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The Influence of Influencers

Galvis, Isabel

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The Influence of Influencers

By

ISABEL GALVIS

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The Influence of Influencers

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ABSTRACT

There is currently a need for academics and practitioners to understand the role of *Social Media Influencers* (SMIs) as they create ties with their audiences that lead to behavioural change, long-term relationships, brand loyalty and ultimately to customer advocacy. This understanding will help lay the foundations for brands to plan, and help to justify their decisions when selecting an SMI as part of a marketing strategy (Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; Delbaere, Michael and Phillips 2021; Hudson et al. 2016). Hence, the research questions proposed for this study address who an SMI is, how and under what circumstances they influence their audiences, and how a brand's management of an SMI might be most effective.

The topic of SMIs has gained significant relevance over the past five years, as the ties between SMIs and their audience grow stronger, and so does the SMI's ability to influence and convince their followers to take actions (Borgonovi, Andrieu and Subramanian 2021; Shang, Wu and Sie 2017; Tiwari, Lane and Alam 2019). Given that guidelines and regulations for SMI promotional activities are being developed, it is a priority to conceptualise how a regular person attains the position of being an SMI, the steps that launch them into stardom and the mechanisms that they use to draw, engage and influence their audiences. In this research, Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) and Pierre Bourdieu's sociological conceptualisations (social capital, influence, practices and reproduction) are used in conjunction to form a theoretical and methodological framework for the study of social bonds, group dynamics, practices and consumption in a digital context (Amiraslani et al. 2021; Clark 2020; MacArthur et al. 2017). *Natural Language Processing* (NLP) and Big Data techniques were used to collect more than nine million tweets dating back to 2008.

The knowledge and insights gained from this research have successfully fulfilled its purpose at three levels. Firstly, by expanding the academic and business knowledge of the characteristics of SMIs, the mediation role that they play between brands and consumers, and the methods they use to shape the opinions of the masses, to popularise trends and promote consumption habits. Secondly, by advancing current SM analysis techniques to include a more precise approach to processing and analysing text and graphical (emoji) data. Thirdly, by proposing alternative social network visualisation and ranking parameters for examining the dialogues taking place between brands and consumers in a digital environment.

Despite important positive outcomes derived from strong social capital between SMIs and their audience, such as the commercial success of the SMI's own-labels and SMI−brand collaborations, this research also identified a series of problems related to the "*negative*" social capital that can be mobilised between the SMI and their audience. However, these results would not have been possible to achieve if the researcher had not employed novel and innovative approaches to solve the numerous technical and methodological problems faced when gathering large datasets and analysing complex patterns of relationships and sharing.

Keywords: *consumer behaviour, social media, influencers, social capital, habitus, online practices, reproduction, Twitter, consumption, Bourdieu, social media influencers*

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Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant:

        Isabel GaMs

Project Title:

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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

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today, a constant exchange of knowledge and experiences between consumers and brands is taking place all over the internet and in social media (SM). SM platforms are recognised as environments where the opinions and practices of people all over the world are being shared (Lopez, Magliocca and Crooks 2019; Reid and Duffy 2018; Shen, Kuo and Ly 2017). While the study of people and their behaviour in a digital environment has gained popularity amongst academics and members of industry, the full range of potential influences that can be exerted online is still to be explored (Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; Leung, Gu and Palmatier 2022; Vrontis et al. 2021).

As technology evolves and permeates all aspects of today's life, academic interest in its effect on people and their behaviour increases where the internet's "*ever-changing*" and erratic nature is influenced by numerous sources that range from political to leisure, social to individual, altruist to the mundane (Bauman 2013; Bruns 2020; Miell, Gill and Vazquez 2018). This research aims to identify and describe the factors that have given rise to the figure of the "*Social Media Influencer*" (SMI) and how these personas interact, engage, and influence their audience, especially when it comes to sponsored products or brands. Current industry reports have highlighted that SMIs have become important marketing assets, as evidenced by the number of brands designating large budgets for their retention, and by the increasing number and frequency of SMIs that they work with (Contestabile 2018; Liu, Shin and Burns 2019; Rakuten Marketing 2017). Yet only a reduced number of studies have attempted to compare traditional advertising theory with SMI advertisements (Feher 2021; Kareklas, Muehling and Weber 2015; Labrecque et al. 2013).

Following the academic call to produce research that recognises the importance of putting "*the context of context*" into consumer behaviour (Askegaard and Linnet 2011), this doctorate focuses on the relationships and practices promoted by a person who is an SMI in a digital environment. Hence this research aims to increase the academic knowledge about SMIs in terms of who they are, their role in shaping the opinions of the masses, and how they popularise trends as part of the dialogues taking place between brands and consumers online.

While relevant SM, consumer behavioural, and sociological principles form the theoretical background of this research, it was necessary to adopt a framework that provided rigorous academic and scientific support. Hence, this research uses Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) and Pierre Bourdieu's theories of "*social capital*", to provide a solid theoretical and

methodological structure for the study of relationships, group dynamics, practices, and consumption in a digital context (Delisle and Parmentier 2016; Eiteneyer, Bendig and Brettel 2019; Tóth et al. 2022). The different sections of this thesis detail the academic underpinnings, aims, methodology, analysis results and knowledge contribution of this research. Each chapter of this document focuses on a different step of the research process, providing its description, critical analyses and the researcher's reflections.

1.1   Background

Technology has evolved greatly over the past decade, giving birth to social media (SM) and social networking sites (SNS) (Janssen, Schouten and Croes 2022; Lopez, Magliocca and Crooks 2019; Schober et al. 2016). These developments have allowed ordinary people to change the "*opinion leadership*" status quo, as SM platforms have become tools for a person to gain mass audiences, recognition and fame without having achieved anything remarkable, with no exceptional abilities or unique set of skills (Lamberton and Stephen 2016; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013).

While being a "*beauty YouTuber*", "*food vlogger*", "*fitness Instagrammer*" or "*fashion blogger*" are currently recognised professions, the ways that led to these people's rise to fame have varied greatly, ranging from the sophisticated and educated, to the extreme and ludicrous (Binkley 2017a; Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; Hanson 2019). Even though SNS, such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram are open to anyone with an internet connection, not everyone who promotes themselves online can achieve mass exposure, fame and fortune (Contestabile 2018; Djafarova and Rushworth 2017; Roelens, Baecke and Benoit 2016). Those who have managed to become "*internet celebrities*" maximise their prominence, recognition and loyalty of their followers by establishing strong online identities and leveraging their own "*averageness*" via self-branding strategies (Delisle and Parmentier 2016; Keinan et al. 2015; McAlexander and Koenig 2012). More importantly, many of these individuals who become "*internet-famous*" do so without leaving their bedroom, as for them nearly all activities, particularly consumption, sharing and discussion, are conducted digitally and publicly (Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard 2020; Belanche et al. 2021; Leung, Gu and Palmatier 2022).

"My job is to make you fall in love with me" Kirill Bichutsky (The American Meme 2018)

Considering that SMIs and brands compete for the consumer's attention online, there is little knowledge regarding who is influencing consumers and how their opinions are being shaped. This research considers theories that relate to individuals and social groups, as well as those that address complex factors inherent in these online environments, such as identification, trust, distinction, opinion leadership, rituals, practices, persuasion and power. These theories are described in the following sections.

1.2   Theoretical Framework

The motivation for this research originates in an identified gap in knowledge regarding SMI−audience–brand relationships, particularly in terms of SMIs' influence on purchases, product use and brand perception (Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Giesler and Fischer 2017; Janssen, Schouten and Croes 2022). This research defines SMIs' "*audience*" as comprising the fan base which has subscribed to their content (follow) and users who talk about them without "*following".* Academic knowledge is created about how SMIs relate to their audiences, to identify generalisations in the context of SMI−brand associations and endorsements, and to underpin guidelines that will enable marketing professionals to make better-informed choices when choosing and working with SMIs.

At the digital level, it is important to consider the mechanics employed by people to express their opinions and feelings, and how these differ from those in the real world. This research uses Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) to provide such theoretical understanding, as this branch of consumer research approaches academic knowledge in a flexible and integrative way that incorporates social, cultural, psychological, economic and technical views (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Askegaard and Linnet 2011; Venkatesh and Peñaloza 2014). Moreover, CCT looks to go beyond traditional knowledge by equally considering the macro and microenvironment where the consumer is located. This theoretical position is advantageous for the study of modern consumerism nested in Social Networking Sites (SNS) and surrounded by messages, interactions and relationships online.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) developed the framework chosen for the exploration of the constructs and interactions present in SMI−audience relationships. Bourdieu, one of the greatest sociologists, philosophers and anthropologists of the 20th century (Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020; Tapp and Warren 2010; Wacquant 2003), sought to narrow the divide across social disciplines, like philosophy, economics, sociology and anthropology (Harvey et al. 2020; Lyke 2017; Nash 1990). Bourdieu's theories of the social

world have evolved the understanding of the way people interact (social dynamics) in the fields of education, marketing, health, politics and economics. His legacy has helped create an interdisciplinary view of the world, based on his practice of hard empirical evidence and reflexivity in scientific practice, in a variety of settings from small groups like families, to wider environments, such as countries or continents (Brosnan 2011; Skeggs 2004; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020).

The chapters in this thesis describe the steps taken to complete the research, where Chapter 2 will introduce the reader to Pierre Bourdieu's main theories and their application in marketing. Chapter 3 will focus on aims, research questions (RQs) and the methodological aspects adopted, while Chapter 4 will focus on the technological development and advances of the methodology used to collect Twitter data. A complete account of how the data analysis was implemented and a summary of the collected data are found in Chapter 5. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 describe the quantitative, qualitative and Social Network Analysis (SNA) results. Their corresponding critical analysis and discussion are described in Chapter 9. Finally, Chapter 10 presents the main knowledge contributions gained from this research and a discussion of the resulting conclusions.

1.3   Research Focus

The motivation for this research originates in the identified lack of knowledge regarding the operationalisation of the role of the SMI in a marketing context. Hence, this research seeks to fill this gap by creating an understanding of the effect of SMI−audience relationships on the consumer, and addressing the current lack of a tool for marketing professionals to make better-informed choices when choosing and working with SMIs (Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Giesler and Fischer 2017; Steils, Martin and Toti 2022).

Academic research has yet to fully study how such individuals use their charm, attractiveness and posted content to attract, engage and enlist users who see them as opinion leaders (Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; Ki and Kim 2019; Zhu, Yin and He 2014). Consequently, this research looks to create new academic knowledge into how SMIs create relationships with their audiences who see them as authentic, trustworthy and genuine "*ordinary and normal people*" and to identify generalisations in the context of brand-SMI associations and endorsements.

1.3.1 Research Aims

There is currently a need for academics and practitioners to understand the role of SMIs and how these create online ties with their audiences that can lead to behavioural change, long-term relationships, brand loyalty and ultimately, customer advocacy. The understanding of these relationships can help brands plan and justify the selection of an SMI as part of their marketing strategy. Based on the knowledge gap found in the literature review, the proposed research questions for this study are:

- ► RQ.1: Who is an SMI and what are their characteristics?
- ► RQ.2: How and to what extent do SMIs influence their audiences?
- ► RQ.3: In what ways do SMIs create trust, authority and legitimacy?
- ► RQ.4: Under what circumstances are SMIs more influential?
- ► RQ.5: How can SMIs be effectively managed by brand owners?

1.3.2 Research Objectives

The objective of this project is to enrich both the academic and business knowledge by defining who an SMI is, to critically analyse their current role, how they gain followers and in what ways they communicate through SM. Based on this project's literature review, the identified knowledge gaps and proposed aims, the objectives of this study are:

- ► To study the moderating effect of *habitus* on the exchange of symbolic, cultural and social capital in the SMI.
- ► To establish the level of opportunity for brands in associating with an SMI based on their accrued capitals and practices.
- ► To study the most efficient ways in which SMIs influence changes in the behaviour of their audiences.

1.4   Methodology

Considering the aims to advance understanding of the SMI to aid brands in the promotion and marketing of their products, it was necessary to select a methodology that provided a robust understanding of the SMI−audience relationships from an interdisciplinary perspective. It is important to consider the mechanics used by people to express their opinions and feelings in

the digital era where, unlike the real word, such expression include emojis, likes, favourites and shares. The use of these "*digital expressions*" has become a common part of the digital interactions available to users in most social media environments (Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; Picheta 2019; Villegas 2018).

