. Twitter was seen by interviewees as being a more professional platform and was perceived as being similar to LinkedIn. Interviewees stated that they would use Twitter for other reasons alongside interacting within the #sustainablefashion online community, for example, talk to colleagues, employers, prospective employers, look for jobs and keep up-to-date with their past university. Thus,

demonstrating that Twitter was not the most perfect online platform to choose due to users sharing and viewing a variety of multi-media content related to green clothing via numerous online mediums. However, considering this study exploring consumers' knowledge sharing within an online community rather than images, video or vlogs, this study chose the most suitable platform being Twitter to explore the online phenomenon.

This study did not anticipate to find that users were disempowered to share knowledge within the #sustainablefashion online community and to uncover a variety of factors that deterred users' knowledge sharing. I was surprised to discover that a majority of users felt a sense of scepticism towards the trustworthiness of content shared on Twitter because of their desire to learn from credible sources and improve their understanding about green clothing, along with using online material to validate what they know. It can be suggested that users want to be educated about green clothing with scientific and factual information, rather than from others' beliefs or perceptions about green clothing. Anxiety and apprehension were indicated by a vast number of users, due to their worry towards receiving backlash from trolls who oppose their opinions, users demonstrate their predicament as they want to share their green clothing concerns and personal experiences, however, they do not want to face negative consequences from users with opposing views. Users further conveyed their sense of trepidation towards causing offence or instigating other users' misinterpretation of their tweet. Users' profession associates with their desire to reduce misinterpretation, as the analysis reveals that users within a highly-professional job requires the users to be transparent online and not to cause confusion online with their customers or clients. The analysis unveiled users' determination to overcome their scepticism and anxiety, when users monitored and filtered past and present comments. The latter evidences the users' passion to educate themselves using objective information and to ensure that their understanding is correct, along with their heightened self-consciousness due to their hope to not offend others or cause misinterpretation. Interestingly, the analysis unveiled that users used reference bodies offline to inform their knowledge sharing and potential behaviours online activities they should avoid, alongside adhering to their personal experiences in which they have faced a repercussion. Overall the analysis unveiled thought-provoking findings that this study did not foresee and provided implications for future research, social-media managers and NGOs.

I also feel a great sense of achievement with respect to the managerial contributions of this study, especially those identifying potential strategies that social media managers and online experts can employ to nurture users' sense of belonging within an online community. I believe the findings have the potential to protect and maintain an online community's presence within an ever-changing technological landscape. The importance of belonging within the online community, is because of the benefits that users can gain from sharing knowledge. These include: the ability to gain a sense of acceptance for their green concerns by talking to like-minded others, the opportunity to feel 'safe' and escape criticism from others who oppose their views, the ability to gather information from an online platform that spans the globe to learn more about their interest in green fashion, and the opportunity to share their wisdom with eager novices who want to learn. Thus, the online community not only provides the necessities of knowledge sharing, but also the chance for users to be empowered and improve their mental health via the facilities offered by an online platform. As I reflect on the contributions of this study, I feel that the implications from my findings are not only beneficial to enhance academic knowledge. Thanks to the additional managerial implications that point to how gatekeepers can harness an online community, I also feel a sense of satisfaction in having the opportunity through this work to inspire social media managers and online experts within industry, NGOs and policy makers. It is a real privilege to be able to offer stakeholders valuable, original knowledge and recommendations to provide the public with the chance to develop their green conscience and enable users to undertake pro-environmental behaviour.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Step-By-Step Procedure of this Study Conducting the Focus Groups

Order of the procedure	Explanation of the procedure
1	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Recruitment via a ‘Call for Participants’</u></p> <p>This study recruited the participants for the two focus groups via a ‘Call for Participants’, the call was distributed via the researchers professional Twitter page. The purpose of the ‘Call for Participants’ was to ask for participants to volunteer to take part in the study’s focus group. The call included a few words associated with this study, these are, Social Media, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogging, Vlogging, Sustainability, Green, Clothing, Green Clothing and Environment. The rationale for presenting words associated with the study, was to trigger prospective participants interest and to attract their curiosity to the study. The terms were informed by the literature review and the initial observations made via the four green clothing YouTube videos. The call included an incentive for the participants contribution which entailed a £20 Amazon voucher, the money was provided by Coventry University’s Centre for Business and Society. The call instructs potential participants to consider if they are interested in the words in bold, and if so, to email the researcher for further information via the email address provided. The second call provided the date and time of the focus group because a participant from focus group 1 had suggested that this detail would have been encouraging to join the focus group.</p>
2	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>First engagement with a prospective participant</u></p> <p>Once the prospective participant emailed the researcher in response to the call to ask for further information. The researcher addressed queries and asked the set of screening questions stated to establish the suitability of the participant.</p>
3	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Informing the suitable participant</u></p> <p>Once the participant was asked the screening questions and was deemed suitable by this study’s researcher, a ‘Participant Information Form’ was sent to the</p>

	<p>participant to inform them about the following. For instance, their participation within the study, the ethical procedures of the study that comply with Coventry University's Ethics and the date, time and Coventry University building that the focus group would be conducted within³⁵. Alongside the researcher sending the potential participant the 'Participant Information Form', the researcher also asked for the participant to read through the form and make sure that they understood the content, and to ask queries if needed. Once the participant confirmed that they had understood the 'Participant Information Form' and agreed to be part of the focus group, the researcher sent additional information. This included, a reminder of the date, time and the actual room number within the Coventry University building where the focus group would be held, alongside information about the meeting point where the researcher would meet the participant.</p>
4	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>The researcher's preparation prior to the focus group</u></p> <p>Prior to the focus groups commencing, the researcher arrived earlier to set up the room, which entailed, providing a 'Participant Information Form' and 'Informed Consent Form' for the participant, for the purpose of recapping the purpose of the study and to obtain a signature of agreement of the participant's consent to contribute. The researcher made sure that the room presented a relaxed and informal feel to align with previous studies guidelines on undertaking a successful focus group (Saunders et al., 2012), and provided refreshments to ensure that participants were comfortable. The researcher made sure that the participants felt welcome on arrival to the focus group by meeting them at the entrance of the Coventry University building, and directed them to the room where the focus group would commence. On arrival to the room the researcher suggested that the participants read the 'Participant Information Form' again to ensure that they understood the study's purpose and their contribution.</p>
5	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Start of the focus group</u></p> <p>At the start of the focus groups, participants were instructed to read the 'Informed Consent Form' and to sign the form to validate their consent to contribute within</p>

³⁵ The focus group 'Participant Information Form' is shown in Appendix 27.

	<p>this study and consented to being recorded via a Dictaphone³⁶. Prior to asking the questions, the researcher imparted a brief introduction which entailed, introducing who s/he was, the participant's rights to withdraw from the study, the termination of the data once the study had been completed, the amount of questions to be asked, the use of stimuli and the length of the focus group.</p>
6	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>During the focus group</u></p> <p>The participants were asked questions from a semi-structured interview guide (The focus group interview guides are shown in Appendices 3 and 4) and participants were shown two videos as stimuli to encourage discussion related to green clothing. Both videos were informed from the initial observations of two green clothing YouTube videos, these videos are shown in Appendix 5. The researcher acted as a moderator throughout both of the focus groups, and ensured that s/he followed the guidelines discussed within Section 3.5.1.1 to encourage good quality discussions between participants. The researcher kept analytical memos of the participants seating plan and interesting behaviours observed or particular aspects that they discussed that were deemed noteworthy to the study. The analytical memos of the seating plan were later used during transcription to identify what participant was speaking, and interesting notes contributed to the ensuing analysis of the data.</p>
7	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>At the end of the focus group</u></p> <p>Once the study had finished participants were given an additional form to provide their demographic details and their consent to partake in future research for this study to acquire the £20 Amazon voucher offered as an incentive to partake (The form to receive the £20 Amazon voucher is shown in Appendix 14). Within the first focus group, participants were given a short form to complete which asked them for their suggestions on how to improve the focus group and feedback on their experience (The feedback form is shown in Appendix 17). The suggestions given by the participants informed the ensuing focus group, for instance, the date and time was added to the following 'Call for Participants' and the same stimuli was used as participants favoured the videos shown.</p>

³⁶ The focus group 'Informed Consent Form' is shown in Appendix 30.

8	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>After the focus groups</u></p> <p>After the completion of both focus groups, the researcher transcribed the participants group discussion using the recording from the Dictaphone. Also, analytical memos were electronically logged, for the purpose of making sure data was kept secure on a password protected USB and notes made on paper were shredded.</p>
9	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Saturation</u></p> <p>Saturation was reached by two focus groups; this was due to the same narrative from participants and themes arising from the group discussion. Thus, demonstrating an exhaustive discussion that had reached theoretical saturation (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Guest et al., 2006; Morse, 1995).</p>

Appendix 2: Step-By-Step Procedure of this Study Conducting the Semi-Structured Interviews

Order of the procedure	Explanation of the procedure
1	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Pilot semi-structured interview</u></p> <p>Prior to commencing the 20 semi-structured interviews, a pilot interview was undertaken in order to assess the researcher's interview skills and to validate the questions that were intended for the main interviews. The researcher undertook a pilot interviewee with a Coventry University Research Assistant who had a vast amount of interview experience, hence, s/he was a suitable candidate to ask for feedback on the researcher's interviewing skills. The pilot semi-structured interview guide was organised around this study's theoretical concepts that were being explored, these are, online communities, knowledge sharing, consumer empowerment and ecological citizenship. However, the context of the interview guide was in the Research Assistants interest of research, which was food waste (The pilot semi-structured interview guide is shown in Appendix 5). Hence, allowing the pilot participant to provide insights into this study's concepts within a context that s/he were aware of. Prior to conducting the pilot interview, the researcher emailed the interviewee a 'Participant Information Form' which informed them about the study, their contribution and ethical considerations related to the pilot interview (The pilot semi-structured interview 'Participant Information Form' is shown in Appendix 28). Alongside, the date, time and location of the pilot interview, to comply with Coventry University's Ethics the interview was held on the University's campus.</p>

	<p>At the start of the pilot interview the participant was asked by the researcher to read through the ‘Informed Consent Form’, and sign the form to provide their agreement to partake within the interview and be recorded by a Dictaphone (The pilot semi-structured interview ‘Informed Consent Form’ is shown in Appendix 31). The pilot interview guide was informed from the focus group findings and had similar questions to the proposed main interview guide, however, the context was related to food waste. The interviewer asked probing questions which were led by the interview guide formatted in italics. At the end of the interview, the pilot participant gave the researcher feedback on their interviewing skills, overall, the feedback was positive. The interviewer transcribed the pilot interview, in order to observe emerging themes from the data which related to this study’s theoretical concepts.</p>
2	<p><u>Updating of the main semi-structured interview guide</u></p> <p>The interview guide for the 20 semi-structured interviews was informed by the pilot interview and the questions were modified by adapting the questions to this study’s context of green clothing. The pilot informed the main guide for instance by asking deeper probing questions.</p>
3	<p><u>Contacting prospective interviewees from the #sustainablefashion online community</u></p> <p>The prospective interviewees who met the criteria within Appendix 20 were contacted by this study’s researcher. The initial contact was made by the researcher commenting on a ‘thread’, to either a user that shared a ‘tweet’ that mentioned the ‘hashtag’ #sustainablefashion or to a user replying on that ‘thread’. The contact message addressed the prospective interviewee by using her/his Twitter handle, followed by asking her/him for an interview, for example, “@ (Twitter handle) I am a researcher from Coventry University and find your conversation</p>

	<p>interesting about #sustainablefashion. Are you available for an informal discussion about this? Best, Rebecca”.</p> <p>Prospective interviewees were contacted on Twitter ‘threads’ between the 19/02/2019 until the 08/03/2019.</p>
4	<p><u>Informing the prospective participant</u></p> <p>Once the prospective interviewee replied, s/he was asked by the researcher to ‘follow’ her/him on her/his professional Twitter page so that a private message could be sent to the interviewee. Within the private message, the potential interviewee was asked for her/his email address to send a ‘Participant Information Form’³⁷. The ‘Participant Information Form’ outlined the nature, scope, and aims of the study and the participant’s role within the study, and provided assurances about data management, security, anonymity, and explained the withdrawal procedure.</p>
5	<p><u>Further validation of the participant</u></p> <p>Once the prospective interviewee had read through the ‘Participant Information Form’ and confirmed her/his participation, a set of screening questions were asked via email for further validation of the suitability of the interviewee. Following the successful validation of the interviewee via the screening questions, a Skype interview date and time was confirmed.</p>
6	<p><u>The researcher’s preparation prior to the semi-structured interview</u></p> <p>Prior to the interviews, the researcher would send a reminder emailed the night before to remind the interviewee about the confirmed date and time of the interview, and asked the interviewee to check that her/his microphone, webcam and Skype app was working. The purpose of the researcher asking the latter question, was to overcome technical problems that are discussed within prior studies (Hanna, 2012).</p>

³⁷ The pilot semi-structured interview ‘Participant Information Form’ is shown in Appendix 28 and the main semi-structured interview ‘Participant Information Form’ is shown in Appendix 29.

7	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>At the start of the semi-structured interview</u></p> <p>At the start of the interview, the researcher introduced herself/himself and briefly read over the ‘Participant Information Form’ to ensure the interviewee was informed, the researcher then asked for the interviewee to say ‘I consent’ if s/he agreed to contribute within this study. The reply of ‘I consent’ was recorded on the Dictaphone and evidenced the interviewees consent to partake within this study.</p>
8	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>During the semi-structured interview</u></p> <p>The researcher initially asked ice breaker questions shown within Appendix 6, to ensure that the participant felt comfortable (Longhurst, 2003). During the main section of the interview questions, the researcher asked probing question which are formatted in italics in the interview guide, in order to gain a deeper clarification to an answer. Additional probing questions were asked in regards to the interviewees answer to address the ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions related to this study. On reflection, each interview lasted one hour and 30 minutes to two hours.</p>
9	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>After the semi-structured interview</u></p> <p>At the end of the interview the researcher wrote analytical memos related to interesting emerging concepts or answers given by the interviewees, that addressed this study’s research questions. Followed by, the researcher writing a summary on each interview which synthesised the overall discussion related to the theoretical concepts that this study explores. The purpose of the analytical memos was to inform the subsequent data analysis (Saunders et al., 2012). The researcher followed up the interview by transcribing the interview, the transcription was used for the ensuing data analysis.</p>

Appendix 3: First Focus Group Guide

Understanding the relationship between knowledge sharing within an online community and consumer empowerment: through the lens of ecological citizenship

Focus group guide

Introduction–

1. Introduce myself
 - Hi my name is Rebecca and I am a PhD student at Coventry University. The purpose of my study is to understand the relationship between consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing, also to explore how and why consumers are motivated to share knowledge. Within the context of green clothing.
2. Hand out participant information sheet and informed consent form and confirm details from the participant information sheet
 - I am handing out two documents, the participant information sheet and the informed consent form.
 - The form entails what my PhD study is about and how you are contributing to my research.
 - Participation is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any point during the study and at any point up to 01/12/2018. To withdraw, please contact me by email, beechr@uni.coventry.ac.uk stating that you wish to withdraw from the study. If you decide to withdraw you will have no further involvement in the study. All data is anonymous and you will not be identifiable in any way. There are no consequences for withdrawing from the study.
 - I will be asking you a set of 11 questions which will last about 1-1.5 hours. I will also be using a recording device to record your answers. During the focus group I will be showing video material to you which are from YouTube.
 - Only I will have access to the raw data. All the consent forms will be stored in a separate, locked location from the raw data itself. You will NOT be identifiable from the focus group guides or any data subsets. All focus group guides will be destroyed by 01/12/2018. Consent forms will be destroyed according to University regulations.

- After reading the participant information form, please can you sign the informed consent form to give your consent to participate in my research project.
- Rules: Please feel free to say anything as it will stay confidential. But please listen to others.
- Begin the focus group

Questions in order to be discussed in a table format (starting with icebreakers then questions)

Icebreaker:

1. Find out more about the participants
 - Please can you introduce yourself by stating your name and something interesting about yourself
2. Ask open questions about their use of social media
 - What type of social media platform do you use?
 - What are the reasons of why you use them?
 - How often would you say you use them?
 - Do you personally read or respond to comments on social media?
 - Would you say you trust the comments or not? And, why?
 - Do you have a personal blog or vlog that you have created?
 - In your own opinion, why did you create the blog or vlog?
3. Ask open questions about their 'greenness'

[Please look at the board showing a current issue in the news and video hyperlinked to article – attached presentation slide]

 - What do you think the article and video are discussing?
 - In your own opinion, does this concern you?
 - How and why does it/doesn't it concern you?
4. Ask open questions about their attitude towards clothing and sub-set of green clothing
 - In your opinion what does clothing mean to you?

- How often do you think you buy clothing? And, what are the reasons of why you are buying clothes?
[Please look at the board showing a few statements and images on clothing – attached presented slide]
- Have you heard of any of these clothing brands?
- In your opinion what type of clothing is this representing?
- What are your thoughts to this type of clothing, and would you consider buying?