As a result, the information gathered using data mining techniques was analysed through quantitative, qualitative and social network analysis (SNA) strategies (Creswell et al. 2003; Creswell 2014; Creswell 2015). This approach was chosen as tweets contain numerical, textual, network and visual data; these are optimal instances for the qualitative and netnographic study of feelings, beliefs and emotions; quantitative measurable insights, such as the number of users that follow, subscribe, like, comment, save and share the content posted online, in addition to network data that allow for the study of the connections made by the audiences and how information flows. As a result of the large number of tweets and the wealth of metadata gathered, it was possible to create a rich understanding of the relationship between an SMI and their audience in a way that would have not been possible if this study had focused on traditional media, such as TV, print or radio (Fu, Wu and Cho 2017; Kudeshia, Sikdar and Mittal 2016; Schau and Gilly 2003).

The selection of the methodology used in this research was dictated by a careful review of the data parameters needed versus the software and programming options available for its retrieval from the Twitter environment. After a process of testing that the data collected can be interpreted and used to help answer the proposed RQs, Twitter's Application Programmable Interface (API) was selected as the primary source of the data to be collected and collated. An important benefit of using Twitter's API is that this interface serves as an archive of rich context-dependent information (metadata) dating back to 2006 when Twitter was launched. In this stage of the research, the programming background of the researcher proved useful as it widened the scope of possible ways to access and use the data. Consequently, the data was accessed via programming scripts (code), therefore preserving most of the associated information needed to map social interactions, messages and users connected on this platform.

1.4.1 Methodological Contribution

The knowledge and insights gained from this research have successfully fulfilled its purpose at three levels. Firstly, by expanding the academic and business knowledge of the characteristics of SMIs, the mediation role that they play between brands and consumers and the methods

they use to shape the opinions of the masses, and to popularise trends and promote consumption habits. Secondly, by advancing current SM analysis techniques to include a more precise approach to processing and analysing text and graphical (emoji) data. Thirdly, by proposing alternative social network visualisation and ranking parameters for examining the dialogues taking place between brands and consumers in SM.

Nonetheless, these results were only obtainable because of the novel and innovative approaches that the researcher used to solve the many technical and methodological problems faced. While the technical implementation of this research is presented in Chapter 4, the details of each one of these developments are described in Chapter 5. These computational techniques have advanced and automated the processing of:

- ► Obtaining longitudinal data: Academic theories point towards longitudinal case studies as being the best research strategy for investigating behaviour over time. However, many researchers report that using this methodology is largely avoided because of the large amounts of time and effort required to carry it out effectively (Bailey et al. 2018; Hassett, Reynolds and Sandberg 2018; Raudenbush 2001). These difficulties were superseded by using R and Python (coding languages) and Gephi (computer software for SNA). Consequently, the researcher was able to collect 12-years' worth of observational data over just one year from three different sources.

- ► Calculating network weight: Since the data collected was made up of over nine million tweets, significant processing power was required to undertake the SNA analysis. The researcher created a way to classify the importance of an individual tweet by measuring the strength of audience responses and the significance of the tweet's author in the network.

- ► Mentions and hashtags processing: This research demonstrated that mentions and hashtags are important signals of the presence of social, symbolic and cultural capital on Twitter, that can be used to link the different nodes found in an SMI's network. The process of "*hashtags and mentions completion*" was used to ensure the quality and homogony of these in each dataset. The process of completion identifies and reshapes key terms that relate to hashtags (usernames) and mentions (themes, topics and collaborations) already used on Twitter were coded into a uniform format.

- ► Emoji processing and vocabulary standardising: Users on SNS adopt a variety of abbreviations, spellings, media and graphical inputs when writing on these platforms.

In the field of natural language processing, similar words with the same meaning that can be used in a sentence can be treated as one (distributional hypothesis). This principle is academically known as the "*semantic meaning*" and it can also be applied to emojis by treating them as if they are normal words (Bilro, Loureiro and Guerreiro 2019; Grus 2019; *Instagram Engineering* 2015). Yet, only a few methodologies in the literature were mentioned or referred to as methods of standardising and coding the language used. Careful consideration was made regarding the treatment of special inputs and characters, while considering the signals of social capital and indications of consumption habits. The script used normalised these abbreviations, the use of hashtags, mentions, names and transforming emoticons into their Unicode equivalent, as their inclusion in the data analysis can enrich the understanding of the content, meaning and emotion associated with each tweet.

1.5   Importance of this Research

The topic of SMIs has gained significant relevance over the past five years. As the ties between influencers and their audience increase, so does the SMI's ability to influence and convince their followers to take actions online and offline (Contestabile 2018; Leung, Gu and Palmatier 2022; Van der Lans et al. 2010). This has generated a significant gap in knowledge regarding the relationship between brands, SMIs and audiences (Bezjian-Avery, Calder and Lacobucci 1998; Brown, Pope and Voges 2003; Choi, Lee and Kim 2005; Dahlen and Rosengren 2016). Furthermore, Agnihotri et al. (Agnihotri et al. 2016) have suggested the need to investigate the ways brands employ SMIs in the "*virtual*" world to create electronic word of mouth (eWOM), brand identity, loyalty and change consumer behaviour (Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Font and McCabe 2017; Mathur and Rangan 1997) as the effects and efficacy of these are unknown.

Given the fact that guidelines and regulations for SMI promotional activities are being developed, it is a priority to conceptualise how a regular person attains the position of being an SMI, the steps that launched them into stardom and the mechanism that they use to draw, engage and influence their audience. Thus, this doctorate proposed a working definition of an SMI, which describes their most popular digital activities, how they increase followers and the most common strategies used in their day-to-day digital communications. Brands associate themselves with SMIs, who promote them in ways that resemble traditional celebrity endorsements and advertising campaigns (Hung 2014; Janssen, Schouten and Croes 2022; Louie and Obermiller 2002). Whether these individuals became SMIs by choice or by

accident, scholars and practitioners must recognise the undeniable power that they can exert on the masses. Furthermore, these "*online personalities*" can reach audiences in numbers that rival those of mainstream media, with the additional benefit of 24/7 connectivity, little to no regulation of the content shared and little to no broadcasting fees (Bezjian-Avery, Calder and Lacobucci 1998; Brown, Pope and Voges 2003; Choi, Lee and Kim 2005; Dahlen and Rosengren 2016).

Bourdieu's "*Theory of Practice, Habitus, Capitals and Field*" provides a solid and relevant theoretical foundation for this research project. These social-cultural theories, further developed by Coleman, Putnam, Lin and Burt (Coleman 1988; Lin 1999; Putnam 2001), have been widely used in the fields of education, politics, medicine, government, culture, arts, civic life, corporate practices and marketing. However, literature is still scarce about the role of social and cultural capital to explain social and consumption behaviours in a digital environment, in terms of symbolic capital, *habitus* and *doxa* and their significance in SNS. At the time of writing, no study was found to analyse marketing practices in terms of "*the capitals, the habitus* and *reproduction practices of influencers*" either online or offline. Hence, the scarcity of studies that examined the moderating effect of the *habitus* on reproduction practices provided a unique opportunity to corroborate and quantify some of Bourdieu's conceptualisations, like the equation presented below, focusing on the *habitus* and practices adopted by a subjugated class as a result from their interactions with a dominant one:

$$\text{"(HABITUS)(CAPITAL) + FIELD = PRACTICE"} \text{ (Bourdieu 1984)}$$

This research sought to create knowledge both from an academic and practitioner perspective. From an academic perspective, this research studies SMIs under the lens of consumer behaviour theories, such as online customer engagement, eLoyalty and eWOM (Dibb, Simões and Wensley 2014; Kratzer et al. 2016; Ngai et al. 2015), with the aim of producing a relational model that explains SMI−audience interactions. From a practitioner perspective, it provides tools for understanding how an SMI's marketing activities are carried out online, and details cases in which SMIs have succeeded or failed in their promotional efforts. It also presents valuable recommendations, supported by a rigorous process of data analysis, that can help practitioners make better-informed decisions when carrying out SMI promotional campaigns.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Considering the complexity of online communications and the technical perils that have become part of everyday life, today's digital world calls for a new academic understanding of the connected consumer and how they interact in this multifaceted technological environment. Consequently, organisations, brands and individuals must learn to manage the increasing number of digital channels available to them. While research has established the importance and benefits that an organisation can gain from SM presence, network theorists argue that the most important question today is how should an organisation be managed and governed to meet this new reality (Bange, Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari 2020; Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Gálvez-Rodríguez, Caba-Pérez and López-Godoy 2016). Under these circumstances, it becomes imperative to create academic knowledge focused on how consumers create bonds, transfer knowledge and the effects of their online interactions on their purchasing behaviour under the ubiquitous spread of social media (SM) platforms and information.

This chapter presents the academic and business literature that serves as the foundation for the framework developed for this doctorate entitled "*The Influence of Influencers*". The main aim of this project is to explore social media influencers (SMIs) in the light of the phenomenon called "*The Megaphone Effect"* (Ki and Kim 2019; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013; Sokolova and Kefi 2020). This phenomenon describes how certain individuals without specific knowledge or entitlement have been able to reach the masses on SNS, like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram. The presence of these individuals on the marketing landscape has changed the dynamics of communication and interactions between brands and customers; where brands are endorsing and creating relationships with individuals who are recognised SMIs (Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; O'Connor 2017; Susarla, Oh and Tan 2016).

The analysis of relevant academic literature in this chapter lead to the identification of the knowledge gaps explored in this doctorate and to the identification of the theorical framework used for its development. The following literature review firstly presents the main methodologies used for SM research and outlines how the main constructs and key concepts of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) have advanced the field of "*Consumer Behaviour Research*" as well as the reasons for its adoption in this research. Secondly, it presents a theoretical understanding of how today's connected consumer breaks apart in terms of

user−brand knowledge gained under traditional means of communication, to then present an analysis of how new technologies affect consumer behaviour, loyalty and the diffusion of information. Thirdly, it presents French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theories of *field*, *practices*, *habitus* and the capitals, with a particular focus on *"social capital", as* an important concept that has been widely applied by academics and practitioners for the study of the influence and power in a social setting (Ferragina and Arrigoni 2017; Otero, Volker and Rozer 2021; Schiff 1992). Fourthly, it presents current knowledge gaps to be explored. Finally, it presents a model that aims to create a holistic and robust understanding of SMI−brand−user relationships that is meaningful and produces a valuable knowledge contribution:

"A theory tries to make sense of out the observable world by ordering the relationships among elements that constitute the theorist's focus of attention" (Dubin 1969: 26)

2.2   Researching Social Media

The adoption and use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) has exponentially risen in recent years. Although people use SNS for communicating and sharing, the specifics of the method of communication can vary from one platform to another. These methods include messaging, posting (images, video or audio) and other forms of digital social actions, such as liking, favouriting, saving, sharing and using hashtags, memes and emojis. Conversely, consumers use the internet to research, buy, review, recommend and even "*broadcast*" their opinions and experiences about a brand or product (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010; Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching 2013; Misopoulos et al. 2014). Consequently, the mechanics of how people and organisations communicate and interact with one another has completely changed, especially over the past decade (Miell, Gill and Vazquez 2018; Quinn et al. 2016; Turner 2010), when the growth of SNS has revolutionised marketing practices by providing a plethora of tools and opportunities for brands to reach, inform, engage and sell not available before (Agnihotri et al. 2016; Hulyk 2015; Vrontis et al. 2021).

The interest of academics and researchers in SNS has created an exponential increase in citation counts for SM related publications in the SSCI (Social Sciences Citation Index), as depicted in Figure 2.1. The increase in the number of health-related publications using SM in Web of Science (WoS) and PubMed (see Figure 2.2), and in public health SM-based research (see Figure 2.3) assert the relevance of SM studies like this one.

Figure 2.1 SSCI Counts by Topic and Year (Lamberton and Stephen 2016)

Figure 2.2 SM in Healthcare Publications (Chen et al. 2019)

Figure 2.3 SM–Based Public Health Research (Zhang, Yan et al. 2020)

Researching SM presents its own sets of techniques, limitations and ethical questions that call for a new understanding and adaptation of research methodologies. These issues are addressed in Chapter 3, as the role of SMIs as part of an advertising campaign is investigated (Delbaere, Michael and Phillips 2021; Leban et al. 2020; Leung, Gu and Palmatier 2022). Although this research is set online, it uses the knowledge gained from traditional academic studies of celebrities in the marketing context and SM related research. For instance, scholars in the medical field have studied celebrities, SMIs and viral content for promoting health-related messages (Biancovilli, Machado and Jurberg 2015; Hoffman and Tan 2013; Hoffman and Tan 2015). Examples such as the "*Ice Bucket Challenge*", in support of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis awareness, gained more than seventeen million videos shared on Facebook alone, showing the validity of SM as a channel for effective mass communication (Hoffman and Tan 2013; Ni et al. 2014; Peng, Lin and Ren 2016).

It can be argued that SMIs play a vital role that needs to be addressed by academics, because SMIs become opinion leaders fulfilling the need of customers craving for guidance, with the role of SMIs comparable to that of bloggers (Colliander and Erlandsson 2015; Khan et al. 2017; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013). However, academic research has yet to address the how their relationship with an audience and opinion leadership is shaped by the unique circumstances that made them famous and, more importantly, to assess the effectiveness of their personal influence in doing so (Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Leban et al. 2020; Rakuten Marketing 2017).

2.3   Consumer Culture Theory

Consumer culture theory (CCT) is a phrenological branch of consumer research that uses an interdisciplinary empirical approach to generate knowledge about the intricacies present during the act of consumption. CCT is characterised by considering the socio-historical, cultural, experiential and ideological context in all its multiple displays for setting guidelines for marketers, policy makers and managers to follow (Coskuner-Balli 2013; Holt 2002; Zhao and Belk 2008). CCT considers the heterogeneous aspects of culture associated with desire-inducing marketing symbols that other academic theories seem to ignore (Bajde, Nøjgaard and Sommer 2019; Baudrillard, Poster and Belk 2018; Price 2018).

CCT research is based on a tradition of empirical analysis of how consumer culture and ideologies are constructed, sustained, manifested and transformed in specific markets embedded in socio-cultural settings (Baudrillard, Poster and Belk 2018; Belk 2018; Zaglia 2013). In CCT the concept of "*cultural meaning*" is not bound to a single conceptualisation, it enjoys the flexibility of a distributed view which allows for multiple interpretations (Hannerz 1992). This plurality in its views is a central part of the status quo present in this philosophy that focuses on the dividedness and fluidity of people's consumption practices, considering their way of life (Bajde, Nøjgaard and Sommer 2019; Ianole and Cornescu 2013; Venkatesh and Peñaloza 2014).

"Consumer culture denotes a social arrangement in which relation between lived culture and social resources and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets" (Arnould and Thompson 2005: 869)

At the heart of CCT is a set of theoretical underpinnings related to 1) Consumer identity projects, 2) Marketplace cultures, 3) Socio-historical patterning of consumption, 4) Mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and 5) Consumers' interpretative strategies streams (Arnould and Thompson 2005). Under these streams of study, CCT looks to create knowledge regarding identities (individual or collective), culture, environment, experiences and the specifics of the sociological process behind the inner beliefs which consumers then act upon (Askegaard and Linnet 2011; Bajde, Nøjgaard and Sommer 2019; Venkatesh and Peñaloza 2014). Nonetheless, critics of CCT argue that it is a highly managerial branch of consumer behaviour that cuts ties with its marketing roots. However, such calls have been regarded as a misinterpretation of the definition and practice of CCT (Featherstone 1990; Holbrook 1987; McCracken 1989).

Given firstly, that under the CCT view, markets can be understood and analysed as relational systems that include societal, financial and organisational practices that create economic, social and cultural value (Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006; Rezabakhsh et al. 2006; Siebert and Giesler 2012) and secondly, that under CCT it becomes imperative to consider the practices, hierarchies, meanings, clusters and symbolism associated with the consumer and their environment (Fırat and Venkatesh 1995; Pai and Tsai 2016; Sibai et al. 2014); researchers have adopted a perspective centred on the symbolic and normative dynamics used by consumers to create their realities (Giesler 2008; Giesler and Fischer 2017; Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler 2010). It is at this intersection that numerous academic developments have been rooted in different instances of Pierre Bourdieu's work under the CCT framework (Arsel and Thompson 2011; Giesler 2008; Holttinen 2014) providing an understanding of the intricately complex and intertwined consumer behaviour. These authors have conceptualised actions as a group of foreseeable feelings, opinions and patterns that are improvised under structures of orthodoxy and hierarchical roles (Arsel and Thompson 2011; Giesler 2008; Holttinen 2014). It is this approach's specific pursuit of the construction of knowledge that makes CCT a suitable theoretical framework to be adopted in this research.

2.4   The Connected Consumer

The use of the internet and SM plays an essential part in people's everyday life. According to a 14 country study reported by Pew Research, 57% of participants say they visit SNS every day, and most active users are young, educated and from wealthier segments of the population (Auxier and Anderson 2021; Poushter 2016; Shah, Widjaya and Smith 2021). There are many reasons for this extensive SM engagement. Through this media, consumers

can share common interests, needs, experiences and create social ties (Behtoui 2016; Contestabile 2018; Meek et al. 2019). These types of activities can eventually lead to consumers promoting awareness, supporting social actions and linking friends, family and acquaintances. Furthermore, today's consumer uses the internet to research, learn about, compare, and buy and review products, as current technology allows them to communicate and share their questions, experiences and beliefs about a brand with ease (MacInnis et al. 2020; Meek et al. 2019; Pentina, Guilloux and Micu 2018).

Academic research has demonstrated that social and situational stimuli in SNS can satisfy self-indulgent and hedonistic needs, while belonging and emotional needs are satisfied via interactions with others (Bui and Kemp 2013; Keinan, Kivetz and Netzer 2016; Miller 2013). Such is the case with online brand communities (OBCs), which are spaces where the sharing of meaningful consumption experiences among members can strengthen social ties, enhance brand awareness and drive purchases (Labrecque et al. 2013; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; McAlexander and Koenig 2012). As the presence of a strong subculture of consumption in digital platforms can greatly benefit a brand in promoting sharing, long-lasting relationships, new membership, attachment, loyalty and advocacy (Bajde, Nøjgaard and Sommer 2019; Cova and Ezan 2010; Laroche et al. 2012); businesses are allocating greater portions of their marketing budgets to SM campaigns. Successful examples of SM marketing include brands such as Coca-Cola, Louis Vuitton and McDonald's. These brands have successfully used platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, FourSquare and LinkedIn, in addition to traditional advertising methods, where consumer engagement strategies have been incorporated, for example by monitoring posts, offering advice, responding to feedback and addressing customer care needs by focusing on relationships, shared interests and the sense of belonging to their OBC (Arvidsson and Caliandro 2016; Fischer and Reuber 2011; Minton et al. 2012).

Due to the explicit links that users maintain with each other, SNS are highly suited to environments for Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), the diffusion of innovation, the creation of "*buzz*" and the spread of viral content. All of these strategies aim to take advantage of the relationships between users to facilitate the spread of awareness and increase the allegiance to particular brands (Brodie et al. 2007; Gálvez-Rodríguez, Caba-Pérez and López-Godoy 2016; Rogers, Chapman and Giotsas 2012). Under these circumstances, the content shared by an engaged consumer who is "*living the brand*" can gain momentum, creating an amplifying influence as theorised in the "*Megaphone Effect*" (Aquino 2013; Lawer and Knox 2006; Parrott, Danbury and Kanthavanich 2015) to potentially reach thousands of consumers. For

that reason, eWOM and personal endorsements play a vital role in shaping opinions, disseminating information and popularising purchase behaviour derived from SM interactions.

2.4.1 Communication, Engagement and Consumption in SM

A central feature of SNS is the ability to share (and rebroadcast) information, which can be intentionally or unintentionally driven by an incentive or done freely (Belk 2018; De Bruyn and Lilien 2008; Pai and Tsai 2016). A user's typical SM activities often include network-specific tasks, such as the addition of Facebook friends, asking users to subscribe on YouTube, following relevant members in LinkedIn or Instagram and using tags in Twitter or YouTube (Engholm and Hansen-Hansen 2014; Hansen, Lee and Lee 2014; Rezabakhsh et al. 2006). These activities can lead to the creation of social ties between users, promote awareness, support social action and link them to *"friends",* while amplifying the effect of these via the viral features intrinsic in this medium.

Today's consumers use the internet to learn about products, buy them and review them. This technology has given the consumer more tools to communicate their experiences and beliefs about a product via SNS (Gensler et al. 2013; Lamberton and Stephen 2016; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002). Due to the explicit links that users maintain with each other, SM platforms are perceived as a highly-suited environment for network based marketing: word of mouth marketing, diffusion of innovation (buzz) and viral marketing, all of which aim to take advantage of the relationships between users to facilitate the spread of awareness or adoption (Brodie et al. 2007; Gálvez-Rodríguez, Caba-Pérez and López-Godoy 2016; Rogers, Chapman and Giotsas 2012). Furthermore, as in the physical world, consumers are more influenced when it comes to purchases by peers than by brands and, therefore, the weight and influence of these recommendations and other digital social actions online, e.g. following, liking or sharing content posted by a brand, are regarded as coming from a trustworthy source (Djafarova and Rushworth 2017; Kozinets 2019; Nguyen and Özçaglar-Toulouse 2021).

Displays of consumption online have similar effects to those seen offline in that these acts are then become associated with the consumer's identity. However, an important difference between the online and offline consumption cases is their exposure and longevity. The act of posting online can make the act widely available to others and due to the archival nature of the internet, these posts stay online until deleted (Gov.uk 2019; McCammon 2022; Shah, Widjaya and Smith 2021). For example, a consumer who feels a strong connection between their self-image and a brand's identity, is more likely to purchase that brand and to

subsequently generate eWOM (Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Halliday 2016; Keller 2009). The greater a consumer's desire to maintain relationships in a brand-related network or online community, the more likely they are to actively engage and give positive referrals (eWOM) about the brand. These actions can also be seen as promotional activities, as eWOM plays a vital role in decision-making and in raising awareness among consumers who use the internet to find information, buy, review and communicate their experiences and beliefs about brands (Krämer 2017; Susarla, Oh and Tan 2016; Yeh and Choi 2011). Customer engagement can refer to the level of interaction from consumers towards a company or brand, to the stage on the customer journey where a user is (Hughes, Swaminathan and Brooks 2019; Sood, Quintal and Phau 2022; Uzunoğlu and Kip 2014) or to the level and deepness of visitor interaction when achieving set objectives (Bowden 2009; Sashi, Brynildsen and Bilgihan 2019; Smith and Fischer 2021).

In addition to these issues of consumer engagement, the presence of a strong subculture of consumption in digital platforms has given rise to tribe-like behaviours, rituals and norms which are predominantly observable in online brand communities. In these spaces, "*communal consumption*" practices are valued by the community members and contribute to the sense of *"we-ness",* especially if the member exhibiting the act of consumption is identified as an authority, such as brand *"insiders"* or *"devotees"*, by their peers (Kozinets 1999; Sakdiyakorn, Golubovskaya and Solnet 2021; Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget 2020). It is important to distinguish the differences of an *online network* versus an *online community*. Although these share similar characteristics, they have different definitions in terms of the closeness of the member's ties and their practices. In an online community (OC) the social ties are closely knit. Members communicate, are engaged and work together, exhibiting norms of reciprocity (Pai and Tsai 2016; Sakdiyakorn, Golubovskaya and Solnet 2021; Wasko and Faraj 2005). In a network, members may exhibit communal practices and norms of reciprocity, their social ties are loosely knit and their members may not know each other, nor expect to do so. As an example, Facebook is one of the main social networks used to access online communities.

Research has demonstrated that credibility, attachment, perception, eWOM, purchases, feelings and trust lead to resonance in the short-term; and to loyalty, advocacy and new member acquisition when developed over a long period of time (Bowden 2009; Templeton 2021; Zook et al. 2017). However, caution should be exercised when applying these concepts to research, as not all consumers will reach the desired level of resonance, loyalty and advocacy, and because of the time required for the proper research of each one of these constructs. In a similar way, brand preference varies on an individual basis and is mediated by

peer judgements and a person's own identity, where factors such as product design and brand ambassadors help shape its members' perceptions and disposition (Lee 2017; Sibai et al. 2014; Tóth et al. 2022).

2.4.2 Trust and Social Ties

The establishment of social bonds, relationship ties and *"kinship"* are a natural human characteristic and their creation is mediated by processes of frequent interaction, care and nurture in a shared social environment (Rotter 1980; Van Wart 2012; Veil and Waymer 2021). Academic research has demonstrated that SNS users create social ties and connections owing to their interactions with other users. For the purpose of this research, kinship, bonding and social ties can be conceptualised as links in a network of human relationships embedded in a shared digital environment.