Focus group questions:

Study's Research question	Sub-topic within RQ	Focus group question that are asked
RQ 2 - To what extent and how do hedonic, social and functional motivators drive consumers' knowledge sharing within the online community?	<i>Belong to an online community</i>	1. Do you have a social media account? And what is it?
	<i>Are active online</i>	2. How do you use your social media account <u>Probe –</u> <u>*Do you use it to interact with others? Give examples*</u> <u>*Do you use it gather information or share information? Give examples*</u> <u>*Do you use it to talk about your own experiences? Give examples*</u>
RQ 3 – What is the nature of the relationship between ecological citizenship and consumers' empowerment within the online community?	<i>Interests towards the context – green and green clothing</i>	3. Do you care about your impact on the environment? <u>Probe for answer unsure</u> <u>*why is that?*</u> <u>Probe –</u>

		<u>*What activities do you do, which do you think shows that you care for the environment?*</u>
		4. How is clothing important to you? And, any particular type of clothing? *Why do you feel strongly or not towards clothing? *Is there a brand or type of clothing that you feel strongly about?*
RQ 2 - To what extent and how do hedonic, social and functional motivators drive consumers' knowledge sharing within the online community?		5. Have you responded to a video or comment on social media within the last month? <u>Probe –</u> <u>*Give examples and what videos?*</u> <u>*Why did you comment or not comment?*</u>
	Show 'My Green Closet' Affordable sustainable fashion video and show images of the hidden comments – one set of comments at a time (2 sets of comments)	
	<i>To what extent they share/or do not share knowledge</i>	*After watching the video, and seeing the hidden comments*
	<i>Motivations of Knowledge sharing</i>	6. What comment would you reply with and why, considering the context of the video? If at all, why?
	<i>Reciprocity</i>	

		<u>Probe –</u> <u>*What would you share*</u>
	Show ‘Use Less’ Learn to consume less with the buyerarchy of needs video and show images of the hidden comments – one at a time	
	<i>To what extent they share/or do not share knowledge</i>	*Now you have seen two videos and both comments which are hidden*
	<i>Motivations of Knowledge sharing</i>	7. Considering both videos and comments, how would you reply within these comments? <u>Probe –</u> <u>*Would you share something different?*</u>
	<i>Reciprocity</i>	
	<i>Their main drivers of knowledge sharing</i>	8. What were the main reasons of why you shared those comments? <u>Probe - *what did you want to gain?*</u>
RQ 3 – What is the nature of the relationship between ecological citizenship and consumers’ empowerment within the online community?	Show My Green Closet ‘New vs. old – which is better?’ video	
	<i>Consumer empowerment</i>	9. What do you think of the video, in regards to how the vlogger is talking about clothing? <u>Probe –</u> <u>*Does the vlogger inspire you or share comments?*</u>
	Show Use Less ‘Handel with care – make your clothes live longer – top 6 hacks!’ video	

	<i>Consumer empowerment</i>	10. In your own opinion, do you feel as passionate about reducing your impact on the environment like the vlogger? <u>*Does the vlogger inspire you to voice your opinions more?*</u>
	<i>Consumer empowerment</i>	11. In the case of the videos shown about green clothing, in your opinion who would you listen to and respond to? And, why?
Video suitability	Which video do you think worked best? And in your own opinion, why?	

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 4: Second Focus Group Guide

Ice breaker:

1. Find out more about the participants
 - Please can you introduce yourself by stating your name and something interesting about yourself
2. Ask open questions about their use of social media
 - What type of social media platform do you use?
 - What are the reasons of why you use them?
 - How often would you say you use them?
 - Do you personally read or respond to comments on social media?
 - Would you say you trust the comments or not? And, why?
 - Do you have a personal blog or vlog that you have created?
 - In your own opinion, why did you create the blog or vlog?
3. Ask open questions about their 'greenness'
 - [Please look at the board showing a current issue in the news and video hyperlinked to article – attached presentation slide]
 - What do you think the article and video are discussing?
 - In your own opinion, does this concern you?
 - How and why does it/doesn't it concern you?
4. Ask open questions about their attitude towards clothing and sub-set of green clothing
 - In your opinion what does clothing mean to you?
 - How often do you think you buy clothing? And, what are the reasons of why you are buying clothes?
 - [Please look at the board showing a few statements and images on clothing – attached presented slide]
 - In your opinion what type of clothing is this representing? Does it have a label?
 - What are your thoughts to this type of clothing?
 - Is this type of clothing something you would consider buying?

Focus group questions:

Study's Research question	Sub-topic within RQ	Focus group question that are asked
RQ 2 - To what extent and how do hedonic, social and functional motivators drive consumers' knowledge sharing within the online community?	<i>Belong to an online community</i>	<p>3. Do you have a social media account? And what is it?</p> <p><i>*What are they and how long have you been using them?*</i></p> <p><i>*What are they main reasons of why you use them?*</i></p> <p><i>What purpose do you use them for?*</i></p>
	<i>Are active online</i>	<p>4. How do you use your social media account</p> <p><u>Probe –</u></p> <p><u>*Do you use it to interact with others? Give examples*</u></p> <p><u>*Do you use it gather information or share information? Give examples*</u></p> <p><u>*Do you use it to talk about your own experiences? Give examples*</u></p> <p><u>*Do you have a separate account for personal and private?*</u></p> <p><u>*How do you use the different social media platform?*</u></p> <p><u>*Are there barriers on the platform which restrict your usage?*</u></p>

		<p><u>*Are they rules to go by when using these online platforms?*</u></p> <p><u>*Do you have a preference towards particular online platforms?*</u></p> <p><u>*Do you have a preference towards professional and personal online platforms?*</u></p>
RQ 3 – What is the nature of the relationship between ecological citizenship and consumers’ empowerment within the online community?	<i>Interests towards the context – green and green clothing</i>	<p>3. Do you care about your impact on the environment?</p> <p><u>Probe for answer unsure</u></p> <p><u>*why is that?*</u></p> <p><u>Probe –</u></p> <p><u>*What activities do you do, which do you think shows that you care for the environment?*</u></p> <p><u>*What made you start having these concerns towards the environment?*</u></p> <p><u>*Do you use any online platforms to inform your concerns?*</u></p> <p>4. How is clothing important to you? And, any particular type of clothing?</p> <p><u>*Why do you feel strongly or not towards clothing?</u></p>

		<p>*Is there a brand or type of clothing that you feel strongly about?*</p> <p><i>Ask clothing questions here about their value towards clothes</i></p> <p>*What value does clothing have for you?*</p>
RQ 2 - To what extent and how do hedonic, social and functional motivators drive consumers' knowledge sharing within the online community?		<p>5. Have you responded to a video or comment on social media within the month?</p> <p><u>Probe –</u></p> <p><u>*Give examples and what videos?*</u></p> <p><u>*Why did you comment or not comment?*</u></p> <p><u>*Did you reply with one comment or continuous?*</u></p> <p><u>*Do you regularly comment on a particular platform?*</u></p> <p><u>*Why would you comment on a particular platform?*</u></p>
	<p>Show ‘My Green Closet’ Affordable sustainable fashion video and show images of the hidden comments – one set of comments at a time (2 sets of comments)</p>	
	<p><i>To what extent they share/or do not share knowledge</i></p>	<p>*After watching the video, and seeing the hidden comments*</p>
	<p><i>Motivations of Knowledge sharing</i></p>	<p>6. What comment would you reply with and why,</p>

	<i>Reciprocity</i>	considering the context of the video? If at all, why? <u>Probe –</u> <u>*What would you share*</u> <u>*If you wouldn't share why is this?*</u>
	Show 'Use Less' Learn to consume less with the buyerarchy of needs video and show images of the hidden comments – one at a time	
	<i>To what extent they share/or do not share knowledge</i>	*Now you have seen two videos and both comments which are hidden*
	<i>Motivations of Knowledge sharing</i>	7. Considering both videos and comments, how would you reply within these comments?
	<i>Reciprocity</i>	<u>Probe –</u> <u>*Would you share something different?*</u>
RQ 3 – What is the nature of the relationship between ecological citizenship and consumers' empowerment within the online community?	<i>Their main drivers of knowledge sharing</i>	8. What were the main reasons of why you shared those comments? <u>Probe - *what did you want to gain?*</u>
	Show My Green Closet 'New vs. old – which is better?' video	
	<i>Consumer empowerment</i>	9. What do you think of the video, in regards to how the vlogger is talking about clothing? <u>Probe –</u>

		<p><u>*Does the vlogger inspire you or share comments?*</u></p> <p><i>Asked this question here 10.</i></p> <p><i>In your own opinion, do you feel as passionate about reducing your impact on the environment like the vlogger?</i></p> <p><u>*Does the vlogger inspire you to voice your opinions more?*</u></p>
	<p>Show Use Less ‘Handel with care – make your clothes live longer – top 6 hacks!’ video</p>	
	<i>Consumer empowerment</i>	<p>10. In your own opinion, do you feel as passionate about reducing your impact on the environment like the vlogger?</p> <p><u>*Does the vlogger inspire you to voice your opinions more?*</u></p>
	<i>Consumer empowerment</i>	<p>11. In the case of the videos shown about green clothing, in your opinion who would you listen to and respond to? And, why?</p>
Video suitability	<p>Which video do you think worked best? And in your own opinion, why?</p>	

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 5: Pilot Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Introduction section

Hello, my name is Rebecca Beech and I am a PhD student within the Centre for Business in Society at Coventry University. My project aims to explore knowledge sharing about green clothing consumption within online communities in Twitter. Today I will be conducting a semi-structured pilot interview which will last for an hour, questions will be asked about your food waste knowledge.

With your consent this interview will be recorded and later transcribed. All data will comply with the University's ethics regulation, which means the transcript will be anonymised (you will not be identified), data is securely stored, and no results can be traced back to you.

Also, you can withdraw from the study at any point. Please take the time to read the participant information form, and sign the consent form if you agree.

Ice breaker:

Firstly for the purpose of the interview, please can you say your name and job title.

Concerns towards food waste (4 min)

To start off, I would like to talk about your opinions and concerns regarding food waste.

Theme	Time	Sub-theme <i>Probing questions in italics</i>	Research question	Theme
Food waste	2 min	What got you interested in food waste? <i>Have you always had these interests or did your interests grow from reading/hearing about it? Why? Any particular person or group of people influence you to get interested?</i>	Address my theoretical underpinning – ecological citizen	Gives understanding to context and theory. Sets the scene for further questions.

	2 min	What are your concerns about food waste and the negative reasons of food waste? <i>Why and examples, because of your concerns – do you actively reduce your food waste?</i>		
Total of minutes	4 minutes			

Social media use (6 min)

Thank you. I would now like to ask you about how you use social media platforms to share and gather information about food waste.

Theme	Time	Sub-theme <i>Probing questions in italics</i>	Research question
Social media (2nd icebreaker questions)	2 min	What social media platforms do you use to share knowledge about food waste? <i>What are these? Why? What are the pro/cons of using social media to gather/share knowledge about food waste? Where do you find the knowledge from to share? Give examples of the type of knowledge shared on these platforms about food waste?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain an understanding about their use of social media, and the various facets impacting their use of Twitter and how they share knowledge? May give insights into RQ 1, what drives them to share the knowledge on
	2 min	What social media platforms do you use to gather knowledge about food waste? <i>What are these? Why? What are the pro/cons of using social media to gather/share knowledge about food waste? How did you locate/find these platforms about food waste? Give examples of the type of</i>	

		<i>gathered knowledge from these platforms about food waste?</i>	different platforms.
	2 min	Do you use these social media platforms differently when sharing/gathering knowledge about food waste? <i>Give examples on how you use these? How and why? Is there a social media platform you use more/least than others? Do you share more on one, and gather more on one?</i>	
Total of minutes	6 minutes		

Participant's use of Twitter when sharing/gathering knowledge about food waste (10 min)

I would now like to ask you how you use social media - in particular Twitter, and how you got interested in using Twitter to gather and share knowledge about food waste.

Theme	Time	Sub-theme <i>Probing questions in italics</i>	Research question	Why it address the research question
Their profile (1st icebreaker questions)	2 min	When did you first create your Twitter page? <i>Why did you?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain an understanding about the individual and their use of Twitter. Understand who the influencers are within the food waste online community. By asking when they created the Twitter account, can see how 	
	2 min	When you first created Twitter, what were the 'interests' you stated? <i>Why did you choose these? What did it result in, suggested followers etc.? Were these related to food waste?</i>		

	2 min	On Twitter are you a member of any ‘lists’ related to food waste? <i>What are these? Why? If not, would you like to be part of them?</i>	<p>empowered they have become from a short/long time. And see how active they have been.</p> <p>Addressing RQ 2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By asking about the ‘interests’, can see if they are empowered to find out information about knowledge sharing, addressing RQ 2. • What the Tweeters aspire to do by using Twitter. • Give insight into their knowledge sharing and how they are empowered from their interests which address RQ 2.
	2 min	Who are the predominant people you follow on Twitter related to food waste? <i>Who are they? Why did you follow them? How long have you been following them? Do they influence you? Do they follow you? Do you tweet with these people?</i>	
	2min	When sharing tweets about food waste, do you want your followers to listen and act to your tweets? <i>Why? How might you think it would influence them? Why? If not, why not? What type of people follow you? Give examples when this has/hasn’t happened?</i>	
Total of minutes	10 minutes		

Consumer empowerment (10 min)

I would now like to ask you about your role within Twitter online communities, when sharing or gathering knowledge about food waste.

Theme	Time	Sub-theme <i>Probing questions in italics</i>	Research question	
Consumer empowerment	2 min	Are you part of any hashtags or lists within Twitter about food waste/related issues? <i>Example? Why do you use that hashtag/list? How did you get on the list? Do you use them both often? Who also uses these hashtags/lists?</i>	Understand if they are part of an online community. Stepping stone to next questions.	
	2 min	How did you find the people/platforms that you follow about food waste? <i>Who/what are they? Are they influencers? Do they follow you? Do you have regular conversations/interactivity? Pro's/cons of this?</i>		
	3 min	Are you part of an online community about food waste, and do you feel part of the community? <i>Example of online community is a hashtag, Give an example of these online communities, how long have you been in it?</i>	RQ 2	-Understand their empowerment within the online community -The example will give an insight into

		<i>how do you feel you belong? Have you broadened your network from these online communities?</i>		how the knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment relate.
	3 min	How would you describe your role within the food waste online communities? <i>Example? Are you an active tweeter or not within the online community? Do you share a lot of the information? Do you class yourself as an influencer? Do you want to influence your followers? Are there roles within the online community that appeal to you? If so, what, why?</i>	RQ 2	-Understand their empowerment within the online community
Total of minutes	10 minutes			

Knowledge sharing (35 min)

Thank you. I would now, like to ask you some questions about how you sharing knowledge when tweeting within the online communities about food waste.