Social and personal influence play an important role in SM relationships, as *"friends"* are both the main way to learn and to join a SNS or online community (OC) (Bilro, Loureiro and Guerreiro 2019; Çetin et al. 2021; Reinikainen et al. 2020). Hence, trust is a central part of any exchange, whether it be online of offline, by working at both the cognitive and affective level of that exchange, via integrity, consistency, communication, values, concern and benevolence (Amiraslani et al. 2021; Halliday 2016; Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget 2020).

Since academic research has demonstrated a strong link between trust and purchase intent, it can be said that trust sets the foundation for relationships and can lead to customer loyalty and repeat buying (Akpinar and Berger 2012; Meek et al. 2019; Smith and Fischer 2021). Thus the effects of the social and situational online stimuli offered by tools, such as customer reviews and testimonials, can help satisfy self-indulgent and hedonistic needs; while belonging and emotional needs can be satisfied via the interaction with others, which can also drive purchases if these users are deemed credible information sources by their peers. The importance of this evidence of social action is that whatever a person engages in reviewing, preferring, favouriting, sharing or liking a brand on SM, these automatically get associated with their digital identity and, therefore, can effectively help create trust, preference and attachment amongst their friends in that brand (Bayazıt, Durmuş and Yıldırım 2017; Godes and Mayzlin 2004; Ioanid, Militaru and Mihai 2015). Furthermore, just as people can create relationships and social ties online, research has demonstrated that emotional ties can be fostered in brand relationships on social platforms and these ties can be stronger and more enduring than cognitively based ones (Cova 2022; Kronrod and Huber 2019; Wang et al. 2021).

2.4.3 Lead Users and Opinion Leaders

SM has radically challenged the traditional ways in which users become opinion leaders and authorities by providing free platforms where anyone can potentially reach massive audiences. SNS tools allow users, irrespective of their profile and background, to subscribe, comment, share, connect and directly interact in a way that was not possible in the past (Agrawal and Kamakura 1995; Mathur and Rangan 1997; Sokolova and Kefi 2020). Thus, since the emergence of SNS, many celebrities and unknowns have been able to gain worldwide recognition and attract huge numbers of followers while bypassing the need of traditional mass media channels (Bezjian-Avery, Calder and Lacobucci 1998; Raamkumar et al. 2019; Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget 2020).

SM has the flexibility to be a medium for communication, whether on a one-to-one or one-to-many basis and mass communication theories are relevant to it. The theory of the "*two-step flow communication*" developed by Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz, considers the psychological and social processes that influence choice and decisions (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1948; Van den Bulte and Lilien 2001). This theory states that people are more likely to be influenced by the views and preferences of "*opinion leaders*" than by those expressed in mass media. Traditionally, opinion leaders have been initially exposed to a specific elite media content. They act as signal amplifiers who receive first-hand information that is interpreted and passed on, propagating their influence on their followers (Chae and Ko 2016; Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Shen, Kuo and Ly 2017). However, the development of networking technologies and SM platforms has allowed *"ordinary"* individuals to gain massive numbers of followers, who engage with what they have to say under the phenomenon known as the *"Megaphone Effect"*, transforming the barriers of upward social mobility in field-specific areas where the influence, popularity and recognition represent power, which can then be transformed into money (Khamis, Ang and Welling 2016; Limkangvanmongkol et al. 2015; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013).

While the "*Megaphone Effect*" has been theorised using WOM and opinion leadership scholarship (Kauffmann et al. 2020; Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson 2012; Susarla, Oh and Tan 2016) the difference from these theories lies in the fact that this phenomenon is based on the "*demotic turn*". This refers to ordinary individuals appearing in the media, gaining more notability and recognition, inaccessible to them in a traditional way (Contestabile 2018; Sokolova and Kefi 2020; Turner 2010). SM has radically changed this position by providing

free platforms where anyone can potentially reach massive audiences, as the tools offered by SNS allow users, irrespective of their profile and background, to subscribe, comment, share, connect and directly interact in a way that was not possible in the past (Agrawal and Kamakura 1995; Mathur and Rangan 1997; Sokolova and Kefi 2020). Thus gaining exposure to the masses and worldwide recognition has been the ploy of many celebrities and unknowns since the emergence of SNS, as these platforms allow individuals to gain massive numbers of followers while bypassing the need of traditional mass media channels (Bezjian-Avery, Calder and Lacobucci 1998; Raamkumar et al. 2019; Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget 2020). As an example, by posting about their consumption practices on SNS in a public setting, consumer bloggers achieve large audience followings in numbers that were previously reserved for the likes of professionals or large institutions (Godes and Mayzlin 2004; Muñiz and Schau 2007; Schau and Gilly 2003).

Most notably, while the fashion industry has been disrupted by "*fashion blogging*" practices, which are one of today's most profitable and popular forms of online cultural production (Duffy and Hund 2015; Hughes, Swaminathan and Brooks 2019; Pedroni 2015), there has been much criticism as a result of fashion bloggers as young as 13 years old holding seats next to fashion experts and "*royals*", such as *Vogue* editor Anna Wintour, just by merit of their online popularity (Copping 2009; Crocker 2016).

Although academic research has established the link between trust and leadership (Aral 2011; Breevaart and Zacher 2019; Cooper, Hamman and Weber 2020), and that through the process of creation of "*social credibility*" a person attains *"relationship capital leadership"* (Cooper, Hamman and Weber 2020; Katila et al. 2022; Van Wart 2012), it is unclear the extent that social ties created between an SMI and their audiences have in granting an SMI "*more or less*" influence and the likelihood that the interactions of these concepts leads to changes in judgements and behavioural changes in their "*opinion followers*".

2.4.4 Social Media Influencers (SMIs)

In the online world, SMIs are constantly working towards building their online social capital to reap dividends from this intangible investment by maintaining contact, building relationships and delivering engaging content to their audiences (Aquino 2013; Freberg et al. 2011; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2016). *"User-generated content"* produced by an SMI, particularly videos on YouTube and comments on Twitter, have changed the way people consume entertainment, access the news and even how politicians make their messages accessible to

the public. Consequently, digital marketing strategies are becoming increasingly important (Dwivedi et al. 2021; Erdmann, Arilla and Ponzoa 2022; Fussey and Roth 2020). Hence the relationships and nature of the "*digital realm*" challenge the notion or institutional and individual *"archetypes"* as it acts as a mass media channel, which in the past was reserved for governments or large corporations to support their own agendas (Colliander and Erlandsson 2015; de Veirman and Hudders 2020; Veil and Waymer 2021).

The figure of the SMI is a vivid example of how ordinary people can become "*opinion leaders*" to the masses as a result of the "*Megaphone Effect*". Individual SMIs use their charisma, entertainment value and media content production to attract audiences, retain their attention and create a fan base who sees their *"normal" and "ordinary"* qualities as a sign of authenticity, trustworthiness and *"being real".* By levering their own *"averageness"* and *"personality"* via self-branding strategies and by establishing strong online identities on social networking platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter and Instagram, these individuals can maximise their prominence and recognition, and strengthen the loyalty of their followers (De Bruyn and Lilien 2008; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; McAlexander and Koenig 2012).

Thus the concepts of *"opinion leadership",* "*bonding*" and "*bridging*" become useful for this research as measures of SMIs' effectiveness and reach via SNS (Feher 2021; Karami et al. 2020; Sajuria et al. 2015). Brands can then associate themselves with these SMIs, who promote their products in a way that resembles traditional advertising use celebrity endorsers (Hung 2014; Louie and Obermiller 2002; Mittal 2021), where the sponsored products are purchased by consumers who are part of their fan base or audience.

While research has demonstrated the link between trust in an SMI's opinion about a recommended product and purchase intent (Agnihotri et al. 2016; Baumer, Sueyoshi and Tomlinson 2011; Li, Larimo and Leonidou 2021), current literature does not consider the distinctive circumstances surrounding the SMI, under the understanding that these are regular people without endowment or attachments to big organisations, who on their own, have been able been able to develop a distinctive and appealing personality online and gain an audience (Atkinson 2008; Schau, Muñiz and Arnould 2009; Watkins 2015). Consequently, the following sections of this literature review explore the main concepts and theories that can help develop a model that conceptualises these relationships and evaluate the need for research that addresses how SMIs have used emotional bonds and leveraged the concept of personal branding to obtain economic gains, recognition and to influence their audience.

2.5 "Bourdieusian" Approach to SM

Bourdieu's sociological work constitutes a platform from which advances in the science of marketing have produced valuable academic knowledge (Gardner et al. 2005; Lyke 2017; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020). Bourdieu's holistic view of relationships takes into account the interplay between the macro and the micro, the global and local, the social and individual (Cavanaugh, Bettman and Luce 2015; Herzenstein, Sonenshein and Dholakia 2011; Pescosolido 1992), is summarised in Table 2.1.

INDUSTRY	THEORY	USE	AUTHOR
Marketing	Field-Capital	Applications and implications for marketers in competitive areas.	(Tapp and Warren 2010)
Accounting	Change and Reproduction	Re-theorise major institutional changes (innovators vs traditionalists).	(Malsch and Gendron 2013)
Management	Capital	Social and Intellectual capital use for organisational advantage.	(Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998)
Innovation	Capital	The use of intellectual capital for innovation.	(Subramaniam and Youndt 2005)
Networks	Capital	Social capital for knowledge transfer.	(Inkpen and Tsang 2005)
Business	Capital	How social and human capital affect the accumulation of economic capital in a venture's growth stages.	(Florin, Lubatkin and Schulze 2003)
Education	Capital	Teacher human and social capital on student performance for public school reform.	(Pil and Leana 2009)
Business	Capital	"Group Capital" configurations for the maximisation of effectiveness.	(Oh, Chung and Labianca 2004)

Table 2.1 Areas of Contribution of Bourdieu's Theories

The importance of Bourdieu's work in social theories lies in his theorisation that considers the wider context structuring social practices, aiming to transcend the divide between objectivism and subjectivism (Bourdieu, Coleman and Coleman 1991; Dodgson 2019; Wacquant 2018). In brief, Bourdieu's theories can be explained using the metaphor of an *International Soccer Club*, where the game would be the *field* and the players, managers, reporters and fans are the *agents*. Now imagine a player from a certain professional team; he will be endowed with "*futbolistic*" (soccer like) knowledge, skills and abilities (cultural capital) and simultaneously, he can be recognised as a top performer, a celebrity, recognised for his philanthropic work and as a brand ambassador for a multi-national organisation (symbolic capital). Additionally, he may be well connected in the sports and business world and be close to influential and high-ranking people (social capital). Therefore he has accumulated capitals that he can exchange, such as economic capital being paid for promoting a brand, participating in events that offer him public exposure by helping a friend, who in return can introduce him to more influential people. Bourdieu has conveyed these concepts in the following equation:

"(HABITUS)(CAPITAL) + FIELD = PRACTICE" (Bourdieu 1984)

Consequently, a determining factor in the adoption of this theory for this research is the conceptualisation that Bourdieu makes in relation to consumption. For him, consumption is a practice that, although experienced at the personal level, is constrained by society and is rooted in economic, cultural and socio-historic circumstances (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu 1991). These three concepts are the driving force behind the agent's abidance with the reproduction of social norms and patterns in what Bourdieu calls the "*economic*" maximisation of capital. It is the destiny of the agents to accrue whatever economic, social or cultural capital is available to them (Bourdieu 1993a; Bourdieu 1995; Wacquant 1993).

Bourdieu's theories have been successfully used to produce models that depict specific feedback loops between bloggers and consumers, and to provide practical guidelines for marketing professionals (Baumer, Sueyoshi and Tomlinson 2011; Hughes, Swaminathan and Brooks 2019; Khan et al. 2017). In this research, Bourdieu's theories can be easily applied to the digital context of SM environments. Hence, Twitter can be conceptualised as a field where members exhibit accrual of capitals, legitimising practices, hierarchies and a distinctive *habitus* (Julien 2015; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013; Zaglia 2013). The following sections outline the theories from Bourdieu's scholarship used in this research.

2.5.1 The Agents

Bourdieu uses the concept of the agent to denote more than just an individual in the social world. For him, an *"agent"* is a player that is willing to "*play the game*"; in their most elemental form they are the subjects of acts situated in an environment (Bogart 1987; Lawson and Todd 2002; Tóth et al. 2022). In Bourdieu's theories, the differentiating conditions of an agent's existence are shaped by their family, education, religion, ethnicity and so on. These are progressively inscribed in the agent's mind and become principles that construct the "*sense of one's place*", "*one's function*" and "*one's status*" (Gulledge, Roscoe and Townley 2015; Nass, Isbister and Lee 2000; Roling and Vieira 2014).