Theme	Time	Sub-theme <i>Probing questions in italics</i>	Research question	Theme
Knowledge sharing	2 min	What is your main purpose of using the online communities about food waste? <i>Why and how, example of this, Why do you choose to share your views? What sources of information are the best?</i>	RQ 1	- Give initial insight into why they use the online community -Initial understanding about what drives their knowledge sharing and how. And about what empowers them to use it.
	15 min	What is the reason you share information within the food waste online communities? <u>Hedonic</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have fun/enjoy sharing knowledge? <i>If so, why and give an example? Is it with particular people? Is this a common reason why you/everyone shares knowledge within this online community?</i> <u>Social</u>	RQ 1	-The overall question to gather insights into what participatory benefits are driving their knowledge sharing within the online community. -The bullet point questions are sub-questions with probing questions. -These address each variable within the

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you share knowledge because you trust others within the food waste online communities? <i>Why? Do you trust anybody in particular - because they are an influencer or been in the online community a long time?</i> • Do you share personal experiences within the food waste online communities? <i>Give examples? Is it with particular people? Is this a common reason why everyone shares knowledge within this online community?</i> <p><u>Psychological</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel like you belong to the food waste online communities? <i>Give examples? Do you feel you would like to belong more, and how could you do this?</i> • From sharing knowledge within the food waste online communities, have you expanded your networks online from doing so? <i>Give example, how has</i> 	participatory benefit construct
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		<p><i>this made you feel? What kind of networks? Who are the relationships with? Are they influencers? Have you met others with food waste interests through these relationships?</i></p> <p><u>Functional</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you share knowledge about the actions you have done to reduce food waste, within the online communities? <i>Give examples, and why? Do you upload pictures? Is this a regular thing you do? Did anyone influence you to do this? Do you feel this encourages more discussion?</i> • Do you ask for information on how to reduce your food waste? <i>Why, how has this helped you? Who helps you? When asking for help, do you receive it?</i> 		
	2 min	<p>What type of knowledge do you want to seek/receive from the food waste online community? <i>How do you gather this knowledge? Where</i></p>	RQ 2 and 3	-Gather insights into their knowledge sharing activities, and in particular what/how/why they

		<i>do you find it? Which sources are valuable to you? How do you recognise what sources are valuable? Give an example to the above</i>		are gathering knowledge -Understand if gathering information empowers them -Possible insight into how all constructs inter-relate
	2 min	In your opinion what makes the food waste online community successful or not, to share knowledge? <i>Why and how? Examples?</i>		
	3 min	How often do you tweet within the food waste online communities? <i>Why is this? Can you give an examples of those tweets? Do you wish you tweeted more, any barriers to not tweeting so much in the online community?</i>	RQ 2 and 3	- It addresses RQ 1 as the probe question ‘why’ can give insights into what participatory benefits drive their knowledge sharing. -It addresses RQ 2 because this can give insights into if they are active (demonstrating consumer empowerment about the context) or not. - The probing question ‘what type

				of tweets would you share', links all the constructs for an insight into RQ 3
	3 min	What type of tweets do you share most often within the food waste online communities? <i>E.g. retweet, retweet with comment, a tweet you created? And why? With particular people?</i>	RQ 2	-Understand the user's type of knowledge sharing and their empowerment level. The more empowered they are likely to share their own opinions with a retweet for instance.
	3 min	Do you think the tweets you share within the food waste online communities influence your followers on Twitter? <i>Can you give an example of how? Do you want to influence anyone in particular?</i>	RQ 2	-Understand their level of consumer empowerment
	3 min	What type of knowledge do you share within the food waste online communities? <i>E.g. about the impacts, how you reduce food waste, why do you share this?</i>	RQ 2, 3	-Understand how they share knowledge in particular which aspect -Explore how they demonstrate empowerment, knowledge sharing and drivers when

				<p>sharing knowledge within the community.</p> <p>-From the ‘why’ gather insights into RQ 3.</p>
	3 min	<p>Do you use particular hashtags to share knowledge about food waste? <i>Why, what are these? And how do you use these? Is this is a popular hashtag associated with food waste? Have you ever created your own?</i></p>	RQ 2	<p>-Understand their knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment is linked to using hashtags</p>
	3 min	<p>Do you share knowledge within the food waste online communities about other social media’s that you use? <i>What are these? And why do you share knowledge about them? Do you find that this is a common activity within the online community? Who else is doing this (influencer)?</i></p>	RQ 2, 3	<p>-Understand how they are using Twitter to share knowledge about their interests within the online community.</p> <p>-Explore how they demonstrate empowerment, knowledge sharing and drivers when sharing knowledge within the community.</p> <p>-Insight into why, which addresses all</p>

				three constructs relationship in RQ 3
Total of minutes	35 minutes			

Concluding questions (6 min)

Lastly, I would like to ask about your reflections on the questions I've asked, in regards to knowledge sharing and gathering knowledge about food waste within an online community within Twitter.

Concluding questions	Time	Question	RQ
	2 min	In your opinion, what are the positive and negatives of sharing/gathering information within social media? <i>Compared to other online communication channels?</i> <i>What about Twitter in particular? Why, Example?</i>	Insight into further possibilities of the study, and broader context.
	2 min	How in an ideal world would you like to receive and send views/information/knowledge about food waste? <i>Why, give examples, what social media platform would you use? Is this already available? Do you know others have the same views, or spoken about it online or with you?</i>	
	2 min	Is there anything else you would like to add to what we have talked about today?	

Total time	6 min
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Thank you so much for your participation.

Total overall minutes of pilot interview – 73minutes (1 hr, 13 minutes)

Appendix 6: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Introduction section

Hello, my name is Rebecca Beech and I am a PhD student within the Centre for Business in Society at Coventry University. My project aims to explore knowledge sharing about green clothing consumption within online communities in Twitter. Today I will be conducting an informal discussion with you which will last for an hour, questions are related to the #sustainablefashion online community that you have commented within using this hashtag.

With your consent this interview will be recorded and later transcribed. All data will comply with the University's ethics regulation, which means the transcript will be anonymised (you will not be identified), data is securely stored, and no results can be traced back to you. Also, you can withdraw from the study at any point.

Please can you confirm, by answering YES, that you have read and understood the information provided in the Participant Information Sheet and that you consent to take part in the research project.

Ice breaker

Firstly, for the purpose of the interview, please can you say your name and job title.

Concerns towards green clothing consumption (4 min)

To start off, I would like to talk about your opinions and concerns regarding sustainable clothing.

Theme	Time	Sub-theme <i>Probing questions in italics</i>	Research question	Theme
Green clothing consumption	2 min	What got you interested in sustainable clothing? <i>Have you always had these interests or did your interests grow from reading/hearing about it? Why? Any particular person or group of people influence you to get interested?</i>	Address my theoretical underpinning – ecological citizenship	Gives understanding to context and theory. Sets the scene for further questions.
	2 min	What are your concerns about sustainable clothing and the negative reasons of clothing not being sustainable? <i>Why and examples, because of your concerns – do you actively make clothing sustainable? How?</i>		
Total of minutes	4 minutes			

Social media use (8 min)

Thank you. I would now like to ask you about how you use social media platforms to share and gather information about sustainable clothing.

Theme	Time	Sub-theme <i>Probing questions in italics</i>	Research question
Social media	2 min	What social media platforms do you use to share knowledge about sustainable clothing? <i>What are these? Why? What are the pros/cons of using social media to</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain an understanding about their use of

		<i>gather/share knowledge about sustainable clothing? Where do you find the knowledge from to share? Give examples of the type of knowledge shared on these platforms about sustainable clothing?</i>	<p>social media, and the various facets impacting their use of Twitter and how they share knowledge?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address RQ 1 and 2, what drives them to share the knowledge on different platforms. And how they are empowered to share knowledge.
	2 min	<i>What social media platforms do you use to gather knowledge about sustainable clothing? What are these? Why? What are the pros/cons of using social media to gather/share knowledge about sustainable clothing? How did you locate/find these platforms about sustainable clothing? Give examples of the type of gathered knowledge from these platforms about sustainable clothing?</i>	
	2 min	<i>Have you created your own social media platform in relation to sustainable fashion or related area? What is this? Why? When did you do this? Who is in it? What type of knowledge do you share/gather from this? Does this platform linked to other social media platforms, why, have you linked them?</i>	
	2 min	<i>Do you use these social media platforms differently when sharing/gathering knowledge about sustainable clothing? Give examples on how you use these? How and why? Is there a social media platform you use more/least than others? Do you share more on one, and gather more on</i>	

		<i>one? How are the social media platform you use different? Give examples.</i>	
Total of minutes	8 minutes		

Participant's use of Twitter when sharing/gathering knowledge about sustainable clothing (12 min)

I would now like to ask you how you use social media - in particular Twitter, and how you got interested in using Twitter to gather and share knowledge about sustainable clothing.

Theme	Time	Sub-theme <i>Probing questions in italics</i>	Research question	Why it addresses the research question
Their profile	2 min	How long have you had Twitter? <i>Why did you create it? Have you become more active recently, or when you first created it? Give examples, and why. Did you create the Twitter page for sustainable fashion or related interests? Why, give examples.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain an understanding about the individual and their use of Twitter. Understand who the influencers are within the 	

	2 min	When you first created Twitter, what were the ‘interests’ you stated? <i>Why did you choose these? What did it result in, suggested followers etc.? Were these related to sustainable clothing?</i>	<p>#sustainablefashion online community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By asking when they created the Twitter account, can see how empowered they have become from a short/long time. And see how active they have been. <p>Addressing RQ 2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By asking about the ‘interests’, can see if they are empowered to find out information about knowledge sharing, addressing RQ 2. What the Tweeters aspire to do by using Twitter. Give insight into their knowledge sharing and how they are empowered from their interests which address RQ 2.
	2 min	On Twitter are you a member of any ‘lists’ related to sustainable clothing? <i>What are these? Why? If not, would you like to be part of them?</i>	
	2 min	Who are the type of people you follow on Twitter? <i>Are they mostly related to sustainable fashion? Who are they, why? If a follower tweets another Twitter handle in their tweet, would you check out that person or follow them? Have you, why?</i>	
	2 min	Who are the predominant people you follow on Twitter related to sustainable clothing? <i>Who are they? Why did you follow them? How long have you been following them? Do they influence you? Do they follow you? Do you tweet with these people? Why? Give examples.</i>	
	2min	When sharing tweets about sustainable clothing, do you want your followers to listen and act to your tweets? <i>Why? How might you</i>	

		<i>think it would influence them?</i> <i>Why? If not, why not? What type of people follow you? Give examples when this has/hasn't happened? Do you have more followers than who you follow, or vice versa? Why do you think this is? Do you want a lot of followers? Why?</i>	
Total of minutes	12 minutes		

Consumer empowerment (12 min)

I would now like to ask you about your role within online communities in particular the #sustainablefashion online community, when sharing or gathering knowledge about sustainable clothing.

Theme	Time	Sub-theme <i>Probing questions in italics</i>	Research question
Consumer empowerment	2 min	Are you part of any hashtags or lists within Twitter about sustainable clothing or related issues? <i>Example? Why do you use that hashtag/list? How did you get on the list? Do you use them both often? Who also uses these hashtags/lists?</i>	Understand if they are part of an online community. Stepping stone to next questions.
	2 min	Do you tweet other hashtags when using	-Address RQ 1 and 2.

		<p>#sustainablefashion?</p> <p><i>Examples? Why? Do you do this regularly? Is there a particular hashtag you use a lot alongside #sustainablefashion? Have others influenced you to use this? What other hashtags are you aware of that are used alongside #sustainablefashion? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i></p>	<p>-Give insight into how the user shares knowledge and is important differently/or not when tweeting a hashtag within #sustainablefashion.</p> <p>-By asking why with examples, can highlight what participatory benefits are driving their knowledge sharing.</p>
	2 min	<p>How did you find the people/platforms that you follow within #sustainablefashion online community? <i>Who/what are they? Are they influencers? Do they follow you? Do you have regular conversations/interactivity ? Pros/cons of this? Has the hashtag expanded your online network within Twitter? Can you give examples for other online</i></p>	

		<i>communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i>		
	3 min	<i>Do you feel part of the #sustainablefashion online community? Example of online community is a hashtag, Give an example of these online communities, how long have you been in it? how do you feel you belong? Have you broadened your network from #sustainablefashion or related online communities? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i>	RQ 2	-Understand their empowerment within the online community -The example will give an insight into how the knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment relate.
	3 min	<i>How would you describe your role within the #sustainablefashion online community? Example? Are you an active tweeter or not within the online community? Do you share a lot of the information? Do you class yourself as an influencer? Do you</i>	RQ 2	-Understand their empowerment within the online community

		<p><i>want to influence your followers? Are there roles within the online community that appeal to you? If so, what, why? What role do you aspire to be? Why? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i></p>		
Total of minutes	12 minutes			

Knowledge sharing (35 min)

Thank you. I would now, like to ask you some questions about how you share knowledge when tweeting within the #sustainablefashion online community.

Theme	Time	Sub-theme <i>Probing questions in italics</i>	Research question	Theme
Knowledge sharing	2 min	What is your main purpose of using the #sustainablefashion? <i>Why and how, example of this, Why do you choose to share your views? What sources of information are the best? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i>	RQ 1	- Give initial insight into why they use the online community -Initial understanding about what drives their knowledge sharing and how. And about what empowers them to use it.
	15 min	What is the reason you share information within the #sustainablefashion online community? <u>Hedonic</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have fun/enjoy sharing knowledge? <i>If so, why and give an example? Is it with particular people? Is this a common reason why you/everyone shares knowledge within this online community?</i> <u>Social</u>	RQ 1	-The overall question to gather insights into what participatory benefits are driving their knowledge sharing within the online community. -The bullet point questions are sub-questions with probing questions. -These address each variable within the

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you share knowledge because you trust others within the #sustainablefashion online community? <i>Why? Do you trust anybody in particular - because they are an influencer or been in the online community a long time? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i> • Do you share personal experiences within the #sustainablefashion online community? <i>Give examples? Is it with particular people? Is this a common reason why everyone shares knowledge within this online community? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i> <p><u>Psychological</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel like you belong to the #sustainablefashion online community? <i>Give</i> 		participatory benefit construct
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		<p><i>examples? Do you feel you would like to belong more, and how could you do this? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From sharing knowledge within the #sustainablefashion online community, have you expanded your networks online from doing so? <i>Give example, how has this made you feel? What kind of networks? Who are the relationships with? Are they influencers? Have you met others with food waste interests through these relationships? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i> <p><u>Functional</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you share knowledge about the actions you have done to make clothing sustainable, within the #sustainablefashion online community? <i>Give</i> 		
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		<p><i>examples, and why? Do you upload pictures? Is this a regular thing you do? Did anyone influence you to do this? Do you feel this encourages more discussion? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you ask for information on how make clothing more sustainable within the #sustainablefashion online community? <i>Why, how has this helped you? Who helps you? When asking for help, do you receive it? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i> 		
	2 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of knowledge do you want to seek/receive from the #sustainablefashion online community? <i>How do you gather this knowledge? Where do you find it? Which sources are valuable to you? How do you recognise what sources are</i> 	RQ 2 and 3	<p>-Gather insights into their knowledge sharing activities, and in particular what/how/why they are gathering knowledge</p> <p>-Understand if gathering</p>

		<i>valuable? Give an example to the above. Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i>		information empowers them -Possible insight into how all constructs inter-relate
	2 min	In your opinion what makes the #sustainablefashion successful or not, to share knowledge? <i>Why and how? Examples? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i>		
	3 min	How often do you tweet within the #sustainablefashion? <i>Why is this? Can you give an examples of those tweets? Do you wish you tweeted more, any barriers to not tweeting so much in the online community? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i>	RQ 2 and 3	- It addresses RQ 1 as the probe question ‘why’ can give insights into what participatory benefits drive their knowledge sharing. -It addresses RQ 2 because this can give insights into if they are active (demonstrating consumer empowerment about the context) or not. - The probing question ‘what type of tweets would you

				share', links all the constructs for an insight into RQ 3
	3 min	What type of tweets do you share most often within the #sustainablefashion online community? <i>E.g. retweet, retweet with comment, a tweet you created? And why? With particular people? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i>	RQ 2	-Understand the user's type of knowledge sharing and their empowerment level. The more empowered they are likely to share their own opinions with a retweet for instance.
	3 min	Do you think the tweets you share within the #sustainablefashion online community, influence your followers on Twitter? <i>Can you give an example of how? Do you want to influence anyone in particular? Would you delete a tweet if you had no response from your followers? Why, example? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i>	RQ 2	-Understand their level of consumer empowerment
	3 min	What type of knowledge do you share within the #sustainablefashion online community? <i>E.g. about the</i>	RQ 2, 3	-Understand how they share knowledge in

		<i>impacts, how you make your clothes more sustainable, why do you share this? Can you give examples for other online communities your involved within, in Twitter?</i>		<p>particular which aspect</p> <p>-Explore how they demonstrate empowerment, knowledge sharing and drivers when sharing knowledge within the community.</p> <p>-From the ‘why’ gather insights into RQ 3.</p>
	3 min	<p>Do you use particular hashtags to share knowledge about sustainable clothing? <i>Why, what are these? And how do you use these? Is there a popular hashtag associated with sustainable clothing? Have you ever created your own?</i></p>	RQ 2	<p>-Understand their knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment is linked to using hashtags</p>
	3 min	<p>Do you share knowledge within the #sustainablefashion online community, about other social media’s that you use? <i>What are these? And why do you share knowledge about them? Do you find that this is a common activity within the</i></p>	RQ 2, 3	<p>-Understand how they are using Twitter to share knowledge about their interests within the online community.</p> <p>-Explore how they demonstrate</p>

		<i>online community? Who else is doing this (influencer)?</i>		empowerment, knowledge sharing and drivers when sharing knowledge within the community. -Insight into why, which addresses all three constructs relationship in RQ 3
Total of minutes	35 minutes			

Concluding questions (6 min)

Lastly, I would like to ask about your reflections on the questions I've asked, in regards to knowledge sharing and gathering knowledge about sustainable clothing within an online community within Twitter.

Concluding questions	Time	Question	RQ
	2 min	In your opinion, what are the positive and negatives of sharing/gathering information within social media? <i>Compared to other online communication channels?</i> <i>What about Twitter in particular? Why, Example?</i>	Insight into further possibilities of the study, and broader context.
	2 min	How in an ideal world would you like to receive and send views/information/knowledge	

		about sustainable clothing? <i>Why, give examples, what social media platform would you use? Is this already available? Do you know others have the same views, or spoken about it online or with you?</i>	
	2 min	Is there anything else you would like to add to what we have talked about today?	
Total time	6 min		

Thank you so much for your participation.

Total overall minutes of pilot interview – 79 minutes (1 hr, 19 minutes)

[For my understanding of how long it will take]

Appendix 7: 5 Step Procedure of this Study Conducting the YouTube Observations prior to the Focus Groups

Order of the procedure	Explanation of the procedure
1	<p><u>Choosing the YouTube videos</u></p> <p>This study employed an inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that the YouTube vloggers and videos were appropriate. As a result of the criteria, four vloggers and eight videos were unsuitable. The table below illustrates the inclusion and exclusion criteria that this study used to select the vloggers and YouTube videos, alongside a justification of why these criteria were applied.</p>

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Justification
The YouTube vlogger should have more than 60,000 subscribers to their YouTube account.	The YouTube vlogger cannot have fewer than 60,000 subscribers to their account	After analysing potential videos that fit the inclusive criteria, the medium of subscribers to a vloggers account was 60,000. As a result of using an active vlogger, this study is able to observe videos that have a potentially large audience.
The YouTube vlogger has additional social media platforms. For example, Instagram, a blog, Facebook,	The YouTube vlogger does not have expansive community that spans other social media accounts.	It is important that this study observes videos created by vloggers who have an influence within the green clothing

Twitter, Pinterest and Patreon.		community. Thus, this study observes videos that have a mass following.
The YouTube video content is about green clothing.	The video content cannot entail additional green related contexts, such as, food or home accessories.	This study's context is green clothing and the purpose of the observation is to gain a better understanding into users' terminology of the context. Thus, it is important that YouTube videos used within the initial observation only discuss green clothing.
YouTube video duration is between 5 -11 minutes.	YouTube video duration is less than 5 minutes or more than 11 minutes.	Videos should be consistent in length and not too long as they will be used as stimuli during the focus groups. A duration of 5-11 minutes was the medium of the majority of the videos chosen.
Each video would have 30+ comment.	The video could not have fewer than 29 comments.	The majority of the videos that aligned with the criteria discussed, demonstrated an average of 30 comments or more per video. Thus, the researcher chose the medium comment count

		as a criterion to select the videos.
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2	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Discarding YouTube videos</u></p> <p>Subsequent to the criteria, the research discounted 8 videos from four YouTube vloggers. The vloggers and videos are presented within the table below.</p>
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<u>YouTube channel</u>	<u>Chosen video name</u>	<u>Video URL</u>
Annika Victoria	The greatest thrift haul ever Part 1	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76gtYjeFA1E
	The greatest thrift haul ever Part 2	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VLiayL2nug
	14 top thrifting tips	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikmSm0qLPXE
	8 sewing essentials you can't live without	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piVfogk6OJg&list=PLc7j7scDMOaeWR6ZejHyI8b_OMoaPGGf_&index=3
With Wendy	Sewing for beginners (machine review, shopping tips, basic supplies, and how to start!)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a09Ex3a4sEM
	How to shop for fabric (terminology and shopping tips!)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruRhkpys83o
	How to make a party dress (halter dress style)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zg_2QIPwO34
Gittermary Johansen	How to avoid green washing	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aw-fEyc2BGI

	My Zero Waste Laundry Routine	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVQUENIGWGQ
	How to be a conscious consumer the Zero Waste lifestyle	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvl4T99pN5o
Alli Cherry	Flea market and vintage finds	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LCojJ2XolU&index=8&list=PLCYY8FQ7hy6QVgVGZazM1c2ek83lReC03
	Flea market Collab with My Green Closet	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pF9QC0FzDrc&index=1&list=PLCYY8FQ7hy6QVgVGZazM1c2ek83lReC03

3	<p><u>Selecting suitable vloggers and YouTube videos</u></p> <p>As a result of the criteria, four YouTube videos from two vloggers were observed. The videos are shown below in Table.</p>
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YouTube channel	Number of subscribers to the channel account	Other social media platforms owned by the vlogger	Chosen video name	Video URL	Duration of video	Number of comments per video
My Green Closet	79.9K	Instagram, blog, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest	Affordable sustainable fashion Conscious shopping on a budget	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pz6RxOsA088	5 minutes and 8 seconds	83

		and Patreon.	How to thrift Second hand shopping tips and alternative	https://www .youtube.co m/watch?v= FJHd81IHH Gg	9 minutes 24 seconds	153
Use less	163K	Instagram, blog, Pinterest and Patreon.	Handel with care – make your clothes live longer – top 6 hacks!	https://www .youtube.co m/watch?v= 4PVz8Td- fig	7 minutes 34 seconds	31
			Learn to consume less with the 'buyerarchy of needs'	https://www .youtube.co m/watch?v= pG4AAL9G S9A	10 minutes 37 seconds	47

4	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Importing the content from YouTube</u></p> <p>The researcher used NVivo 11's tool NCapture to import the videos and comments into NVivo 11, the tool enabled the researcher to transcribe the YouTube videos and commence observations (QSR, 2019). Other tools were considered when choosing an appropriate way to retrieve online data, the additional tools included: scraper, Netlytic, Webometric Analyst and NodeXL. However, due to the researcher's current training in NVivo 11 this meant that s/he was equipped to use the software and perform the task of importing web content. Additionally, the researcher undertook extensive research into the most reliable and credible tool to perform the task, for instance, by exploring online forums and asking academic colleagues</p>
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	about the best tool to use. NVivo 11's NCapture proved to be the most suitable.
5	<u>Observing the data</u> The researcher observed the data that was captured via NVivo 11

Appendix 8: The Purpose of the YouTube Observations

Purpose	Rationale
YouTube was chosen as a social media platform to conduct initial observations.	YouTube is a popular platform that has a global reach (YouTube, 2017) and the content allows the researcher to gather interesting information related to public sentiment and opinion (Ahmad et al., 2017).
	The platform has been used to explore the ensuing phenomena related to this study, this includes, clothing (Keats, 2012), consumer behaviour related to current culture (Burgess and Green, 2018; Snickars and Vonderau, 2009; Burgess and Green, 2009) and sustainability (Manetti and Bellucci, 2016). In particular, Smith et al. (2012: 102) label YouTube as a "content community" that is mainly created by consumers, thus, aligning with this study's intention to gather an initial understanding of consumers' knowledge sharing which entails content creation.
The observations informed the focus group guides.	The rationale of using the observations was to, understand consumers' language



	and terminology used in regards to green clothing, and how consumers share knowledge with other users and the vlogger.
	To inform the focus group guide with suitable terminology and provide thought-provoking stimuli to be used during the two focus groups.

Appendix 9: How the YouTube Observations Informed the Focus Groups' Guide – Stimuli

Stimuli used	Rationale
<u>Phase 1 –</u> The focus groups showed the selected videos shown in Appendix 7, to the participants.	The four suitable videos from the two YouTube vloggers, were shown to the participants during both of the focus groups. In order to encourage discussion about the context of this study, green clothing.
<u>Phase 2 –</u> Screenshots of comments from two videos that met the criteria.	The additional stimuli included screenshots of comments from the following two videos, these are, My Green Closet's 'Affordable sustainable fashion Conscious shopping on a budget' and Use Less's 'Learn to consume less with the buyerarchy of needs'. Both videos were chosen because the comments provided stimulating content for the stimuli. The researcher blanked out the YouTube users' names who commented on the post, to comply with Coventry University's Ethics. The researcher also blanked out the replies to certain comments to encourage the participants to share their response to a comment. The purpose of the stimuli was to encourage discussion (Carey

	and Asbury, 2016; Clifford et al., 2012), and gain a deeper understanding into how participants would share knowledge on social media and comprehend their drive to exchange information. Both stimuli are shown within Appendices 10 and 11.
<u>Phase 3 –</u> Screenshots of comments from two videos that met the criteria.	Subsequent, to a group discussion regarding the participants response to the comments, the researcher showed the actual responses that the YouTube users stated. In order to present alternative responses and motivations to distribute knowledge. These are shown below in Appendices 12 and 13.

Appendix 10: Focus Group Stimuli: Screenshots from My Green Closet's Video (hidden comments)

  3 months ago
When I made the decision to pursue more ethical options for my clothes, I realized that I really didn't need to be buying clothes. At all. When you cut out the option to shop mall brands, it becomes apparent pretty quickly if the extra effort needed to research the clothes you're buying really matches up with how much you need a certain clothing item.

Reply • 44    




[Hide replies](#) ^







My Green Closet 3 months ago

That's such a great point!

Reply • 3  

  3 months ago


Reply •  

  3 months ago
I think you should make a video on online second hand shops! Very little people know about them and I get almost all my clothing from there because I can find new and gently used items that were just going to be thrown away!







Reply • 7  


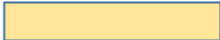


[Hide replies](#) ^



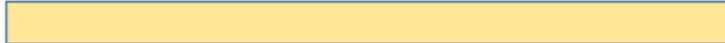


  3 months ago









Reply •  


Appendix 11: Focus Group Stimuli: Screenshots from Use Less's Video (hidden comments)



  8 months ago
Another phrase I love is: use it up, wear it out, make do, or do without.
Reply • 15    
[Hide replies](#) ^






 [Use Less](#) 8 months ago

Reply • 1  

  6 months ago

Reply •  



  9 months ago
This philosophy makes perfect sense to me. Especially buying quality clothes and shoes, that you can wear and wear, repair and alter when needed, and stop the endless consumption. Like  below, I feel sickened by all the fast fashion and the haul every week mentality that is so ubiquitous on you tube. I've had to unsubscribe from many
[Read more](#)
Reply • 35    
[Hide replies](#) ^

 [Use Less](#) 9 months ago

[Read more](#)
Reply • 3  


  8 months ago

Reply • 1  

Appendix 12: Focus Group Stimuli: Screenshots from My Green Closet's Video (revealed comments)

  months ago
When I made the decision to pursue more ethical options for my clothes, I realized that I really didn't need to be buying clothes. At all. When you cut out the option to shop mall brands, it becomes apparent pretty quickly if the extra effort needed to research the clothes you're buying really matches up with how much you need a certain clothing item.


Reply • 44    



[Hide replies](#) ^

 **My Green Closet** 3 months ago
That's such a great point!

Reply • 3  



  3 months ago
 very true!



Reply •  

  3 months ago
I think you should make a video on online second hand shops! Very little people know about them and I get almost all my clothing from there because I can find new and gently used items that were just going to be thrown away!






Reply • 7  


[Hide replies](#) ^






  3 months ago
secondhand sort of goes hand in hand with thrift stores, similar concept except I think secondhand costs a bit more and is usually a little nicer (but not always nicer, I constantly find new with tags stuff at both types of stores).


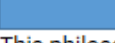




Reply •  





Appendix 13: Focus Group Stimuli: Screenshots from Use Less's Video (revealed comments)



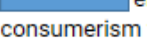


  8 months ago
Another phrase I love is: use it up, wear it out, make do, or do without.
Reply • 15   
[Hide replies](#) ^

 **Use Less** 8 months ago
I love that phrase!!
Reply • 1  

  6 months ago
 this is a quote from the non consumer advocate.
Reply •  

  9 months ago
This philosophy makes perfect sense to me. Especially buying quality clothes and shoes, that you can wear and wear, repair and alter when needed, and stop the endless consumption. Like  below, I feel sickened by all the fast fashion and the haul every week mentality that is so ubiquitous on you tube. I've had to unsubscribe from many
[Read more](#)
Reply • 35   
[Hide replies](#) ^

 **Use Less** 9 months ago
Thank you SO, so much  I always cherish you sweet comments, and I'm glad to hear that you agree with me. I totally agree with both of you about the hauls. Sure they can be inspirational, but I wish more people would try doing "reverse hauls" with things they already have in their closets!
[Read more](#)
Reply • 3  

  8 months ago
 enjoy thrift hauls much more. Unpredictable and fun and second hand consumerism feels better
Reply • 1  

Appendix 14: Claim Form for £20 Amazon Voucher used in both Focus Groups

Respondent information for £20 Amazon voucher claim

Please fill in the form in BLOCK capitals in order to claim your Amazon voucher. You will receive your voucher within 10 working day.

First name:..... Middle name(s):..... Last name:.....

Age: Please circle the age range you fit:

18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75+

Ethnicity: Please circle your ethnicity:

English/White Black/African Asian Multiple ethnic background Other.....

Education: Please tick your highest degree or level of school you completed

Left school without qualifications

☐

GCSE/Standard grade

☐

A-Level/Higher grade

☐

Certificate/Diploma/NVQ

☐

Degree

☐

Post-graduate

☐

Doctorate degree

☐

Other.....

Profession: Please tick your profession

Professional Occupations

☐

Associate Professional and Technical Occupations

☐

Administrative and Secretarial Occupations

☐

Skilled Trades Occupations

☐

Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations

☐

Sales and Customer Service Occupations

☐

Process, Plant and Machine Operatives

☐

Elementary Occupations

☐

Other

Contact: Please write your contact number

Mobile:.....

Home:.....

Please sign to authorise the details you have given are correct, and you have received the £20 Amazon voucher.

Signature:

Initials:.....

Thank you for completing the form

Appendix 15: 'Call for Participants' Leaflet for Focus Group 1 Shared Via Twitter

CALL FOR PARTICIPANT'S

I am a PhD student at Coventry University. I am looking for participants to take part in an informal discussion held at Coventry University. Amazon vouchers worth £20 will be given to attending participants. If you are interested in the words below, please email.

Do you have interests in the following words?

**Social Media, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogging, Vlogging,
Sustainability, Green, Clothing, Green Clothing, Environment?**

If you have answered YES to the above, or require more information please email -

Appendix 16: 'Call for Participants' Leaflet for Focus Group 2 Shared Via Twitter

CALL FOR PARTICIPANT'S

I am a PhD student at Coventry University. I am looking for participants (no Coventry university staff/students required) to take part in an informal discussion held at Coventry University on **Wednesday 15th November 5-7pm**. Amazon vouchers worth £20 will be given to attending participants. If you are interested in the words below, please email.

Do you have interests in the following words?

**Social Media, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogging, Vlogging, Sustainability,
Green, Clothing, Green Clothing, Environment?**

If you have answered YES to the above, or require more information please

Appendix 17: Feedback Form used During Focus Group 1

Understanding the relationship between knowledge sharing within an online community and consumer empowerment: through the lens of ecological citizenship

Focus group guide – further suggestions and feedback

If you have more **suggestions** regarding the questions asked, please can you write them in the box provided below.

If you would like to provide **feedback** on the focus group guide today, please can you write your comments in the box provided below.

Please tick the box if you would like to be involved in future research activities ☐

Please tick this box if you would like to hear about your contribution to this study ☐

Appendix 18: Original and Modified Research Questions for this Study

Original	Modified and current research questions
RQ 1 – How does consumer empowerment and consumers’ knowledge sharing inter-relate within online communities?	RQ 1 – What roles do hedonic, social, functional participatory benefits play within consumers’ knowledge sharing within a green clothing online community?
RQ 2 – To what extent and how do hedonic, social and functional motivators drive consumers’ knowledge sharing within the online community?	RQ 2 – How do consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing inter-relate, within consumers’ narrative of a green clothing online community?
RQ 3 – What is the nature of the relationship between ecological citizenship and consumers’ empowerment within the online community?	RQ 3 – What is the relationship between the participatory benefits in RQ 1, consumer empowerment and knowledge sharing?
RQ 4 - As a result of knowledge sharing online, what is the extent and nature of any changes in attitude and behaviour? In instances of no or little change, why might this be?	

Rationale - The questions were modified to enable this study to have deeper focus to explore the inter-relationship between knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment, and to comprehend how motivations to share knowledge, knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment interplay.

Appendix 19: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Selecting Focus Group Participants

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Justification
The participant is 18 years of age and over, and is not a vulnerable adult.	The participant is below the age of 18 and is a vulnerable adult.	This study complies with Coventry University's Ethics, that requires the participants to be 18 years of age and over and not a vulnerable adult.
The participant has a social media account(s).	The participant does not have a social media account.	The purpose of the focus groups is to explore consumers' knowledge sharing on social media. Thus, it is vital that the participants have a social media account.
The participant deems themselves as a regular user of social media account (sharing comments, posting text or images, and using the private messaging tool).	The participant does not refer to themselves as a regular user of social media.	The purpose of the focus groups is to understand consumers' knowledge sharing activity and empowerment. Empowerment literature evidences that users

		must have been active within an online community for a lengthy amount of time to be empowered. Thus, it is important that the participants consider themselves as a regular user of social media.
The participant is aware of negative impacts on the environment and is conscience of their environmental footprint.	The participant is not aware of negative impacts on the environment and is not conscience of their environmental footprint.	This study intends to explore consumers' knowledge sharing within a green context. Initial observations on YouTube found that consumers are not aware of the term green, instead they use the term environmental. Thus, the researcher asked the prospective participants if they regarded themselves as having an environmental conscience rather than having green concerns.
The participant considers themselves to have concerns and an interest	The participant does not have concerns or an interest towards	This study's context is green clothing and is concerned with consumers who have an

towards sustainability and the environment.	sustainability and the environment.	environmental concern. The YouTube observations found that consumers are not aware of the meaning of the term green, however, terms such as sustainability and environmental are discussed by participants. Thus, the researcher asked the participants if they consider themselves to have concerns and interests towards sustainability and the environment.
The participant is available to participate within a focus group held in Coventry, UK.	The participant is not available to participate within a focus group held in Coventry, UK.	This study intends to undertake a traditional focus group that is face-to-face. Also, complying with Coventry University's Ethics, the focus group must be conducted on University campus, for the safety of the researcher and the participants. Thus, it is important that the

		participant is available to join a focus group held in Coventry, UK.
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Appendix 20: Selection Criteria for the 20 Semi-Structured Interviews

Selection criteria for interviewees	Description of criteria	Challenges or limitations
Membership of the #sustainablefashion online community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewees used #sustainablefashion in a ‘tweet’ or reciprocated within a ‘thread’ which used #sustainablefashion. • Interviewees had an active Twitter page and were not deemed to be a ‘troll’ or ‘bot’. • ‘Bots’ and ‘trolls’ were identified as automated accounts, which undertook the following actions: sponsoring activities, selling products/services, or spamming unsuitable content (Chavoshi et al. 2016). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was difficult to judge how long the interviewees had been a part of the online community. • Some ‘tweets’ that used #sustainablefashion were not directly linked to sustainable fashion (fast fashion impacts on the environment and sustainable alternatives to consumption).