As their name implies, agents exercise "*agency*", which is the conscious act of applying a series of cognitive structures (series of classification systems) that are internalised in the various aspects of social life (Paldam 2000; Schiff 1992; Widén-Wulff et al. 2008). Agency for Bourdieu is the inherent ability that every person has of understanding and being in control of their own decisions (as opposed to social-determinism theories), which should be understood within the socio-cultural context, taking improvisation into account (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu

1986; Durkheim 2003). These internalised classification systems and structures become acquired *"practical knowledge"* that pre-exists in the agents, linking the agents directly to a society creating a shared, meaningful and social world (Arsel and Bean 2013; Bourdieu 1984; Wacquant 2015).

2.5.2 The Field

For Bourdieu, the field is a metaphor for the environment where practices take place and structures take shape, in the form of institutions, rules, norms, codes, values, classes and appointments that generate hierarchies inside social clusters. Bourdieu conceptualises that the field changes as the participants, practices, rules and structures change, and the specific hierarchies in each social cluster produce a certain way of thinking and acting in its members (Bourdieu, Coleman and Coleman 1991; Collyer, Willis and Lewis 2017; Saatcioglu and Ozanne 2013). As the field can be interpreted as an arena in which the players constantly struggle for power and to determine how the values (capitals), should be distributed (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Onishi and Manchanda 2012; Skeggs 2005), there are as many fields as there are social spaces where each one has its *habitus* (individual practices, logic and norms) that govern it. Thus, the practices that take place in a field and the *agent's* lifestyles are distinctive from those of other fields (Anheier, Gerhards and Romo 1995; Collyer, Willis and Lewis 2017; DiMaggio and Mohr 1985).

Bourdieu's theory of the field has facilitated the study of practices, structures, categorisation and social norms in social groups and can easily be applied at either a micro- or macro-societal level (Davies 2017; Galli and Müller-Stewens 2012; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020). Lastly*,* another concept that emerges from this understanding of the field is the "*illusion"* or the belief in the game (Gartman 2002; Panofsky 2011; Wacquant 1993). This concept institutes the "*apparent"* way, boundaries under which the actors play the game and how others see them. For example, in the world of luxury goods, where the expression of social differences and distances are more than obvious; their consumption requires not only money but also means that allow their respective cultural appropriation.

2.5.3 Habitus, Practices and Doxa

Central to Bourdieu's *"Theory of the Field"* is the attention to the motives, practices and structures that are inherent in the agent's everyday life. These are detailed in Bourdieu's concepts of habits (*habitus*), practices and norms (*doxa*), which enable the study of

manifestation, beliefs and reproduction in a social group at the micro-level (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Ki and Kim 2019; Lyke 2017). Bourdieu continues to elaborate on the concepts that define actions and beliefs in each agent and links them to the field as follows:

"The relation between habitus and field operates in two ways. On one side, it is a relation of conditioning; the field structures the habitus … on the other, it is a relation of cognitive construction. Habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world… Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127)

As this research focuses on how SMIs form bonds with their audiences that lead to behavioural changes and consumptive practices prompted by the SMI's influence, the following sections examine Bourdieu's scholarship on the subject of a user's habits, practices and the rules that govern these.

2.5.3.1 The *Habitus*

The word "*habitus*" originates from Latin and it refers to the typical or habitual state, condition or appearance of something (Gambetti 2020; Gulledge, Roscoe and Townley 2015; Scott et al. 2017). Nonetheless, the concept of *habitus* for Bourdieu is far more complex than just simply a "*habit*". It is a scheme that operates below the level of consciousness and forms "*systems of durable, transposable dispositions/structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures*" (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu 1984; Gambetti 2020).

Habitus in the *"Bourdieusian"* sense is an intrinsic force, which by merit of a consensus acts in a way that is not evident to the actor (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu 2002; Pernicka et al. 2021). This concept gives meaning to the relationship between practices and situations, allowing the agent to make sense of the world, shaping all the encounters with "*structuring structures*". Hence the *habitus* encompasses all the values of an agent that make it act in a particular way, such as a person's culture, values, history and experiences. *Habitus* is an embodied social structure that determines everyday practices and that governs without being regular rules. In his book *Sociology in Question* Bourdieu discusses the intricacies inherent in this concept (Bourdieu 1993b; Shin 2013; Wacquant 2015).

Habitus is expressed in the form of freedoms and moralities institutionalised in the agent during their lifetime (Bourdieu 1984; Gaddis 2013; Wacquant 2014). The merit of this concept lies in the fact that its study considers the previously acquired and internalised knowledge that

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the agent has acquired from the world. Hence, the *habitus* is an embodied scheme that originates from the collective and the individual's historical experiences (Drumwright and Kamal 2015; MacArthur et al. 2017; Muensit, Thongyou and Lapanunb 2019). *Habitus* is a concept that, despite critiques of opposing objectivists and academics, plays an important social function during the educational process. Bourdieu conceptualises the educational process inculcates a certain *habitus*, allowing the socialisation between students (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Wacquant 2014; Wacquant 2018). Moreover, it implies an unconscious set of social structures that provide a sense of social status, distinction and acceptance producing cohesion within societies (Cole 2011; Lareau 2015; Vaara and Faÿ 2012).

2.5.3.2   Practices

Bourdieu's theories make use of the symbolism hidden in the dynamics of social groups to find the principles of "*logic of practice*" that govern and create hierarchies in such groups (Bourdieu 1990a; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020; Wacquant 2004).

In Bourdieu's theories, a person's preference and choice of "*social goods",* such as clothing or possessions with cultural and symbolic meaning, such as designer items, and the exhibition of consumptive practices is the result of the interactions between *habitus* and capitals*.* The importance of these social goods lies in the fact their possession is embedded in the core of the concept of social class, from which dispositions and reproduction practices originate (Ahmad 2014; Keinan et al. 2015; Pham, Valette-Florence and Vigneron 2018). Bourdieu differentiates replication from reproduction, as the latter implies that it is internalised by the agent influencing behaviour, the thinking process and the physical actions that can vary depending on their context (Amis, Mair and Munir 2020; Bourdieu 1977; Ni et al. 2014). For him, a practice ("*praxis"*) is a "*structuring structure*", a reproducible cognitive operation that guides social interactions and is controlled by the agent's acquired understanding of themselves and their environment.

By using this framework, the knowledge gained can act as both "*structure"* or "*modus operadum",* subject to objectification and as "*structuring"* or "*modus operandi"* that forms thought and action in the members of a group (Gambetti 2020; Grenfell 2014; Wacquant 2014).

2.5.3.3   Doxa (Rules)

The *doxa* is another constituent that allows the agent to function in the social world. For Bourdieu the *doxa* is in the form of norms, rules and regulations that are true for the agent (Bourdieu 1996a; Drumwright and Kamal 2015; Lyke 2017). The *doxa* allows agents to discern what is wrong from what is right, what is acceptable or not, what is sacred or mundane, what has value and what does not, and thus it is a fundamental factor that structures and organises society. Bourdieu attributes its origin to manuals, texts and similar instruments that institute, the sense of "*right and wrong*":

> *"The field of doxa, of that which is beyond question and which each agent tacitly accords by the mere fact of acting in accord with social convention, is itself a fundamental objective at stake in that form of class struggle which is the struggle for the imposition of the dominant systems of classification"* (Bourdieu 1977: 169)

For Bourdieu, while the *doxa* plays a crucial part in the structuring of society, his theories are vague in describing the heterodoxy of this concept (Drumwright and Kamal 2015; Lyke 2017; Vaara and Faÿ 2012). Nevertheless, the *doxa* is an important part of reproduction practices as it promotes "*symbolic violence"* or the prevailing values that the elite impose on other people (MacArthur et al. 2017; Skippon and Garwood 2011; Wolter et al. 2016).

2.5.4   The Capitals

Bourdieu borrows from economic theories of capitalism the notion of capital and uses it to expand its meaning so that it becomes a theoretical aid for understanding the interplays, exchanges and negotiations between the agents (Bourdieu 1986; Gretzinger and Royer 2014; Portes 1998). The main advantage of using a "*Bourdieusian"* approach is that it provides a rigorous scientific lens that incorporates the macro and the micro, subjective and objective views, the personal and the collective, to form a comprehensive unified theory (Christoforou 2016; Claussen, Wacquant and Akçaoğlu 2017; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020).

A *"capital"* is a form of competency, power, credit, endowment or accumulated labour that a person can have access to, acquire or spend. Each capital is made up of a set of distinct skills, dispositions, tastes and *habitus,* each signified by its specific components. It can also be objectified or embodied and if invested one can expect to reap profits from it. It can be

produced and reproduced in many ways and its distribution provides a structure for the social world. Although Bourdieu conceptualises that there are many other existing types of capitals, each one being field-dependent, in his sociology he introduces four main forms of capitals: economic, cultural, social and symbolic (Coulson et al. 2015; Molina et al. 2017; Prieto and Wang 2010). Bourdieu refers to the creation and exchange of these capitals as *"The Economy of Practice"*, as these are the pillars of his sociological scholarship.

The "*Economy of Practice*" refers to the ways and conditions of how the capitals are created and exchanged by the agents, which vary depending on the field in which these take place (Bradford and Sherry 2013; Katila et al. 2022; Üstüner and Thompson 2012). The resulting *habitus* and capitals, regardless of whether these were acquired by traditional or non-traditional means, such as endowment or acquisition, are specific to its function as a source of inculcation and is bound to the particularities and milieus of the field in question (Bourdieu 1984; Mayrhofer et al. 2004; Wacquant 2011). Hence, the context in which these are applied, for example, food, agriculture, recreation, finance and politics, influences the amount of specific capital accumulated.

An "*International Soccer Club"* metaphor explains these concepts, set in a scenario where club managers want to add a new player who is deemed as a top performer. Hence when making the selection process these managers will look for soccer players that meet the required criteria and would exclude interviewing a player from a different sport, such as baseball or basketball, as although they can be a top performer in their area of expertise, their abilities and knowledge would not translate into a completely different field, for example soccer. In the same manner, the exchange of capitals between agents will have either a beneficial or an unfavourable effect under the governance of the different field-related practice and although some fields may intersect with another, for example music and dance, this is not always the case (Desmond and Sarah 2006; Wacquant 2011; Zugravu-Soilita et al. 2021).

2.5.4.1   Economic Capital

Economic capital in its classical economic form consists of money, financial goods and possessions; for example properties or investments, that can be easily exchanged for common currency (Anheier, Gerhards and Romo 1995; Bourdieu 1984; Malsch and Gendron 2013).

The owner of economic capital can enjoy the power accompanying it, by creating distance between themselves and economic necessities, and giving access to means otherwise not available (Chernilo, Fine and Wacquant 2013; Claussen, Wacquant and Akçaoğlu 2017; Jafari, Aly and Doherty 2022). Bourdieu uses the case of culinary practices to illustrate how the choice of products can signal the different capitals accrued by a person. This act is a functional exercise in personal taste, as in Figure 2.4:

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Figure 2.4 The Economy of Practice in the Food Space (Bourdieu 1984)

2.5.4.2   Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is the value that derives from consumer preferences, tastes, attributes, skills and abilities that enhances a person's opportunities to move upwards socially (Gaddis 2013; Lareau 2015; Tapp and Warren 2010). For Bourdieu, culture is an embodied representation of cultural capital which is governed by two independent logics, that of the field of production and that of the field of consumption (Erickson 1996; Gartman 2002; Hannerz 1992). Hence cultural practice and consumption must be understood in terms of social variations across class structures. These can be demonstrated in an agent being able to speak several languages or having musical skills, cultural knowledge, academic certifications and awards.

However, under this scholarship, the producers of cultural goods fall mainly into the categories of artists, intellectuals and other professionals, dedicated and consecrated to the exercises of art and culture despite their own economic and social wellbeing. Hence, some of the ways that SMI's can construct cultural capital in their positions are:

► Entertainment factor: The narratives and entertainment factors of SMI's retaining attention, gain shares and with viral consequences (Akpinar and Berger 2017; France, Vaghefi and Zhao 2016; Reinikainen et al. 2020).

► Exercising taste: In studies of fashion and design bloggers (McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013; Stringfellow et al. 2013), the authors see fashion bloggers as individuals who leverage their cultural capital by repeatedly exercising their function of judgement and taste.

► Providing expert advice: When SMI address audiences with advice, whether gained on their own or by their audience's initiative, it allows them to create stronger bonds with their audiences and gain their trust, legitimising their positions (Djafarova and Rushworth 2017; Johns and English 2016; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2016).

2.5.4.3   Social Capital

The term "*social capital*" has been used abundantly within the academic and industry literature, creating a divergence in its definition (Adler and Kwon 2002; Eloire 2015; Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998). Even though the definition of social capital has been argued by academics such as Pierre Bourdieu, who defines it as a social relationship in stratified societies that can be exchanged and accumulated (Bourdieu 1986; Pernicka et al. 2021; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020), and Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam, whose widely-adopted definition describes it as the "*collective value of all social networks and the inclinations that arise from these networks to collaborate with each other, norms of reciprocity*" (Putnam 2000). The value of this concept arises from the benefits, assets and resources that a person or group can derive, harness and mobilise from the relationships with others and their network of social contacts.

The academic literature has examined the importance of social capital as a form of economic and cultural capital (resources and assets that society considers valuable) that promote exchanges and social mobility, confer social status and ultimately, power between its members (Amiraslani et al. 2021; Ferragina and Arrigoni 2017; MacArthur et al. 2017). Hence, social capital can be exchanged for symbolic or economic capital in the same way as any other type of currency. Other definitions of social capital have incorporated additional attributes and dimensions to this concept concerning its internal and/or external effects, as observed in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Definitions of Social Capital (Adler and Kwon 2002)

To conclude, despite the many definitions, applications and opposing views about social capital, the previous sections have evidenced that the theoretical benefits and importance of social capital make it amenable to the study of human relations, networks, groups and organisations, resulting in important theoretical and empirical advances across numerous academic fields (Adam and Rončević 2003; Anheier, Gerhards and Romo 1995; Coleman 1988). Given the importance of SNS for building relationships and "*social capital*" with

potentially millions of users (Amiraslani et al. 2021; Hashemy, Yousefi and Soodi 2016; Recuero, Amaral and Monteiro 2012), there is a strong case for applying these theoretical ideas here, to show how these platforms can help:

► Consolidate informal social ties through shared experiences.
► Enhance the individuals' sense of membership in their community.
► Offer the means of discussing and resolving divisions and conflicts within a community.

2.5.4.3.1 Negative Social Capital

While social capital can lead to positive outcomes, there is a dark side to this concept that implies adverse or harmful consequences. Hence, "*negative*" social capital takes place when an actor can secure resources through its social connections with a negative outcome (Canhoto et al. 2015; Portes and Landolt 2000; Putnam 2001). In the case of sects, gangs or radical groups; close social connections can secure resources for a particular group, but these can also block access and exclude others. Here, the presence of strong social ties and shared beliefs help members secure benefits and limit their actions under a shared strict orthodoxy in their roles and capabilities (Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006; Portes 1998; Üstüner and Holt 2010).

Hence, groups or organisations that arise from a shared opposition to topics, ideas or organisations will most likely exercise negative social capital to attain their goals and binding their members (Cooper, Hamman and Weber 2020; Portes and Landolt 2000; Putnam 2001). Different network configurations will present different advantages or disadvantages to their members. However, social networks that exhibit strong bonds and similarities between actors are most likely to exhibit fewer flexible norms and criteria for membership (bonding social capital), while networks where actors come from diverse backgrounds are more likely to exhibit lower levels of bridging social capital, weaker ties and looser cohesion (Behtoui 2016; Simons et al. 2021; Tiwari, Lane and Alam 2019).

2.5.4.4 Symbolic Capital

Bourdieu proposes that symbolic capital represents a person's resources based on honour, prestige, authority or recognition functioning as an embodiment of value (Heracleous and Marshak 2004; MacArthur et al. 2017; Phillip and Dennis 2011). Bourdieu linked this capital with the concept of "*distinction*" through observing students who paid for the "*symbolic capital*"

and distinction of belonging to French educational institutions with high rankings or prestige that promise a higher-class degree and the opportunities associated with it (Bennett et al. 2009; Bourdieu 1996a; Savage et al. 2013):

"Once one realizes that symbolic capital is always credit, in the widest sense of the word, i.e., a sort of advance which the group alone can grant those who give it the best material and symbolic guarantees, it can be seen that the exhibition of symbolic capital (which is always very expensive in economic terms) is one of the mechanisms which (no doubt universally) make capital go to capital" (Bourdieu 1977: 181)

Hence, *symbolic capital* can be traded for short-term profits and can serve as a mediator, which defines the distribution that emerges from the exchange of capitals (Bourdieu 1998; Eiteneyer, Bendig and Brettel 2019; Zugravu-Soilita et al. 2021), as described in the next section.

2.5.4.4.1   Distinction

One of the most important ways that agents display their symbolic capital is by being recognised as *"distinct"* or as a member of the elite, by other agents in the field. For Bourdieu, class is the same as "*distinction*", which has been associated with high culture and is considered a type of *habitus*, involving practices and tastes generally associated with the elite (upper classes) (Bourdieu 1986; Claussen, Wacquant and Akçaoğlu 2017; Highmore 2017). Each field has gatekeepers and a set of particular practices that legitimise their role, which simultaneously enact the *habitus* of the field and promote reproduction to maintain the order of classes (Bourdieu 1986; Entwistle and Rocamora 2006; Ibrahim 2013).

2.5.4.4.2   Aesthetic Judgement and Taste

Another central concept in Bourdieu's analysis is the concept of aesthetics. As this research focuses on beauty SMIs, it is important to clarify the different constructs, theories and measures that could relate to the concept of beauty and aesthetics in Bourdieu's sociology.

For Bourdieu, in the same manner as the classical Greek philosophers, aesthetics is not solely related to beauty. Rather, it is more sublime and ethereal, a special kind of *habitus* that transcends and permeates all aspects of life, from what people eat, wear, live, even how they speak and see the world. It is the "*aesthetic judgement*" that shapes taste and preferences, while cultural tastes are social constructs located in the context of a class-oriented *habitus*

(Barker 2004; Highmore 2017; Lareau 2015). This sense can be credited as "*aesthetic capital*" and determines the agent's location in society and the milieu of each class based on the production and consumption of cultural and symbolic products. It also helps perpetuate the divisions of social structures of society and in turn, shapes every action taken based on the social class that an agent belongs to (Ahmad 2014; Bourdieu 1994; Sunikka-Blank, Galvin and Behar 2017).

It is important to note that for Bourdieu, the exercise of aesthetic judgement, although well practised at the individual level, is bound by a socio-cultural and historic context, as well as being subject to the conditions set out by the different capitals and the rules of the field (Ashley 2014; Bourdieu 1994; Entwistle 2002). The concepts related to the field of beauty to be used in this research are summarised in Table 2.3. These concepts are important as this research focuses on beauty SMIs and consequently these constructs represent important motivations behind the content, purchases and behaviour that are posted and shared in SNS by the SMIs and their audiences.

BEAUTY AS	FIELD	DEFINITION / USE	AUTHOR
BODILY EXIS	Marketing	Beauty (and how to obtain it) is embodied and displayed in plastic surgery websites.	(Merianos, Vidourek and King 2013)
POPULARITY	Sociology	Beauty enhances the effects of popularity.	(Abeer and Quiñonez 2015)
DISPLAY	Marketing	Selfie-Users look to fulfil two basic needs by posting selfies in SM: the need to belong and the need for self-presentation.	(Ma, Yang and Wilson 2017)
STATUS	Sociology	Beauty (or attractiveness) affects results and interaction patterns.	(Webster and Driskell 1983)
SELF-PRESENTATION	Marketing	There is limited literature regarding the Selfie phenomena in marketing that needs empirical and systematic data before it can be considered for marketing planning.	(Ma, Yang and Wilson 2017)
		Measure: Development of a coding scheme for selfies based on.	(Qiu, Tang and Whinston 2015)
		There is a link between brand personality and the ideal self.	(Malär et al. 2011)
	Sociology	New research should investigate culture's role in online self-representation.	(Kedzior, Allen and Schroeder 2016)
PRACTICE	Marketing	The location where the selfie was taken (bedrooms, inside cars, etc.) may be an indicator of consumer grooming rituals.	(Ma, Yang and Wilson 2017)

Table 2.3 Main Concepts of Beauty

According to Bourdieu, a product can be seen as an instrument of authority and legitimacy, endowed with the structural logic and reinforcing capacity assigned to it by a social group or class (Fuchs et al. 2013; Kobayashi, Jackson and Sam 2017; Lareau 2015). Consequently, aesthetics gives meaning to the exercising of judgements in taste. It is observable and explainable in each field in members of the same class and the exercise of taste is constantly being perpetuated by the *habitus*, as a practical concept that identifies the particularities found in these groups (Bourdieu 1984). He proposes that these concepts can be visualised in a Cartesian graph, where the axis represents the relationship between capitals and dispositions, such as is presented in Figure 2.5, which presents the "*aesthetic disposition*" generated from different amounts of capitals.

Figure 2.5 Aesthetic Disposition by Capitals (Bourdieu 1984)

For Bourdieu, "*taste*" is an acquired disposition that can be understood as a person's manifested preferences to appreciate and differentiate regardless of pre-existing distinctive knowledge. Taste is practical and can be exhibited in the act of consumption, helping determine the position of the agent in the field. It guides the agent's notions of their "*own*" place to categorise and stratify agents as a set degree of aesthetic dispositions inherent in the agent's social class. Bourdieu refers to these as a "*cultural pedigree*" (Bourdieu 1984; Highmore 2017; Sunikka-Blank, Galvin and Behar 2017).

The study of taste facilitates the research and understanding of social values and meanings that further the knowledge of other agents, groups, possessions and practices in that particular social space as described in Table 2.4.

CONCEPTS	FIELD	THEORY	AUTHORS
Influence, taste	Marketing Fashion	Influence is a driver of Taste	(Godart and Mears 2009; Godart and Galunic 2019)
Taste, capitals	Sociology	Taste is derived from the competition for capitals between social agents located in stratified, segmented fields.	(Bourdieu 1984)
Taste, habitus, reproduction	Sociology	Taste formation results from ingrained dispositions, *Habitus*, indicating that unconsciously existing social structures and social status distinctions tend to be reproduced.	(Bourdieu 1984)
Taste, culture	Sociology	Taste is an aspect of culture.	(Lamont and Lareau 1988)

Table 2.4 Theories About Taste

The exercising of taste plays a key role in the increase or decrease of an agent's capitals, as when taste is displayed or commented on, the resulting opinions of others help determine the position of the agent in the social world. This aesthetic practice will signal distinction and

social distance if properly executed (Abeer and Quiñonez 2015; Spence et al. 2017; Zamudio 2016). An example of how taste levels can affect the public perception of an agent is seen when the media reviews the outfits worn by celebrities in events such as the Oscars or the BAFTA awards, where positive reviews can increase an actor's prominence and motivate studies to contract them, but under a negative review, the same actor may suffer considerable critiques and see a decrease in their work engagements.

2.5.4.4.3   Opinion Leaders in SNS

In today's SMS-mediated world, it is the consumer who leads on communicating brand messages and who can influence product design, prices and features (Labrecque et al. 2013; Rezabakhsh et al. 2006; Yang and Li 2016). These capabilities are made possible within SNS because of the structure the platforms are built upon. The ability to reach many millions of people instantly enables the user to spread their message faster than previously possible.

The academic literature has shown that distinct users, such as opinion leaders, lead users and SMIs, exhibit characteristics that correspond to Bourdieu's dominant classes in an online environment (see Table 2.5).