<p>Active membership within the #sustainablefashion online community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospective interviewees were classified as ‘heavier’ or ‘lighter’ users. This was based on their knowledge sharing and reciprocity within the online community. • Heavier users engaged with other users recurrently and habitually shared knowledge. • Lighter users did not engage with other members frequently and did not share knowledge often. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some prospective interviewees did appear to be ‘heavier’ users, but were in fact using an ‘automated system’.
<p>Suitability of ‘tweet’ content.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All ‘tweets’ were in English. • ‘Tweet’ content discussed sustainable fashion, either concerning the negative impacts of clothing/fast fashion or alternative activities (mending, upcycling, swapping, making, charity shopping, DIY, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interesting ‘tweets’ in another language may have been overlooked.

	capsule wardrobe, and buying less).	
Mix of occupation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the online community attracted industry professionals and experts, it was important to ensure a mix of experts and non-experts. This was intended to minimise bias. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Checking of Twitter profiles was essential to understanding the Twitter user's occupation. This was a challenge when prospective interviewees were vague about their occupation on their profile.
Mix of gender.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The online community demonstrated both men and women sharing knowledge about sustainable fashion. Thus, a mix of genders was chosen to ensure the study provided an accurate depiction of engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of members were women; therefore, the majority of participants were women. However, a selection of male participants was included.

Appendix 21: Rationale of Screening Questions Asked to Focus Group Prospective Participants

Purpose	Explanation
The purpose of the screening questions was to conduct another level of validation, to ensure that the participants aligned with this study's criteria.	For instance, participants environmental interest reflects this study's context, and the theoretical concepts which include, online community, consumer empowerment, knowledge sharing and ecological citizenship. Appendix 2 further details when and how the screening questions were asked.
The purpose of asking prospective participants if they use Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, was due to the researcher's exploration into popular social media platforms used by consumers to share knowledge, such as text rather than images.	Text was an important determinant when choosing popular social media mediums, because this study warrants an exploration into users exchange of knowledge and conversations that emerge from engaging. In contrast, to exploring engagement within platforms whose predominant focus is the sharing of photographs.

Appendix 22: Rationale Behind this Study Using Twitter

Reason	Rationale
Appropriate content.	This study chose Twitter as a platform due to the site being a popular medium for consumers to create content and gather information (Smith et al., 2012) and Twitter ‘hashtags’ allow aggregation of consumers’ perspective which forms an online community (Arvidsson and Caliandro, 2015).
Online communities available.	<p>Moorley and Chinn (2014) state that a Twitter ‘hashtag’ enables users to communicate about a particular topic irrespective of geographical location, and by using a ‘hashtag’ it makes topical discussions easy to find. Hence, the Twitter ‘hashtag’ is used by users as an online community.</p> <p>The latter evidences the rationale of this study using Twitter, as the platform advocates consumers to collectively communicate within a space, subsequently, the cumulative engagement forms an online community. Papacharissi and Oliveria (2012) indicate that the ‘hashtag’ tool on Twitter allows consumers to initiate and prolong a ‘hashtag’ online community by associating their ‘tweets’ with a classification, in consideration of this study, an example would be #sustainablefashion</p>
Variety of green clothing related online communities	Subsequent to the initial observations made to identify the chosen online community, the observations demonstrated that there are a variety of green online communities available on Twitter.

Appendix 23: Procedure of the Initial Observations to Choose a Suitable Online Community

Order of the procedure	Explanation of the procedure
1	The initial observation was informed by the preliminary YouTube observation and the focus group findings. For instance, both sets of findings delivered an insight into the terms used within the observation. The terms demonstrated terminology related to green clothing and the process of greening clothing.
2	The researcher developed a list of 269 terms (shown in Appendix 24), the terms were structured around the following overarching concepts, these are, green consumption and greening of consumption. The proposed terms were reviewed by an industry expert, thus, validating the valuable content of the terms to be input into Twitter for observation purposes. Within the table of terms shown in Appendix 24, the researcher indicates alternative phrases that were searched when an original term did not produce tweets. The researcher further states if the alternative phrases did not result in tweets. Thus, the table evidences an exhaustive list of terms and a thorough initial observation process on Twitter carried out by this study's researcher. In order, to identify a green clothing online community to recruit 20 interviewees for the semi-structured interviews.
3	The terms were individually searched within the search toolbar on Twitter which led to observing what 'hashtag' online communities were used by Twitter users. Overall, 18 'hashtag' green clothing online communities were identified (A table of all of the 'hashtag' online communities are shown in Appendix 25). However, using the selection criteria shown in Appendix 20, the #sustainablefashion

	online community was the most appropriate for this study to select interviewees from.
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Appendix 24: List of 269 Search Terms for the Initial Observation to Identity a Green Clothing Online Community

Aspect of green clothing	Search term	Themes	Sub-column (focus group, own observations and literature derived)
Green consumption	Clothing material	Learning about clothing materials	• Natural product
			• Organic cotton
			• Hemp
			• Bamboo
			• Linen
			• Environmental cotton
			• Organic plants in which the clothing is made Update – clothing made from organic plants No results
			• Not using pesticides and stuff Update – not using pesticides
			• Organic Update – organic clothing

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katherine Hamnett – green clothing brand
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not sure of green clothing sources Update – green clothing sources
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High cost Update – high cost of clothing
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have more awareness of ethical practices No search
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion between green and ethical No search
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TENSEL
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher price associated with these garments Update - higher price green clothes No results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise of clothing demand, led to production of manmade fibers Update - manmade fibers
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polyester
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of pesticides

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscious brand
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix clothing materials some green and some manmade Update - Mix clothing materials
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manmade not that bad, if use the garment lots of times Update – use garment lots of times No results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegan brands
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscious wardrobe
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant fibers
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made in Britain
		Green culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green fashion and clothing
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair trade policy
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source of raw materials
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ticking all these Fairtrade boxes No results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources those materials responsively No results

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green clothing
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not heard of green clothing brands Update - green clothing brands
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not part of any green clothing online communities Update – green online communities
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green lifestyle
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green community No results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing impact on the environment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitude behaviour gap
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast fashion
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rise of globalization
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am willing to make sacrifices to protect the environment Update - Sacrifices to protect the environment

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are sacrifices to be made to protect the environment <p>Update - sacrifices to be made to protect the environment</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My actions impact the environment <p>No results</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People's actions do impact on the environment <p>Update - People do impact on the environment</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The condition of the environment affects the quality of life <p>Update - environment affects the quality of life</p> <p>PROBLEM – not capturing data so download as PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My quality of life is affected by the condition of the environment

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humans are severely abusing the environment <p>Update – human are abusing the environment</p> <p>PROBLEM – not capturing data as tweet and PDF. So screen shot in word</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would be willing to reduce my consumption to help protect the environment <p>Update – reduce my consumption</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning about the negative impacts on the environment, I would reduce my consumption <p>Update – learning about impacts on the environment</p> <p>PROBLEM – not capturing data as tweet.</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major political change is necessary

			<p>to protect the natural environment</p> <p>Update – environment major political change</p> <p>Update – environmental political change</p> <p>PROBLEM – not capturing data as tweet.</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major social changes are necessary to protect the natural environment <p>Update – major social change</p> <p>Update – environmental social changes</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anti-pollution laws should be enforced more strongly <p>PROBLEM – not capturing data as tweet. Captured as PDF.</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice on green clothing

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tips on green clothing
		Personal benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A price premium to pay for this Update – - Expensive environmental clothing Data is there but not capturing. So captured through PDF. • Find brands which match your attitudes Update – clothing matches attitude - Attitude clothing • Tended to buy on the characteristic of it looked nice Update – nice clothing (nearly 2000) Nice environmental clothing • Buy clothes in the sale, because they are cheaper Update – sale clothes

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bamboo products are anti-bacterial Update – bamboo antibacterial
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frugal Update frugal clothes
	Green concerns	Strong concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns me that we as a society are not taking it perhaps as seriously as we are Update – serious about the environment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am very concerned about how society is not taking negative impacts on the environment seriously Update – concern about the environment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why are we not seeing enough action being done Update – action environment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are we doing enough and quickly enough

			Update- doing enough environment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a concern and its been at the forefront for a lot of years Update- environment concern for years
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of how peoples clothing is being made Update – how clothing is made
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destroying the planet Update - clothing destroying the planet [1 tweet – not used] Update – destroying the planet
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is polluting the environment in some way Update – clothing is polluting the environment [no tweets] - Clothing pollution
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Its very alarming and very sad

			<p>Update – environment sad [3700 tweets large dataset]</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world is actually one in the end <p>Update – environment the world is one</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared shocking stories with each other about negative impacts on the environment <p>Update – sharing environment</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example of how plastic affects the environment <p>Update – plastic environment [6900]</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed how they loved the water, and wouldn't want the oceans being destroyed <p>Update – clothing ocean</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiling to reduce their consumption to save the oceans Update – buy less ocean
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seemed sad with realisation of impacts on the environment Update – sad impact on environment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing concerns amongst consumers, but not equal to change in behaviours behaviours Update – care environment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude behaviour gap [No results from dataset] Capture by PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a green lifestyle as well as concerns Update – green lifestyle
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eco-friendly Update – eco friendly clothes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable

			Update – sustainable clothes
		Portraying themselves as being green (self-image)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability is important Update – importance sustainable clothes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd rather go the extra mile Update – clothing go the extra mile [1 tweet] -Clothing going the extra mile -Going the extra mile for clothing
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I love nature and all of that Update – love nature clothes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect the environment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to others, made them change their opinions or favour green concerns Update – change environment concerns

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended self can be demonstrated in a social environment Update – I have environmental concerns [no results]
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portraying another self to others [related to above no results]
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extension of self entails of consumers portraying another self to seem green (Belk 2013) [related to above no results]
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online collaborations between YouTube vloggers [unsure]
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Status element portrayed through comment to post videos by vloggers[related to above no results]
		What is needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visiting the factory's Update – clothing factory Appalled by some of the practices

			Update – bad clothing practices [2 tweets]
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values Update – clothing values
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibility Update – clothing visibility [not relevant] - Clothing transparency
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities of the company that is manufacturing those items Update – clothing manufacturer YES And clothing manufacturing YES
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did suggest ethical practices that need to be changed Update – environmental practices change
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion between ethical and green practices

			Update – environmental and ethical
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater awareness of negative ethical issues compared to green (Cho 2015) [similar with above]
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brands need to adopt greener supply chains Update – environmental supply chain
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More fashionable selection of green clothing Updated – fashionable environmental clothes YES PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would prefer garments which are on trend which are green Trendy environmental clothes PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be more transparent

			Update – environmental companies transparency
	Consumption - shopping in Charity shops/eBay	Personal benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good value for money Update – second hand good value
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can save money Update – second hand clothing save money [1 tweet] so capture PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop around Update – second hand shop around
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use different charity shops, high street shops and online Update – online second hand [showing 2] PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop for high-end items at a substantial discount Update – thrift designer cheaper
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save money on luxury item

			Update – thrift luxury cheaper
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buy something that makes you happy Update – clothes happy
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quite good stuff in the charity shops Update – good stuff charity shop YES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good stuff thrift YES
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can get good quality clothes in the charity shops Update – good quality charity shop YES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good quality thrift YES
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Really cheap to buy second hand Update – cheap secondhand YES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cheap thrift YES Cheap charity shop YES
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buying stuff on eBay
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easier to buy clothe on Ebay

			-buying clothes on ebay
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Now buying them through other outlets Update – buy clothes from Large
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prefer to buy clothes through other outlets Same as above
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online shops Update - Buy online clothing shops large
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority bought books from charity shops n/a
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative opinion of charity shops having out dated clothes Update – thrift outdated clothes YES Charityshop outdated clothes no
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bought on eBay for convenience also Update – ebay clothes convenience Ebay convenience YES
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fun to do with family and friends

			<p>Update – thrift fun family and friends PDF</p> <p>Charity shop fun family and friends PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear loose clothing when going to charity shops <p>Update – wear loose clothes thrift PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be creative within the charity shop <p>Update – creative in charity shop</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brand new with tags on <p>Update -thrift brand new clothes PDF</p> <p>-charity shop brand new clothes PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prefer to buy clothes from charity shops with the tags still on <p>Update – charity shop tags</p> <p>- Thrift tags</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thrift stores in areas where the more wealthy people live

			Update – thrift wealthy areas PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer to buy in charity shops which are in more affluent areas Same as above
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snap up designer bargains Update – thrift designer bargains - Charity shop designer bargains
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can get designer clothes at good prices Update – charity shop designer price PDF - Thrift designer price PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entire wardrobe is thrift Update – wardrobe is thrift
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable wardrobe which is all thrift clothing Update – cheap wardrobe is thrift PDF

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheap Update – cheap thrift Update – cheap charity shop
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable Update – affordable charity shop PDF -affordable thrift
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique items Update – unique thrift -unique charity shop
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can buy unique items which no one else has No results – same as above
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save so much money Update – thrift save so much money PDF - Charity shop save so much money PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update my wardrobe Update – thrift update wardrobe - Charity shop update wardrobe
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macklemore (band which sang about second hand clothes)

			Update – Macklemore thirft
		Green concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C-POP (online second hand store) No relevant results – about a Chinese celebrity
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thredUP (online second hand store)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illene (online second hand store) Update – illene fisher PDF not that relevant – showing clothing related tweets
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jess Lee (online second hand store) Not relevant
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletica (green clothing shop) Not relevant
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vinted (online second hand store)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zest and Zeal (online second hand store) Not relevant
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buying handmade items Update – homemade clothing

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local buy-and-sells
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can go to local buy-and-sells alternatively Same as above
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haulalternative PDF
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thrift stores a lot of tweets [3237]
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consignment stores
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flea market Update – flea market clothing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second hand shop Update – second hand shop clothing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second hand clothing Same as above
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barnados
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used clothes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vintage clothing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I take a lot of things to charity shops Update – take alot of things to charity shop
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's an option to consider, buying second hand Update – option buying second hand PDF

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I like the option of buying second hand PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By buying from charity shops it reduces buying from fast fashion (Claudio 2007) Update – thrift reduce fast fashion PDF - Charity shop reduce fast fashion NO RESULTS
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce fast fashion (Claudio 2007) PDF
	Disposal - Recycling clothing	Personal benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting rid of stuff Update – getting rid of stuff clothes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'd never chuck anything away Update - Never chuck clothes away
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace it with a like to like item No relevant results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Viable alternative No results

		Concern and involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If not - you are creating a huge burden on the garbage <p>Update – disposing clothes burden on environment</p> <p>-clothes burden on environment</p> <p>No results</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The society are creating a huge burden if they don't dispose of clothes in a green way <p>Update – dispose of clothes environment</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternatives to the local charity shop <p>Update – dispose of clothes not charity shop</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sell on eBay <p>Update – sell clothes on ebay PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garment being sent to a 3rd world country (Claudio 2007)

			<p>Update – clothes sent to 3rd world country PDF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clothes sent to third world country PDF - Clothes sent to Africa PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving to a charity shop (Claudio 2007) <p>Update – clothes sent to thrift PROBLEM CAPTURING wont go into nvivo tried a few times</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clothes sent to charity shop PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tons of clothing sent to landfill (Claudio 2007) <p>Update – clothes sent to landfill</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donating (Claudio 2007) <p>Update – donating clothes –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clothes donation
Greening of consumption	Alternative to consumption	Swapping - Personal benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear something for a few years and get bored of it

			Update – wear something then get bored PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I’ve brought some clothes for you Update – brought you clothes No relevant results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I like to give other people my old clothes Update - giving clothes away PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for clothes to be shared within family’s Update – share clothes with family
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I like to share old clothes with my family Same as above
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hands clothes on No relevant results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pass them down Update – pass clothes down to family and friends PDF

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give to family members the same height as me <p>No results</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swap with friends and family <p>Update – clothes swapping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clothes swapping family PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swapping is fun <p>Update – clothes swapping is fun</p>
		Swapping – Green concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give to my mom and sister <p>Update – clothes swapping with mom and sister PDF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clothes swapping with mum and sister PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I swap with my mom and sister <p>Same as above</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swapping events <p>Update – clothing swapping events PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trading groups

			Update – clothing trading groups PDF
		Repair - Personal benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hole in my socks Update – repair hole in sock PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Darn the socks Update – repair darn sock PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repair them Update – repair clothes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reparability of clothing
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fix it Update - fix clothing
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I took it to a tailor to make it look a bit better Update – repair clothing at tailor PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By taking it to a tailor it can look better No results
		Repair – green concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repairing garments in of the buyarchy of needs Update – buyarchy of needs

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get rid of smells – using vodka <p>Update – vodka on clothes smell</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We spray some water+vodka on clothes <p>Same as above</p>
		Capsule wardrobe - Personal benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functionality <p>Update – capsule wardrobe functional</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capsule kind of wardrobe <p>Update – capsule wardrobe PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will dip in and out of <p>No results</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It will last me hopefully many many years <p>Update – capsule wardrobe last many years</p> <p>- Update capsule wardrobe last years PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clothes that would last

			Update - Capsule wardrobe clothes that last PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Afford the products and brands that I want Update – capsule wardrobe afford clothes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buy few good products and no fast fashion Update – capsule wardrobe no fast fashion PDF
		Upcycling – personal benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used again Update - upcycle clothes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upcycle clothing Clothes use again Clothing use again
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reusing the garment (Claudio 2007) Update – reuse garment PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The garment can be reused (Claudio 2007)

			Update- garment can be reused PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Something new and personal Update – reusing clothing new and personal Upcycle clothing new and personal - reuse clothes new and personal PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upcycling can create some new and personal Same as above
		Minimisation of clothing – personal benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am not one of those out there shopping every other week Update- do not buy clothes every week PDF - Do not buy clothes often PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I wouldn't buy every week Update – I wouldn't buy clothes often PDF - Minimalist clothing YES

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I'm shopping do I really need it Update – clothes shopping do I really need it PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I shop for certain items Update – shop for certain items clothing PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually ill buy clothing based on the activity that I'm doing Update - buy clothing because of activity
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensible decision Update – minimalist clothing sensible decision - Minimalist clothing sensible No results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By having a limited amount of clothes this is better decision Update – limited amount of clothing
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saving money

			Update – minimalist saving money
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Savvy Update – minimalist clothes savvy
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By having fewer items of clothes, I am savvy Update – few clothing items savvy
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't actually need to do this No results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I buy like key things Update – minimalist buy key things PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key things are more essentials Update – minimalist key essential clothing - Minimalist key clothing PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want to spend a bit more money because it's going to be an investment Update – minimalist investment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the item is going to be an investment I

			<p>will spend more money</p> <p>Update – minimalist spend more money</p> <p>- Minimalist expensive</p> <p>No results</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest more in boots PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boots are an investment PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I look for quality <p>Update - Minimalist quality clothes PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality in clothes when having a limited number of garments <p>Update – quality few clothes PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am not a huge fan of changing through clothes very often <p>Update – not a fan of changing clothes</p> <p>No relevant results</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am not buying it all the time <p>Update- not buying clothes all the time</p>

		Minimisation of clothing – Green concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance with newly bought clothes <p>Update – green clothes and new clothes</p> <p>No relevant results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buy thrift and new clothes PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing shopping habits
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering my green concerns, it has changed my shopping habits <p>Update – green concerns changed shopping habits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental concerns changed shopping habits <p>No results</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing <p>Update – investing in clothes</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality over quantity <p>Update – clothes quality not quantity</p>
		Borrow clothes –	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stealing clothes from friends or family

		personal benefits	Update – stealing clothes from family and friends PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I take clothes from friends and family Update – take clothes from friends and family No relevant results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can transfer clothes for other clothes I like Update – transferring clothes I like No relevant results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transferring clothes No relevant results
	Washing clothing	Concern and involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am try to avoid clothes which need specialist cleaning and I look for clothing which can be machine washed Update – washing clothes impact PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmentally friendly Update – washing clothes environmental PDF

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not clear between ethical and green impacts of washing <p>Update – ethical and environmental washing clothes PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care of the garment has the most detrimental impact on the environment (Bly et al. 2015) <p>Update – care of the garment YES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clothing care [not relevant] - Clothing care environment PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caring for the garment has worst negative impact on the environment (Bly et al. 2015) <p>No results</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care phase (Bly et al. 2015) <p>No relevant results</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited understanding on how to care for their clothing, whilst

			<p>reducing their impact(Bly et al. 2015)</p> <p>Update – how to care for clothing</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less frequent washing (Bly et al. 2015) <p>Update – less clothing washing</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate amount of detergent (Bly et al. 2015) <p>Update – detergent washing clothing PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washing machine is fully loaded (Bly et al. 2015) PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold wash (Bly et al. 2015) <p>Update – washing clothes cold wash PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using hot water and dyers uses up alot of energy and harms your clothes

			Update –washing clothes hot water PDF
	Clothing durability	Green concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jacket which is probably 20 years old Update – clothes lasted long time
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I value this jacket which is probably 20 years old Update – value clothes that last PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I expect it to last for forever Update – clothes should last forever
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When I buy clothes, I expect the piece to last Update – expect the clothing to last
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps going on and on and on Update - Clothes keeps wearing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep wearing same clothing
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hard wearing

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear it till it's pretty worn out (Claudio 2007)
		Personal benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I expect them to last Update – except my clothes to last
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I expect it to last for forever Update - expect my clothes to last forever
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Last a good amount of time Update – clothes last a good amount time PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going to last me Update – clothes are going to last me
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would last forever Update – clothes last forever
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longevity Update – clothes longevity
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lasted rather well Update – clothes lasted well
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's got its money's worth Update – clothes got its moneys worth

			No results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clothes that last longer so you don't have to buy more clothes No results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By clothes to last longer, so I don't have to buy more No results
		Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You wouldn't believe the dress that I have bought maybe 7/8 years back Update – dress lasted years PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good feeling to have a dress this long Update – good to have a dress that long
			No relevant results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I cherish it because it's still that good Update – cherish old clothes PDF
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Update – quality of clothes

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> But with jeans and jumpers I tend to spend a little bit more because they tend to last <p>Update – spend more on clothes last longer</p> <p>PDF</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I spend more on investment pieces of clothes <p>Update – investment piece spend more</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I tend to pay for something that lasts rather than replacing stuff <p>Update – spend more rather than replace</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I prefer to spend more if it lasts longer <p>Update – spend more clothes lasts longer</p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jeans last for about 3 years <p>Update – jeans last a long time</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around the value that you place on them Update – clothes value
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I value my clothes Update – I love my clothes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I actually have a jacket that I love wearing. I've had it for 4 years, it's a leather jacket Update – I love wearing my old clothes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I love my jacket that I have had for 4 years Same as above
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-image – the garment representing the consumer (Belk 2013) Update – the clothing demonstrates me No relevant results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in conscious brands I like Update – invest in conscious brands PDF

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I love what Elieen Fisher is doing (online second hand store) <p>No relevant results</p>
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Appendix 25: List of all Hashtag Online Communities as a Result of an Initial Observation

Hashtag online communities
#fashion
#circulareconomy
#thrift
#Recycle
#charityshops
#winterwardrobe
#recycling
#sustainablefashion
#usewhatyouhave
#borrow
#swap
#SecondHandFirst
#consciousconsumer
#minimalist
#bycottfashion
#organicclothing
#whomademyclothes
#slowfashion



Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:

Rebecca Beech

Project Title:

Impact of new media technologies on green brand consumption

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Low Risk

Date of approval:

17 June 2016

Project Reference Number:

P42617



Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:

Rebecca Beech

Project Title:

Impact of new media technologies on green brand consumption

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Low Risk

Date of approval:

21 November 2016

Project Reference Number:

P47968



Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:

Rebecca Beech

Project Title:

Impact of new media technology on green brand consumption

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Low Risk

Date of approval:

29 June 2017

Project Reference Number:

P48378



Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:

Rebecca Beech

Project Title:

Understanding knowledge sharing and consumer empowerment within online communities: through the lens of ecological citizenship

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Low Risk

Date of approval:

31 August 2017

Project Reference Number:

P60984



Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:

Rebecca Beech

Project Title:

Understanding knowledge sharing within online communities and consumer empowerment: through the lens of ecological citizenship

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Medium Risk

Date of approval:

08 November 2017

Project Reference Number:

P62143



Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:

Rebecca Beech

Project Title:

Understanding knowledge sharing within online communities and consumer empowerment: through the lens of ecological citizenship

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Medium Risk

Date of approval:

19 March 2018

Project Reference Number:

P60815



Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:

Rebecca Beech

Project Title:

Understanding knowledge sharing within online communities

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Low Risk

Date of approval:

04 November 2018

Project Reference Number:

P77708



Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:

Rebecca Beech

Project Title:

Understanding knowledge sharing within online communities in Twitter: Within the context of green clothing consumption

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Medium Risk

Date of approval:

11 February 2019

Project Reference Number:

P86977

Appendix 27: Focus Group 'Participant Information Form'

Understanding Knowledge Sharing within Online Communities in Twitter: Within the Context of Green Clothing Consumption

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in research on knowledge sharing within online communities. Rebecca Beech, PhD Student at Coventry University is leading this research. Before you decide to take part, it is important you understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to understand the drivers behind consumer's knowledge sharing about green clothing consumption within an online community on Twitter. Also, to gain insights into consumers' empowerment within the online community, and the inter-relationship with their knowledge sharing. The study invites you to participate within a focus group, the group discussion will be audio recorded using the researcher's Dictaphone.

Why have I been chosen to take part?

For the purpose of the study, I intend to conduct a focus group with you and five other participants, as you are an active user of social media and have concerns or interest towards sustainability.

What are the benefits of taking part?

By sharing your experiences with us, you will be helping Rebecca Beech and Coventry University to better understand consumers' knowledge sharing on Twitter within the context of green clothing consumption.

Are there any risks associated with taking part?

This study has been reviewed and approved through Coventry University's formal research ethics procedure. There are no significant risks associated with participation.

Do I have to take part?

No – it is entirely up to you. If you do decide to take part, please keep this Information Sheet and complete the Informed Consent Form to show that you understand your rights in relation to the research, and that you are happy to participate. Please note down your participant number (which will be given during the informal discussion) and provide this to the lead researcher if you seek to withdraw from the study at a later date. You are free to withdraw your information from the project data set at any time until the data are destroyed on 01/01/2020. You should note that your data may be used in the production of formal research outputs (e.g. journal articles, conference papers, theses and reports) prior to this date and so you are advised to contact the university at the earliest opportunity should you wish to withdraw from the study. To withdraw, please contact the lead researcher (contact details are provided below). Please also contact the Research Support Office [researchproservices.fbl@coventry.ac.uk; telephone +44(0)2477658461] so that your request can be dealt with promptly in the event of the lead researcher's absence. You do not need to give a reason. A decision to withdraw, or not to take part, will not affect you in any way.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

You will be asked a set of informal questions within a group setting, there will be five other participants present. During the focus group, the interviewer will show four YouTube videos to you which are associated to the green clothing, you will be asked on your views towards the videos. Also, a selection of four screenshots of comments taken from the four videos will be shown to you, the researcher will ask you for our response to the comments in the screenshot. The focus group will be recorded using the researcher's personal Dictaphone. The focus group should take one hour to one hour and 30 minutes to complete.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Your data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential. Unless they are fully anonymised in our records, your data will be referred to by a unique participant number rather than by name. If you consent to being audio recorded, all recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. Your data will only be viewed by the researcher/research team. All electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer file at Coventry University. All paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at Coventry University. Your consent information will be kept separately from your responses

in order to minimise risk in the event of a data breach. The lead researcher will take responsibility for data destruction and all collected data will be destroyed on or before 01/01/2020.

Data Protection Rights

Coventry University is a Data Controller for the information you provide. You have the right to access information held about you. Your right of access can be exercised in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. You also have other rights including rights of correction, erasure, objection, and data portability. For more details, including the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office, please visit www.ico.org.uk. Questions, comments and requests about your personal data can also be sent to the University Data Protection Officer - enquiry.ipu@coventry.ac.uk

What will happen with the results of this study?

The results of this study may be summarised in published articles, reports and presentations. Quotes or key findings will always be made anonymous in any formal outputs unless we have your prior and explicit written permission to attribute them to you by name.

Making a Complaint

If you are unhappy with any aspect of this research, please first contact the lead researcher, Rebecca Beech. If you still have concerns and wish to make a formal complaint, please write to Dr. Anvita Kumar:

In your letter please provide information about the research project, specify the name of the researcher and detail the nature of your complaint.

Appendix 28: Pilot Semi-Structured Interview 'Participant Information Form'

Understanding Knowledge Sharing within Online Communities in Twitter: Within the Context of Green Clothing Consumption

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in research on knowledge sharing within online communities. Rebecca Beech, PhD Student at Coventry University is leading this research. Before you decide to take part, it is important you understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to understand the drivers behind consumers' knowledge sharing about green clothing consumption within an online community on Twitter. Also, to gain insights into consumers' empowerment within the online community, and the inter-relationship with their knowledge sharing. The study invites you to participate within a pilot semi-structured interview, the informal discussion will be audio recorded using the researcher's Dictaphone.

Why have I been chosen to take part?

For the purpose of the study, I intend to conduct a pilot semi-structured interview with you. This study chose you as a participant because you have a vast amount of knowledge in regards to conducting interviews, hence, you have the capability to provide constructive feedback on the researchers interviewing skills.

What are the benefits of taking part?

By sharing your experiences with us, you will be helping Rebecca Beech and Coventry University to better understand consumers' knowledge sharing on Twitter within the context of green clothing consumption.

Are there any risks associated with taking part?

This study has been reviewed and approved through Coventry University's formal research ethics procedure. There are no significant risks associated with participation.

Do I have to take part?

No – it is entirely up to you. If you do decide to take part, please keep this Information Sheet and complete the Informed Consent Form to show that you understand your rights in relation to the research, and that you are happy to participate. Please note down your participant number (which will be given during the informal discussion) and provide this to the lead researcher if you seek to withdraw from the study at a later date. You are free to withdraw your information from the project data set at any time until the data are destroyed on 01/01/2020. You should note that your data may be used in the production of formal research outputs (e.g. journal articles, conference papers, theses and reports) prior to this date and so you are advised to contact the university at the earliest opportunity should you wish to withdraw from the study. To withdraw, please contact the lead researcher (contact details are provided below). Please also contact the Research Support Office [researchproservices.fbl@coventry.ac.uk; telephone +44(0)2477658461] so that your request can be dealt with promptly in the event of the lead researcher's absence. You do not need to give a reason. A decision to withdraw, or not to take part, will not affect you in any way.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

You will be asked a set of informal questions within a group setting, there will be five other participants present. During the focus group, the interviewer will show four YouTube videos to you which are associated to the green clothing, you will be asked on your views towards the videos. Also, a selection of four screenshots of comments taken from the four videos will be shown to you, the researcher will ask you for our response to the comments in the screenshot. The focus group will be recorded using the researcher's personal Dictaphone. The focus group should take one hour to one hour and 30 minutes to complete.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Your data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential. Unless they are fully anonymised in our records, your data will be referred to by a unique participant number rather than by name. If you consent to being audio recorded, all recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. Your data will only be viewed by the researcher/research team. All electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer file at Coventry University. All paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at Coventry University. Your consent information will be kept separately from your responses in order to minimise risk in the event of a data breach. The lead researcher will take responsibility for data destruction and all collected data will be destroyed on or before 01/01/2020.

Data Protection Rights

Coventry University is a Data Controller for the information you provide. You have the right to access information held about you. Your right of access can be exercised in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. You also have other rights including rights of correction, erasure, objection, and data portability. For more details, including the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office, please visit www.ico.org.uk. Questions, comments and requests about your personal data can also be sent to the University Data Protection Officer - enquiry.ipu@coventry.ac.uk

What will happen with the results of this study?

The results of this study may be summarised in published articles, reports and presentations. Quotes or key findings will always be made anonymous in any formal outputs unless we have your prior and explicit written permission to attribute them to you by name.

Making a Complaint

If you are unhappy with any aspect of this research, please first contact the lead researcher, Rebecca Beech. If you still have concerns and wish to make a formal complaint, please write to Dr. Anvita Kumar:

In your letter please provide information about the research project, specify the name of the researcher and detail the nature of your complaint.