LEAD USERS EXHIBIT	BOURDEU'S CONCEPT	AUTHOR
Distinctive social network position.	Distinction, Class	(Hudson et al. 2016)
Unusually high level of "*betweenness centrality*", meaning that they are positioned as bridges between different social groups.	Social capital: Bonding and Bridging	(Fang et al. 2012)
The influence of reviewer credibility and the moderating effects of price and rating…. reviewer expertise in terms of the number of "*elite*" badges and reviewer online attractiveness in the number of friends both helped a review receive helpfulness votes (badging).	Legitimisation and Habitus, Symbolic, Cultural and Social Capital, Distinction	(McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013)
The megaphone effect refers to the fact that the web makes a mass audience potentially available to ordinary consumers without the institutional mediation historically required. Fashion bloggers acquire an audience by iterated displays of aesthetic discrimination (selection and combination) of clothing. Their success depends on the accumulation of cultural capital via public displays of taste, that produces economic rewards and social capital.	Field, Taste, Distinction, Cultural, Symbolic and Social Capital	(Entwistle and Rocamora 2006)
Fashion blogs are one of the most lucrative branches of user-generated content (UGC) and distinguished fashion and beauty bloggers occupy prominent places.	Field, Distinction, Taste, Social Distance	(Lampel and Bhalla 2007)
Informational gift-giving, besides being driven by altruism and reciprocity; is also strongly driven by status and status-seeking and that status sentiments are more likely to sustain virtual communities.	Distinction, Class and Social Capital	(Duffy and Hund 2015)

Table 2.5 Relationships Between Lead-User Attributes and Bourdieu's Concepts

Although this table illustrates the helpfulness of online reviews and offers examples of their practical application, previous research identified that verified reviews written by opinion leaders do not necessarily receive "*helpfulness votes*", "*likes*" or "*shares*". This is an important observation that grants insight into the moderating circumstances that may hinder the authority of an opinion leader online, as trusted opinions do not mean that these are

popularised. On the contrary, research has demonstrated that if an opinion leader has posted inaccurate information, their credibility and reputation can be damaged even if the fault is not of their own making (Djafarova and Rushworth 2017; Hudson et al. 2016; Muskat 2020). However, the literature has yet to theorise these circumstances and their effect on opinion leadership using Bourdieu's scholarship.

2.5.4.5   The Exchange of Capitals

Bourdieu proposed an analysis of the field based on three capitals: economic, social and symbolic capital, where the result of the exchange (transactions) of these capitals allow an agent to gain or "*buy*" a position in that field (Luna-Cortés 2017; Muensit, Thongyou and Lapanunb 2019; Wacquant 2004). The field gives value (volume) and structure (hierarchy) to these transactions or exchanges that transform one form of capital into another. Although these transactions are constantly occurring in the social world, all transactions must take place under established rules set by the society.

For Bourdieu, the capitals can exist in three different forms: the embodied, the objectified and the institutionalised state. These forms may or may not be easily exchangeable into other forms of capital (Amiraslani et al. 2021; Erickson 1996; Labban, Moore and Dubé 2011). An example of an embodied state is a specific disposition; an objectified and institutionalised state, which can be represented by material possessions. Some exchanges of capitals are straightforward, for example turning money (economic capital) into cultural capital through qualifications or gaining economic capital from the sale of "*cultural goods"* (Bennett et al. 2013; Bourdieu 1986; Skeggs 2004). For the embodied forms of capital, Bourdieu presupposes that a process of inculcation, personal investment and assimilation has taken place over time within the context of *habitus* rather than because of a spontaneous event where, for example, a person's social network can provide them with more opportunities and, therefore, they can obtain economic capital in return, which can be re-invested in cultural capital. The display of cultural capital in this case, is more likely to be used for gaining acceptance and status in society, therefore acquiring further social capital.

Bourdieu came to this realisation when researching the academic performance of school children in France. He noticed that parents who had access to high culture, social status and economic capital financially supported or passed the capitals to their children, who then used them to gain profits, such as better academic performance, acquiring more skills or knowledge than those who did not (Bontis 1998; Hockings 2011; Pil and Leana 2009). However, he was

cautious when considering the total volume of capitals as, unlike money or liquid assets, the accounting of each type of capital possesses different and fluctuating "*conversion rates*" (Behtoui 2016; Bourdieu 1986; Florin, Lubatkin and Schulze 2003).

2.5.5 Power, Consumption and Reproduction

Previous research has used the *"Bourdieusian"* lens to shed light on consumption practices and the struggles for actor legitimacy in a field (Coskuner-Balli 2013; Krämer 2017; Limkangvanmongkol et al. 2015); where items such as cosmetics, clothing or furnishings become opportunities for an individual to assert their rank and position in the social space (Bourdieu 1984). Thus, under Bourdieu's scholarship, concepts such as distinction, aesthetic judgement and taste are adopted objectively or subjectively by an agent; to then help support the act of consumption by providing "*social proof*" (justification) to validate indulgent consumption and reduce conflict (Poor, Duhachek and Krishnan 2013; Sunikka-Blank, Galvin and Behar 2017; Warde 2014).

Consequently, this type of lens could be helpful in uncovering how SMIs promote and legitimise beauty-related consumption practices by promoting the use of makeup and beauty products. These concepts and their implications are explained in detail in the following sections.

2.5.5.1   Consumption

Consumption practices play an important role in Bourdieu's scholarship, which has been influenced by renowned sociologists such as Marx, Weber and Durkheim, as reflected in his concern for the study of class, stratification and cultures (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu 1996a). More importantly, Bourdieu conceptualisation of markets, consumption and consumers has been transposed to marketing scholarship, where the act of consumption goes beyond its functional attributes to constitute a signal of expression, status and class, as well as a reflection of *habitus*, culture and social behaviour (Leban et al. 2020; Savage et al. 2013; Veblen 2009).

Bourdieu suggests that if an object is recognised to signal quality, prestige or distinction, its possession will confer authority and reinforce the dispositions of that class to its owner. Hence, the possession of certain objects is related to specific capitals creating certain dispositions in the agent and facilitating the continued accrual of that capital (Bourdieu 1984;

Erickson 1996; Zugravu-Soilita et al. 2021). More importantly, consumption practices also follow a hierarchical structure in society, where as part of the domination of the upper classes, their choices and preferences in consumption behaviours help maintain their social distance, which at the same time, legitimises their position as these practices become references for the lower classes to follow (Athwal and Arnott 2014; Grier and Deshpandé 2001; Lieber-Milo 2021).

2.5.5.2   Power (Symbolic Violence)

Evident throughout Bourdieu's work is the study of how dominant classes benefit from their capitals and exert a subtle type of domination that is legitimised and imitated by the subjugated classes. While Bourdieu's sociological theories have been applied in numerous settings, these originated in the study of the distinctive dynamics of power and control exerted by the dominant classes in the political field (Claussen, Wacquant and Akçaoğlu 2017; Harvey et al. 2020; Wacquant 2003). Bourdieu calls this type of domination "s*ymbolic violence*", and its attributes differ depending on whether it is social capital or an institutionalised social structure that this type of violence generates (Callahan and Sandlin 2007; Chernilo, Fine and Wacquant 2013; Foss and Hallberg 2017).

When an individual or a group applies symbolic violence to another, the result is a form of *"social subjugation"*, which helps form and divide social groups into classes (Amis, Mair and Munir 2020; Chernilo, Fine and Wacquant 2013; Zugravu-Soilita et al. 2021). The subjugated group will try to mimic (reproduce) the beliefs, values and disposition of those in the upper-class, allowing the elite to remain legitimate and appropriate. Symbolic violence can take the form of titles, nobilities and academic degrees. In some others, it can be riches, conspicuous consumption and the exhibition of luxury or lavish lifestyles, often gaining followers through emulation, such as when the preferences of upper-class members favouring a certain designer brand has stimulated its sale within the middle and lower class (Chernilo, Fine and Wacquant 2013; Erickson 1996; Spence et al. 2017). The effect of exercising this type of violence is the constant *distinction* of the agents who hold such capitals and their benefits from those who do not, creating social distance and differentiation in these groups (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Pernicka et al. 2021; Vaara and Faÿ 2012).

The concepts of symbolic and cultural goods are at the centre of this research, as the products used and promoted by SMIs acquire significance and meaning, which is passed on from the SMI to the consumer who acquires them (Claussen, Wacquant and Akçaoğlu 2017;

Muensit, Thongyou and Lapanunb 2019; Rojek 2014). In *"The Market of Symbolic Goods"* Bourdieu considers that the producers of symbolic goods need to have a principle of legitimisation as these go against orthodoxy, and suggests that products with both cultural and commercial value, despite being relatively independent of each other, should be economically sanctioned to elevate their cultural worthiness (Bourdieu 1985; Markus 2021; Nguyen and Özçaglar-Toulouse 2021). In other words, if these capabilities are seen as products their value would vary depending on their brand and the specifics of the products themselves. In higher education, this would relate to the different range of institutions, their trajectories and education styles.

2.5.5.3 Structures and Reproduction

Bourdieu's social theories offer a robust content-dependent framework that is well suited for the analysis of social structures, such as a "*network of users*" in SM. The following sections discuss useful concepts, measures and associations identified in these theories and their relevance in the present study.

An important part of Bourdieu's theory focuses on the maintenance of the social structures, how they are incorporated by an actor and passed on by conceptualising reproduction and change. For Bourdieu, the stability of the social structures relies on constant domination from the higher classes using forms of forwardly innovating into new products, trends and areas, carving paths for the lower classes to follow. In the classical sense, the dominant classes must always look for novel ways to maintain their social distance from the subjugated classes to secure and maintain their status, leadership and ultimately, their power and control (Behtoui 2016; Belliveau, O'Reilly and Wade 1996; Savage et al. 2013). Change is not something that Bourdieu considered is replicated throughout all subjugated agents of the lower class. Instead, his theories state that agents are prone to change based upon the capitals they have accrued and their *habitus* (Bourdieu 2001). Hence Bourdieu developed models of how reproduction and change operate in an agent, founded on the concepts of *habitus*, structures and practices. These interactions are illustrated in Figure 2.6 and extended model of Bourdieu's theories of reproduction and change is presented in Figure 2.7.

Figure 2.6 Minimal Model of Reproduction and Change (Bourdieu 1990b: 101)

Figure 2.7 Extended Reproduction and Change Model (Bourdieu 1990b)

This research also focuses on the concept of *"reproduction"* of consumption practices. Consequently, it is essential to consider Bourdieu's elaboration of how the dominant classes establish such practices and their adoption by the subjugated groups, to understand how influence operates between an SMI and its audience. How reproduction practices are established in a society is illustrated in Figure 2.8.

Figure 2.8 The Reproduction Cycle (Bourdieu 1990b)

2.6   Gaps in the Current SMI Literature

As with any academic study, the development of knowledge regarding SMIs as a social phenomenon carries difficulties. These mainly relate to issues surrounding the lack of guidelines in the labelling of sponsored content and the technological constraints in measuring an SMI's advertising campaign ROI. So far, marketing researchers and practitioners have considered statistics such as the number of followers, likes, shares and visits to the SMI's website as measures of the effectiveness of SMIs in marketing strategy. However, there is a lack of knowledge about the quality of those contacts or the kind of value they can deliver long-term. These are crucial factors that need to be understood and considered when choosing endorsers for brands (Delbaere, Michael and Phillips 2021; Harrigan et al. 2021; von Mettenheim and Wiedmann 2021). Many marketing agencies advertise "*finding influencers in seconds*" based on their characteristics, conversations and reach (Influencer Ltd 2022; Insightpool 2016; SocialEdge 2021), hoping to capitalise on the current desire that many brands have of using them to promote their products.

Critiques of celebrity−brand pairings include academic models that look at incongruences, low-profitability and technological restraints (cross-network and cross-device tracking is not yet available), leave many questions unanswered (Chan, Kara and Fan 2022; Mittal 2021; Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget 2020). Conversely, the impact of credibility analysed in celebrity−brand associations reveals a symbiotic relationship between the credibility of the celebrity and the brand, with corporate credibility independent of the endorser's credibility (Bigné Alcañiz, Chumpitaz Cáceres and Currás Peréz 2010; de Veirman and Hudders 2020; Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell 2000). Thus the limitations of these studies leave room to examine what effects SNS have when a more credible brand is paired with a less credible celebrity. In this case, the SMI could be conceptualised as a "*less credible celebrity*" due to their self-made nature and lack of formal ties to industry.

Furthermore, while some academic studies have explored SMI−product congruency and its positive effect on consumer attitude, purchase intent and recommendation (Belanche et al. 2021; Biswas, Biswas and Das 2006; Janssen, Schouten and Croes 2022), limited attention is given to identifying how SMI−audience interactions and emotional bonds affect these relationships. Under these circumstances, the study of SMIs could fill some of those gaps in knowledge given that they are not mainstream authorities, professionals, athletes or celebrities (Khamis, Ang and Welling 2016; Main 2017; Wisenberg Brin 2018).

SNS are platforms used by people to publicly criticise, denounce and express their opposition. SMIs have frequently become embroiled in these controversies, often with negative effects, especially in terms of the credibility and reputation of the brands associated with them (Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell 2000). Therefore there is a need for new academic knowledge concerning the effect of this loss of credibility and improper behaviour on an SMI's social capital and their repercussions for SMI−brand relationships (Khamis, Ang and Welling 2016; Main 2017; Wisenberg Brin 2018).