Appendix 29: Semi-Structured Interview 'Participant Information Form'

Understanding Knowledge Sharing within Online Communities in Twitter: Within the Context of Green Clothing Consumption

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in research on knowledge sharing within online communities. Rebecca Beech, PhD Student at Coventry University is leading this research. Before you decide to take part, it is important you understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to understand the drivers behind consumer's knowledge sharing about green clothing consumption within an online community on Twitter. Also, to gain insights into consumers consumer empowerment within the online community, and the inter-relationship with their knowledge sharing.

The informal discussion will be undertaken with you via Skype. The interview will be audio recorded using the researchers Dictaphone.

Why have I been chosen to take part?

For the purpose of the study, I intend to conduct an informal discussion with you, as you tweet within the #sustainablefashion online community within Twitter. You have been chosen as you have used this hashtag within their tweet.

What are the benefits of taking part?

By sharing your experiences with us, you will be helping Rebecca Beech and Coventry University to better understand the knowledge sharing within Twitter within the context of green clothing consumption.

Are there any risks associated with taking part?

This study has been reviewed and approved through Coventry University's formal research ethics procedure. There are no significant risks associated with participation.

Do I have to take part?

No – it is entirely up to you. If you do decide to take part, please keep this Information Sheet and complete the Informed Consent Form to show that you understand your rights in relation to the research, and that you are happy to participate. Please note down your participant number (which will be given during the informal discussion) and provide this to the lead researcher if you seek to withdraw from the study at a later date. You are free to withdraw your information from the project data set at any time until the data are destroyed on 01/01/2020. You should note that your data may be used in the production of formal research outputs (e.g. journal articles, conference papers, theses and reports) prior to this date and so you are advised to contact the university at the earliest opportunity should you wish to withdraw from the study. To withdraw, please contact the lead researcher (contact details are provided below). Please also contact the Research Support Office [researchproservices.fbl@coventry.ac.uk; telephone +44(0)2477658461] so that your request can be dealt with promptly in the event of the lead researcher's absence. You do not need to give a reason. A decision to withdraw, or not to take part, will not affect you in any way.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

You will be asked a number of questions regarding your conversations within #sustainablefashion within Twitter and why you share knowledge about sustainable clothing. The informal discussion will take place over Skype. Ideally, we would like to audio record your responses (and will require your consent for this), so the location should be in a fairly quiet area. The informal discussion should take around 45 minutes to an hour to complete.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Your data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential. Unless they are fully anonymised in our records, your data will be referred to by a unique participant number rather than by name. If you consent to being audio recorded, all recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. Your data will only be viewed by the researcher/research team. All electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer file at Coventry University. All paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at Coventry University. Your consent information will be kept separately from your responses in order to minimise risk in the event of a data breach. The lead researcher will take

responsibility for data destruction and all collected data will be destroyed on or before 01/01/2020.

Data Protection Rights

Coventry University is a Data Controller for the information you provide. You have the right to access information held about you. Your right of access can be exercised in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. You also have other rights including rights of correction, erasure, objection, and data portability. For more details, including the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office, please visit www.ico.org.uk. Questions, comments and requests about your personal data can also be sent to the University Data Protection Officer - enquiry.ipu@coventry.ac.uk

What will happen with the results of this study?

The results of this study may be summarised in published articles, reports and presentations. Quotes or key findings will always be made anonymous in any formal outputs unless we have your prior and explicit written permission to attribute them to you by name.

Making a Complaint

If you are unhappy with any aspect of this research, please first contact the lead researcher, Rebecca Beech. If you still have concerns and wish to make a formal complaint, please write to Dr. Anvita Kumar:

[Redacted address block containing five lines of text]

In your letter please provide information about the research project, specify the name of the researcher and detail the nature of your complaint.

Appendix 30: Focus Group 'Informed Consent Form'

Participant
No.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM:

Understanding Knowledge Sharing within Online Communities in Twitter: Within the context of Green Clothing Consumption

You are invited to take part in this research study for the purpose of collecting data on knowledge sharing social media.

Before you decide to take part, you must **read the accompanying Participant Information Sheet.**

Please do not hesitate to ask questions if anything is unclear or if you would like more information about any aspect of this research. It is important that you feel able to take the necessary time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

If you are happy to participate, please confirm your consent by circling YES against each of the below statements and then signing and dating the form as participant.

1	I confirm that I have read and understood the <u>Participant Information Sheet</u> for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions	YES	NO
2	I understand my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my data, without giving a reason, by contacting the lead researcher and the Research Support Office <u>at any time</u> until the date specified in the Participant Information Sheet	YES	NO
3	I have noted down my participant number (top left of this Consent Form) which may be required by the lead researcher if I wish to withdraw from the study	YES	NO
4	I understand that all the information I provide will be held securely and treated confidentially	YES	NO
5	I am happy for the information I provide to be used (anonymously) in academic papers and other formal research outputs	YES	NO

6	I am happy for the interview to be <u>audio recorded</u>	YES	NO
7	I agree to take part in the above study	YES	NO

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your help is very much appreciated.

Participant's Name	Date	Signature
Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix 31: Pilot Semi-Structured Interview 'Informed Consent Form'

Participant No.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM:

Understanding Knowledge Sharing within Online Communities in Twitter: Within the context of Green Clothing Consumption

You are invited to take part in this research study for the purpose of collecting data on knowledge sharing social media.

Before you decide to take part, you must **read the accompanying Participant Information Sheet.**

Please do not hesitate to ask questions if anything is unclear or if you would like more information about any aspect of this research. It is important that you feel able to take the necessary time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

If you are happy to participate, please confirm your consent by circling YES against each of the below statements and then signing and dating the form as participant.

1	I confirm that I have read and understood the <u>Participant Information Sheet</u> for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions	YES	NO
2	I understand my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my data, without giving a reason, by contacting the lead researcher and the Research Support Office <u>at any time</u> until the date specified in the Participant Information Sheet	YES	NO
3	I have noted down my participant number (top left of this Consent Form) which may be required by the lead researcher if I wish to withdraw from the study	YES	NO

4	I understand that all the information I provide will be held securely and treated confidentially	YES	NO
5	I am happy for the information I provide to be used (anonymously) in academic papers and other formal research outputs	YES	NO
6	I am happy for the interview to be <u>audio recorded</u>	YES	NO
7	I agree to take part in the above study	YES	NO

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your help is very much appreciated.

Participant's Name	Date	Signature
Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix 32: Thematic Analysis Procedure: for the Two Focus Groups

Steps	Description of the process	This study's thematic analysis procedure
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing the data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.	This study transcribed both focus groups that were recorded using a Dictaphone, and made notes on each focus group transcription in regards to interesting discussions shared by the participants and the indication of emerging themes.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set and collating data relevant to each code.	<p>The ensuing step entailed the researcher developing a close engagement with the data, by listening to the recordings of the two focus groups and reading the transcripts simultaneously. This task meant that the researcher could immerse themselves within the data and remind themselves of the discussions that were spoken.</p> <p>During the second step which entailed the researcher being engrossed within the data, the researcher commenced the collation of the codes emerging from the data set following the subsequent process. For instance, the researcher wrote 20-50 interesting concepts that emerged from each focus group, in doing so, the researcher created a data set of initial codes. The concepts were deemed interesting by the researcher, if the concept was a focal aspect that motivated participants' knowledge sharing, a recurring factor discussed by the</p>

		<p>participants that explained why they were encouraged on social media, and a frequent mentioning of particular green terminology. The initial codes delivered a preliminary understanding to addressing research questions 1 and 2.</p>
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.	<p>The ensuing third step entailed the researcher synthesising the 20-50 concepts written for each of the focus groups into 4-6 key themes that emerged from each focus group. Followed by, further summarising both sets of 4-6 pivotal concepts to 4-6 overall emerging themes. The table in Appendix 33 illustrates the key 4-6 aspects that emerged from each individual focus group, and the five overarching themes that arose.</p> <p>An additional purpose of the focus groups was to gain an understanding into the green terminology used by the participants, to inform the subsequent semi-structured interview guide. The table in Appendix 34 illustrates the key concepts that align within the phases of green clothing. The latter aligns with this study's context³⁸. Appendix 34 is informed by the focus group findings and the initial YouTube observations.</p>
4. Reviewing the themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (step 1)	<p>The fourth step entailed the researcher creating thematic maps of the analysis so far. The purpose of the thematic maps was to</p>

³⁸ The four phases of green clothing are discussed within Section 1.2.

	and the entire data set (step 2), and generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.	undertake another level of analysis to develop a deeper comprehension. The thematic maps in Appendix 35 and 37, illustrate the subsequent level of a deeper analysis of the focus group data. Appendix 36 presents a table of definitions that define the themes that emerged within the thematic map in Appendix 35. Whereas, Appendix 38 shows a table of the definitions that define the themes that emerged within the thematic map in Appendix 37.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells. Subsequently, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.	The fifth step comprised of the researcher’s further analysis which entailed understanding the connections between the factors presented within the thematic maps. Thus, delivering an in-depth comprehension into the ‘why’ and ‘how’ to deliver an initial understanding to research questions 1 and 2.
6. Producing the report	This is the final opportunity for analysis. This step entails, the selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.	The final step encompassed of the researcher writing up the analysis of the two focus groups, that emerged from the former five steps of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guidance to thematic analysis. Chapter 4 discusses the analysis that emerged from the two focus groups.

Appendix 33: The Key emergent Themes Derived from the Analysis of the Two Focus Groups

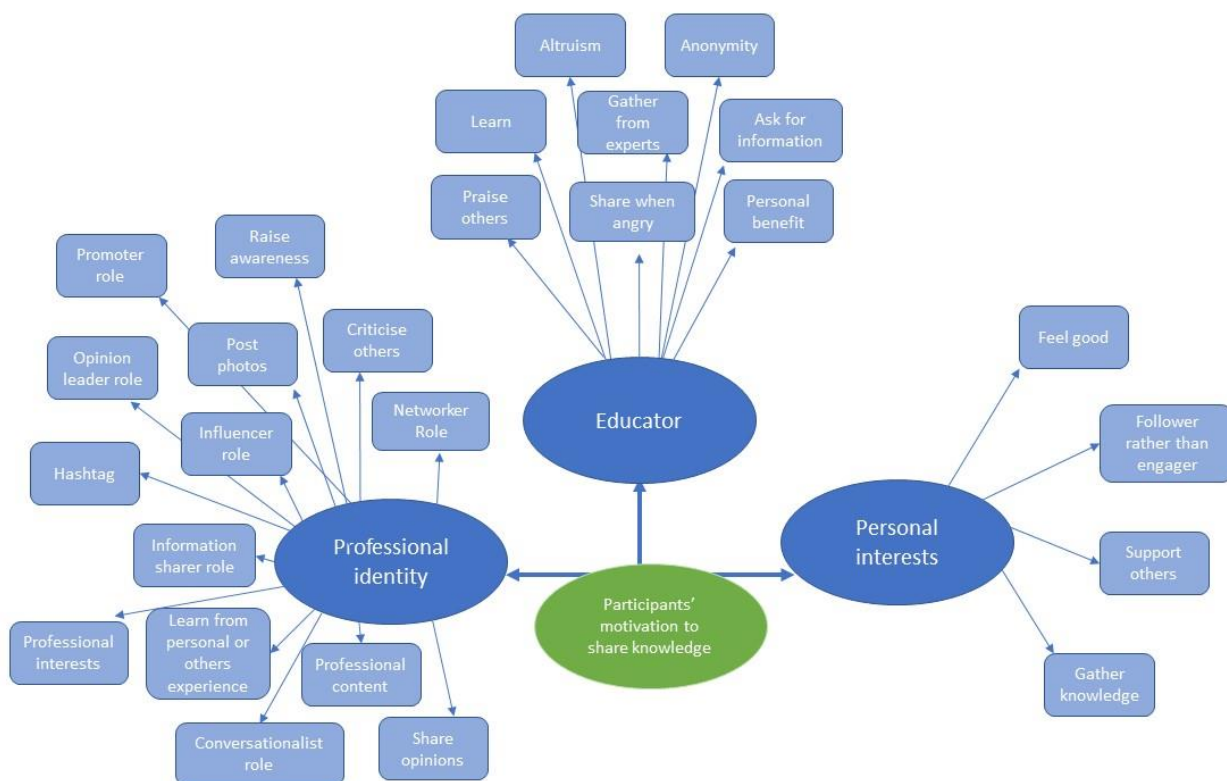
Focus group 1 – key concepts and meaning	Focus group 2 – key concepts and meaning	Overall key themes
<u>Professional</u> – A participant's drive to share knowledge that is related to their job.	<u>Professional</u> – A participant's drive to share knowledge that is related to their job. For instance, the ability to network, progress in her/his job and promote what s/he sell.	<u>Professional</u> – A participant's drive to share knowledge that is related to their job. For instance, the ability to network, progress in her/his job and promote what s/he sell.
<u>Anxiety</u> – A participant's self-awareness towards others' perception of the knowledge s/he shares.	<u>Power from anonymity</u> – A participant is driven to share knowledge because they feel anonymous online, because s/he are behind a screen and no-one can see them.	<u>Twitter tools</u> – The tools on Twitter enable a participant to share knowledge easily. For example, 'retweeting', 'liking' and 140 character-limitation.
<u>Twitter tools</u> – The tools on Twitter enable a participant to share knowledge. For example, 'retweeting', 'liking' and 140 character-limitation.	<u>Gather quality information</u> – A participant intends to gather quality information in order to learn more and is inspired by what s/he reads.	<u>Gathering</u> – A participant intends to gather quality information in order to learn more and is inspired by what s/he reads. Alternatively, a participant is driven to gather knowledge from social media rather than engage with another. This is due to the participant's lack of interest, confidence or expertise

		which leads to gathering information.
<u>Persuading others</u> – A participant wants to influence others thoughts to think differently towards companies that are not green. The participant does this, by sharing her/his personal experiences related to the company.	<u>Twitter tools</u> – The tools on Twitter enable a participant to share knowledge easily. For example, ‘retweeting’, ‘liking’ and 140 character-limitation.	
<u>Gathering</u> – A participant is driven to gather knowledge from social media rather than engage with another. This is due to the participant’s lack of interest, confidence or expertise which leads to gathering information.		

Appendix 34: Table of Green Clothing Terminology Derived from the Analysis of the Two Focus Groups and the Initial YouTube Observation

Phase of green clothing	Green clothing terminology
Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand made • Materials
Consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable green clothes • Balance between brands and second-hand • Online second-hand • Second-hand clothing • Frugal • Capsule wardrobe • Minimisation • Vintage • Quality • Trying second-hand clothes on
Caring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry cleaning • Repair • Storage • Washing • Detergent • Fabric-softeners • Hand-washing • Wear more than once
Disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swap • Re-sell • Repair

Appendix 35: Thematic Map Derived from Both Focus Groups: Participants' Motivation to Share Knowledge on Social Media



Appendix 36: Definition of Aspects that Emerged from the Thematic Map 'Participants' Motivation to Share Knowledge on Social Media'

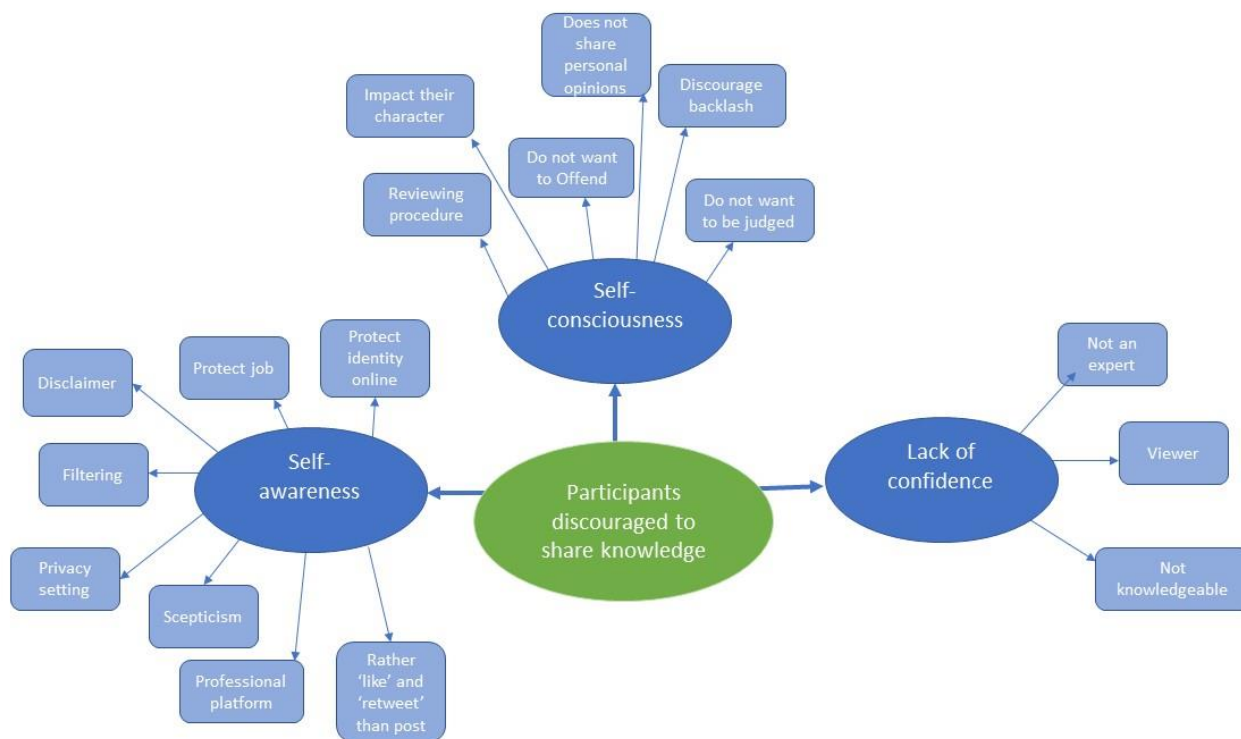
Sub-theme	Emerging aspect	Definition
Professional identity	Seek validation	The user seeks others approval from others on their perceived identity.
	Professional content	The user shares posts which are related to their job. The posts do not contain personal thoughts or comments.
	Professional interests	The user gathers knowledge to gain knowledge associated to their job.
	Share opinions	The user contributes their thoughts which are related to their job.
	Criticise others	The user shares their negative opinions about something or someone.
	Learn from personal or others experience	The user shares knowledge a certain way due learning from others experience or their own.
	Networker role	The user uses a social media platform to connect with others, to talk to people associated with their job.
	Information sharer role	The user gathers knowledge and shares information

		which may be of use to their followers on social media.
	Conversationalist role	The user views conversations within 'hashtags' which s/he is interested in. This encourages the user to contribute within the discussion.
	Influencer role	The user perceives themselves as an influencer, who is knowledgeable and others will listen and act upon what s/he shares.
	Opinion leader role	The user perceives themselves as being knowledgeable and shares their expert opinions on the subject matter.
	Promoter role	The user talks about the products or services that s/he sells on their social media.
	Raise awareness	The user deems themselves knowledgeable and talks about issues related to their job.
	Hashtag	The user describes the benefit of a 'hashtag', this entails that information co-exists in one place online.

	Post photos	The user overcomes the 'tweet' character limitation on Twitter by posting photos.
Educator	Learn	The user gathers knowledge to learn more about something.
	Praise others	The user gathers knowledge and praises the source of the knowledge if s/he 'likes' the content.
	Gather from experts	The user only gathers from perceived experts on social media.
	Ask for information	The user gathers information and often asks the provider of information for extra knowledge on something.
	Personal benefit	The user often gathers knowledge for their own fulfilment, e.g. to gain knowledge for their business or to learn.
	Share when angry	The user will share more information (criticism mostly) when s/he is angered by a post shared by another user.
	Anonymity	The user is emboldened to share knowledge because

		s/he is anonymous behind the screen.
	Altruism	The user shares knowledge to educate others not for their own benefit, but to help others.
Personal interest	Support others	The user supports their family and friends on social media, as this is of interest to them.
	Follower rather than engager	The user is more likely to gather knowledge of interest to them rather than to engage with another user.
	Feel good	The user shares or gathers knowledge because it makes them feel good about themselves.
	Gather knowledge	The user shares knowledge in the hope to gather knowledge so s/he can learn or improve their understanding.

Appendix 37: Thematic Map Derived from both Focus Groups: Participants' Discouragement to Share Knowledge on Social Media



Appendix 38: Definition of Aspects that Emerged from the Thematic Map ‘Participants Discouraged to Share Knowledge on Social Media’

Sub-theme	Emerging aspect	Definition
Self-awareness	Disclaimer	The user states a disclaimer on their social media profile to show that all their posts are their own. This is done to reduce criticism from other users.
	Filtering	The user monitors previous posts and deletes them if they do not reflect their present image online, are invalid or displays their current thoughts.
	Protect identity online	The user is mindful of their identity online, and only shares knowledge which reflects their perceived image.
	Protect job	The user is aware of the knowledge that s/he shares may negatively impact on their job, therefore s/he only shares information which will not receive backlash on their job.
	Privacy setting	The user is aware of how others may use their metadata (e.g. location) or

		can access previous posts that are not deleted and should be, therefore privacy settings are enforced to limit access to this information.
	Professional platform	The user wants to protect their perceived professional image online, therefore all their social media only shares professional related information.
	Rather 'like' and 'retweet' than post	The user is apprehensive to share knowledge due to their job, therefore resorts to only 'likes' and 'retweets' when sharing knowledge.
	Scepticism	The user is sceptical of how others may use their personal data; therefore s/he enforce privacy settings.
Self-consciousness	Do not want to offend	The user is conscious that their posts may offend others, therefore s/he are careful about what information s/he shares.
	Do not want to be judged	The user is cautious of other users negatively judgement them from their posts, therefore the user is mindful about what s/he post so it does not encourage backlash.

	Does not share personal opinions	The user does not want to offend others or be judged, so s/he is more inclined to share no personal opinions.
	Reviewing procedure	The user monitors old posts s/he shared and deletes information that does not correspond with their present identity or thoughts. By doing so, the user hopes to reduce the risk of being judged.
	Impact their character	The user is mindful of the information that s/he shares may lead to others judging their character, therefore s/he thinks twice about what content s/he posts.
	Discourage backlash	The user hopes to prevent backlash from others, this consists of negative comment or users judging them. Therefore, the participant is mindful of what information s/he shares.
Lack of confidence	Not an expert	The user states that s/he is not an expert of the conversation topic online, therefore s/he does not share knowledge at all.

	Not knowledgeable	The user deems themselves as not knowledgeable about what is spoken about online, thus s/he does not exchange information online.
	Viewer	Due to the user perceiving themselves as not being an expert or knowledgeable, s/he only observes information shared online rather than sharing knowledge.

Appendix 39: Thematic Analysis Procedure: 20 Semi-Structured Interviews

<u>Steps</u>	<u>Description of the process</u>	<u>This study's thematic analysis procedure</u>
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing the data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.	This study's researcher transcribed the interviews that were recorded via a Dictaphone, and noted preliminary thoughts per interview regarding emerging themes
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set and collating data relevant to each code.	The researcher emerged themselves within the data by re-reading the transcripts alongside listening to the recordings of each interview. During the process of the researcher familiarising themselves with each interview, the researcher noted down 20-50 occurring aspects from the data. The purpose of the researcher carrying out the latter, was to present an exhaustive list of interesting concepts that the interviewees discussed. The concepts were deemed thought-provoking by the researcher, if the interviewee talked about the aspect as a pivotal focus to, why s/he was motivated to share knowledge, by what means and way s/he were empowered to distribute knowledge, and in what manner her/his knowledge sharing inter-related within her/his empowerment to disseminate knowledge within the #sustainablefashion online community.

<p>3. Searching for themes</p>	<p>Collating codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.</p>	<p>The researcher read through the 20-50 aspects to produce 5-6 overarching themes per interview. Appendix 40 illustrates a photograph of the process. The researcher used magic whiteboard paper³⁹ to note the interesting concepts per interview (the interview number is stated in the right-hand corner), followed by 5-6 principal emergent themes on a post-it note. Succeeding the latter, the researcher read through all the 5-6 important themes for the 20 interviews, and developed 5-6 overarching themes that emerged from the entire set of interviews. Thus, by using magic whiteboard paper the researcher had an overall view of all the data that derived from the 20 semi-structured interviews and fully emerged themselves within the data, which enabled the researcher to gather a rich insight. Therefore, the hands-on thematic analysis approach better suited the researcher's creative thinking, and led to this study's rich and comprehensive thematic analysis that was warranted by this study's philosophical stance.</p> <p>Appendix 41 illustrates the 5-6 key themes that emerged within each of the 20 semi-structured interviews. Appendix 42 presents a table of definitions that defines</p>
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³⁹ Magic whiteboard paper is a sheet of plastic that sticks to any surface, and allowed the researcher to conduct their analysis on the wall.

		each aspect discussed within Appendix 41's table. Appendix 43 evidences the key emergent themes discussed within each interview; the researcher created the table by calculating how many times a theme was stated by an interviewee. Regarding Appendix 43, the most important theme that emerged from each interview was lobbying.
4. Reviewing the themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (step 1) and the entire data set (step 2), and generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.	The researcher produced a thematic map for the most predominant theme which is lobbying. Consequently, the researcher was able to identify that the themes overlapped with one another, this is demonstrated within Appendix 44.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells. Subsequently, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.	As a result of a producing thematic map for the pivotal theme that emerged from the interviews, this led to a further level of analysis that refined the key themes. The ensuing process comprises of producing a clearer definition of the themes, and gathering a clearer understanding of what the themes entail.
6. Producing the report	This is the final opportunity for analysis. This step entails, the selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts,	The concluding sixth step entailed the researcher writing up the analysis of the 20 semi-structured interviews, this is presented within Chapter 5.

Appendix 41: The 5-6 Emergent Themes from the Analysis of the 20 Semi-Structured Interviews

Transcripts					
Themes	1	2	3	4	5
	Scepticism	Isolation	Status	Co-creation	Professional
	Raise awareness	Lobbying	Lobbying	Lobbying	Activist
	Family influence	Learning	Sustainable lifestyle	Sustainable lifestyle	Identity
	Savvy	Dependency	Savvy	Identity	Raise awareness
	Validation	Sustainable lifestyle	Validation	Professional	Scepticism
	Lobbying	Belonging	Stress		Lobbying
	6	7	8	9	10
	Scepticism	Lobbying	Sustainable lifestyle	Identity	Belonging
	Lobbying	Activist	Professional	Raise awareness	Savvy

	The power behind the screen	Lobbying	Belonging	Belonging	Activist
	Professional	Scepticism	Lobbying	Sustainable lifestyle	Scepticism
	Politics	Learn	Activist	Lobbying	Lobbying
	Country	Sustainable lifestyle	Identity		Sustainable lifestyle
	11	12	13	14	15
	Dependency	Savvy	Status	Activist	Country
	Identity	Belonging	Learn	Lobbying	Lobbying
	Co-creation	Identity	Professional	Dependency	Raise awareness
	Belonging	Co-creation	Country	Observing	Learn
	Scepticism	Lobbying	Scepticism	Validation	Belonging
	Professional		Lobbying	Savvy	
	16	17	18	19	20
	Country	Professional	Identity	Professional	Scepticism
	Sustainable lifestyle	Country	Status	Belonging	Lobbying

	Professional	Identity	Raise awareness	Savvy	Raise awareness
	Status	Educator	Professional	Validation	Status
	Lobbying	Validation	Savvy	Identity	Identity
	Observing				Convenience

Appendix 42: Definition of the Overarching Emergent Themes from the 20 Semi-Structured Interviews

Term (emerging theme)	Definition
Activist	An interviewee who has strong concerns for sustainable fashion and voices their opinions within the online community. Related to lobbying, as activists also convey their desire to change others' mindset and behaviour towards sustainable fashion.
Belonging	An interviewee who discusses how they feel they fit within the #sustainablefashion online community.
Co-creation	The creation of content between two or more members within the online community. For instance, by 'retweeting' or sending a private message.
Convenience	An interviewee who uses an 'automated system' to save time when sharing knowledge within the online community and uses a free program which saves money.
Country	An interviewee's country of origin.
Dependency	An interviewee's reliance on the #sustainablefashion online community.
Identity	An interviewee who depicts a role within the online community, e.g. learner, helper, educator. The latter could be done by the interviewee knowingly or inadvertently.
Isolation	A feeling demonstrated by an interviewee who does not have friends or family who share the same concerns about sustainable fashion. Related to dependency.
Learn	A role that an interviewee demonstrates, predominantly when gathering knowledge to learn about sustainable fashion. Related to identity.
Lobbying	An interviewee's desire to change other users' mindsets or behaviours, when sharing knowledge about sustainable fashion. Such knowledge entails sustainable alternatives to fashion

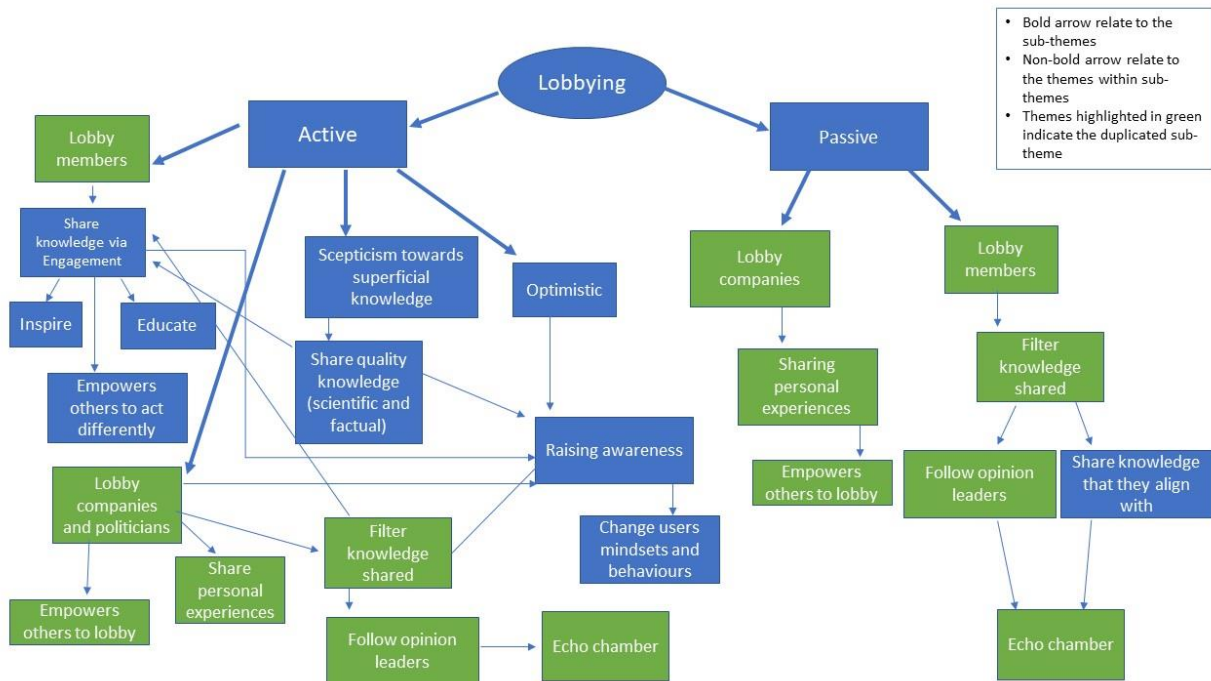
	consumption or about the negative environmental impacts of fast fashion.
Observing	An interviewee who reads 'tweets' shared by others, often gathering the knowledge they have viewed. Related to learn.
Politics	An Interviewee who discusses politics associated to sustainable fashion. Related to lobbying.
Professional	An interviewee who shares knowledge about their employer or their job, concerning sustainable fashion.
Raise awareness	An interviewee who shares knowledge about sustainable fashion to influence others' perception about the concept and to influence a wider audience. Related to lobbying.
Savvy	An interviewee who discusses their experience of using Twitter tools, which include: sharing knowledge via 'retweets', 'retweets' with comments, sending a private message, uploading images, 'cross-posting' between social media platforms, using an 'automated system', or 'liking' a post.
Scepticism	An interviewee who has doubts towards a Twitter source or the contents of a 'tweet' related to sustainable fashion.
Status	A role that an interviewee demonstrates, in particular when sharing knowledge about their profession or their knowledge about sustainable fashion. Related to professional and identity.
Stress	An interviewee demonstrates stress when discussing how they use Twitter, and when sharing or gathering knowledge within the online community.
Sustainable lifestyle	How an interviewee adapts sustainability into the way they live, for instance, during their work life, buying food, or buying clothes.
The power behind the screen	An interviewee who states they can say whatever they like when they are sharing knowledge within an online community, which is not face-to-face with other users.

Validation	An interviewee who demonstrates a lack of confidence in their knowledge sharing, and warrants other users to prove what they are sharing is correct.
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Appendix 43: Frequently Mentioned Themes from the 20 Semi-Structured Interviews in Ascending Order

Themes	Number of times mentioned (ascending order)
Lobbying	17
Professional	10
Identity	10
Sustainable lifestyle	8
Scepticism	8
Belonging	8
Savvy	7
Raise awareness	6
Status	5
Activist	5
Validation	5
Country	5
Learn	4
Co-creation	3
Dependency	3
Observing	2
The power behind the screen	1
Politics	1
Stress	1
Isolation	1
Convenience	1

Appendix 44: Thematic Map of the Theme Lobbying



Appendix 45: Model of Pro-Environmental Behaviour (Sourced from: European Commission, 2012)