While social capital has been widely explored from multiple academic perspectives, most of the research has taken place in western countries such as the USA, creating a knowledge gap in the measurement of "*online social capital*' at a wider global scale (Amiraslani et al. 2021; Knack and Keefer 1997; Labban, Moore and Dubé 2011). Consequently, the identified knowledge gaps guided the development of the methodology and data collection strategies used in this doctoral thesis.

2.6.1 Relationships and Information Flow

Prior to the emergence of SM, users played a passive role as information recipients in a controlled environment that involved means of mass communication that followed models of predictability. But the appearance and adoption of SM and digital environments involves much complexity, that many times the relationship between cause and effect is clear due to constant interplay between agents and networks (Leban et al. 2020; Lopez, Magliocca and Crooks 2019; Poushter 2016). As the use of SNS has increasingly become an important part of people's everyday life, with users accessing SNS such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube multiple times a day and viewing routinely using their digital devices, organisations across a variety of sectors are changing the way they operate to embrace *"networked society"* (Bauman 2013; Castells 2004; Kidd 2017).

While academic studies have looked at SMIs under human brand, attractiveness and attachment theories, to conclude that these generate increased attachment in the SMI's followers, the methodology used in these studies was mainly self-administered surveys focusing on "*micro-influencers*" with sample sizes below 1,000 respondents (Harrigan et al. 2021; von Mettenheim and Wiedmann 2021; Wisenberg Brin 2018). Such studies suggest that emotional bonding leads to follower loyalty, credit marketing messages and lower resistance, without altering the perception as advertising. However, these studies do not explain the mechanisms used by the SMI to create such bonds and attachments, nor are their sample

sizes big enough to justify a robust creation of knowledge for other than "*micro-influencers*", as mainstream SMIs have audiences that range in the millions of followers. Because celebrity source attractiveness can improve recall, but only marginally increase a consumer's purchase intent (Atkins and Block 1983; Mittal 2021; Warner 2013), and given that factors such as congruency have been demonstrated to be ambivalent, as incongruent sponsors can be recruited by brands as part of a change in their advertising or positioning strategy (Sirgy and Su 2000; Skippon et al. 2016; von Mettenheim and Wiedmann 2021), this research does not focus on these issues. Instead, it focuses on the SMI's application of "*social influence*" as a member of the "*elite",* who has access to mass mediums of communication, and acts as an information gatekeeper to influence the opinions of their audiences and shape their purchasing practices and behaviours.

While management researchers have developed step-wise models that explain how credibility can be achieved by SMIs, such as by acquiring friends and followers, obtaining likes, favourites and shares; gaining comments and engagement, making promises and commitments and fulfilling these commitments to attain credibility (Peters 2014), these models often lack empirical testing to support their validity.

2.6.2 Marketing Practices in Social Media

SNS present a new opportunity for brands to interact with consumers and respond to new challenges, enabling a means to directly communicate, collaborate and relate to customers and other stakeholders (Cheng and Shiu 2020; Sashi, Brynildsen and Bilgihan 2019; Shah, Widjaya and Smith 2021). Nevertheless, digital media have altered traditional branding strategies and created new challenges for creating awareness, building loyalty and consumer satisfaction (Krämer 2017; Lepkowska-White and Imboden 2013; Pires, Stanton and Rita 2006).

Thus SM has created new avenues for digital engagement and new customer journeys, forcing marketing activities to adapt and develop new practices, such as digital content marketing, SM marketing, digital marketing and search engine optimisation (SEO) (Agnihotri et al. 2016; Erdmann, Arilla and Ponzoa 2022; Li, Larimo and Leonidou 2021). At the same time, the application of these practices requires dedicated budgets and creates a demand for marketing professionals who have the skills and knowledge needed to carry out campaigns in these mediums (Erdmann, Arilla and Ponzoa 2022; Li, Larimo and Leonidou 2021; Vyas 2019).

As evidenced in academic research, TV and e-mail campaigns can increase profitability by adding SM promotions that engage consumers in cross-buying and spending behaviour (Fernando, Suganthi and Sivakumaran 2014; Kumar et al. 2016; Mayzlin and Yoganarasimhan 2012). Research has also established that the presence of brands on SM is fundamental in creating customer based brand loyalty (Habibi, Laroche and Richard 2016; Jahn and Kunz 2012; Woisetschläger, Hartleb and Blut 2008); where review sites, blogs, forums and chatting apps, amongst others, provide consumers with a way to gain awareness and knowledge about a brand, and also brands with a medium to quickly adapt to the changes in the market. Hence marketers who have tried to exploit the potential for rebroadcasting on SNS via viral marketing campaigns have lacked access to evidence that supports their effectiveness (de Veirman and Hudders 2020; Ngai et al. 2015; Zhang, Yuchi, Moe and Schweidel 2016).

The importance of electronic user-to-user referrals has prompted the establishment of "*viral marketing*" as a strategy that helps brands maximise profits through positive word of mouth (WOM) and sharing of popular content among customers (Berger and Milkman 2013; Charles 2018a; Domingos 2005). This strategy is based on the sharing of unsolicited electronic content between peers to create awareness, trigger interest and generate sales or product adoption. Within this strategy, the practice of "*going viral*" is of foremost importance for SMIs, as it can dramatically increase profile and build popularity, with all the benefits that this popularity brings (Contestabile 2018; Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Wen 2014). While existing research addresses the effects of customer engagement mainly at the brand level, few studies have focused on the effects of this engagement on SMIs' influence on their audiences and even fewer have considered the consequences of negative engagement for the SMIs, their audiences or brands linked to them (Canhoto et al. 2015; Rahman et al. 2022; Zhou and Whitla 2011).

In a traditional marketing context, the relationship between brands and celebrity endorsers was relatively straightforward, with celebrities engaged as part of branding campaigns to promote brand identity, create emotional bonds and increase sales (Azoulay 2003; Chan, Kennyk and Misra 1990; Felix and Borges 2014). A brand owner would contract a celebrity to endorse its products, feature in advertising and to provide positive testimonials (Atkins and Block 1983; Hung 2014; Keel and Nataraajan 2012). With large amounts of advertising branding spend currently devoted to SMI campaigns (Contestabile 2018; Leban et al. 2020; Main 2017), current legislation regarding branded content and its promotion in the online

setting is still under development, creating uncertainty in audiences about the spontaneity and veracity of the content shared.

Being associated with SMIs offers brands the opportunity to benefit from their social capital, when an SMI promotes branded messages on popular content sources, such as blogs, SNS, apps or a combination of these (Fu, Wu and Cho 2017; Upreti et al. 2021; Van der Lans et al. 2010). However, the outcomes for brands are not necessarily beneficial, as these platforms can also amplify the reach and extent of negative content posted online. For instance, controversial and negative content was posted by users relating to the danger of having BOTOX® which greatly hindered the brand's image and reputation (Giesler 2012; Sood, Quintal and Phau 2022; Vlahos and Bove 2016).

Currently, the lack of consensus in industry practices regarding how SMIs should be paid or contracted creates a layer of uncertainty for brand owners. Brands use diverse strategies that include direct contact, broker agency or other kinds of automated/self-service platforms (Hulyk 2015; Leung, Gu and Palmatier 2022; Vrontis et al. 2021). However, the metrics available on these platforms are limited to web analytics and some social signals, such as shares, comments, replies, saves, likes, dislikes and favourites, which at the moment do not provide insight into how purchase intent, product resonance or brand loyalty are being shaped by the SMI's content. No specific measure is available to assess the quality of the content being promoted by SMIs, with some scholars describing it as a "*narcotising dysfunction of media, along with its functional roles in society*" (Abidin 2016; Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954; Ng 2020). To make matters worse, the lack of a system of "*checks and balances*" has led to SMIs making false claims about products or promoting their misuse, leading to sanctions for brands and harm to consumers (Kareklas, Muehling and Weber 2015; Kronrod and Huber 2019; Rezabakhsh et al. 2006).

While the use of celebrity endorsement has been widely discussed in relation to traditional marketing, investigation of the role of SMIs in non-traditional advertising campaigns and the benefits that brands can gain from their association is in its infancy. While the literature has focused on the use of celebrity endorsements and has evidenced the benefits to be gained when these are effectively managed, what constitutes paid endorsement or sponsored content is less clear on SM. This generates a gap in knowledge in terms of what consumers perceive as sponsored content versus an SMI's *"personal"* opinion and what the effects might be on audiences.

2.6.3 Bourdieusian Concepts

Prior studies have produced a model that depicts the feedback loop between the bloggers and consumers, which can be used as a reference for marketing professionals (Ilicic and Webster 2013; Mayzlin and Moe 2010; Zamudio 2016). Current research has yet to identify how likely a consumer is to reproduce a consumptive behaviour by reason of the SMI's personal influence and the role of the consumer's *habitus* in accepting or rejecting these behaviours.

Given that this research proposes that the social investment that an SMI makes in their audience can be potentially reclaimed as increased symbolic capital in the future, it is vital to clarify the different theories which form an interdisciplinary standpoint and how these are evidenced both online and offline, as summarised in Table 2.6.

	THEORY	AUTHOR	ONLINE EQUIVALENT	AUTHOR
	SOCIAL CAPITAL			
Soc./Business	The volume of social capital possessed by an agent…depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilise and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed by each of those to whom he is connected.	(Bourdieu 1977)	Belonging can be seen in comments like: "I love these posts". Reciprocity can be seen in comments like: "Thank you for your comment. I really like your blog, your posts are amazing! We could follow each other; I would like it very much".	(Mortara and Roberti 2017)
	Social capital is demonstrated in relationships and civic engagement in the community.	(Fukuyama 2001)	Social capital, trust and its link to online interactions.	(Julien 2015)
	Traditional business models neglect a crucial third form of capital: *"social capital"*. **KNOWLEDGE GAP**	(Erickson 1996)	SM profile promotion include the addition to Facebook friends, relevant users in Google+, Twitter and LinkedIn groups.	(Hansen, Lee and Lee 2014)
	CULTURAL CAPITAL			
Sociology/Marketing	Cultural capital refers to long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body, such as accents, comportment, race or dress.	(Bourdieu 1977)	Fashion blogs show how cultural capital gained by displaying taste, is exchanged for economic gains and social connections.	(McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013)
	Cultural capital is the primary cause for status and relative positions within a social field. It is a durable system of dispositions and represents one's entirety of intellectual qualifications or human capital and one's culture that implies time-intensive labour of inculcation and assimilation.	(Bourdieu and Passeron 1990)	Consumption practices and their online displays vary from one culture to another. Young Chinese consumers constantly post their consumption activities (outside) online and with material things as part of their extended self, which are related to overspending and luxury consumption.	(Zhao and Belk 2008)
	Global capitalist markets that have co-opted countercultural consumer symbols and practices, countervailing markets may emerge through the efforts of consumer evangelists and entrepreneurs wanting to cultivate commercially reclaimed countercultural meanings.	(Gurrieri and Cherrier 2013)	OBCs are "specialised, non-geographically bound communities, based on shared interests, ideologies, culture and a structured set of social relationships among users of a brand".	(Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001)
	Cultural capital is transferred by family and education It is institutionalised in the forms of educational qualifications.	(Bourdieu 1984)	The exact relationship between symbolic capital and cultural capital remains to be ascertained (Üstüner and Thompson 2012) online and offline. **KNOWLEDGE GAP**	(McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013)
	SYMBOLIC CAPITAL			
Sociology	One's social capital cannot be dissociated from one's symbolic capital – status in a field. Symbolic capital 'is only the credit and authority bestowed on an agent by recognitions and possessions of other forms of capital'.	(Bourdieu 1991)	On SNS, everyone is linked… therefore the relationships can be explored through network analysis (graphs and matrices; centrality, prestige and power; cliques, cohesion).	(Castells 2001)
	Prestige usually associated with the higher classes.	(Bourdieu 1984)	Distinctive characteristics are exhibited in the online behaviour of luxury brand advocates.	(Parrott, Danbury and Kanthavanich 2015)

	Authority is nothing other than "*credit*" with a set of agents (connections) whose value is proportionate to the credit they command themselves.	(Bourdieu and Nice 1980)	The lifetime total of reviews rated as "*cool*", perhaps indexes symbolic capital, even as the number of reviews written might index cultural capital. **KNOWLEDGE GAP**	(McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013)
	CONSUMPTION / TASTE			
Sociology/Marketing	Consumption plays into consumer's fantasies, emotions and experiences.	(Holbrook and Hirschman 1982)	Meaning and consumption practices online can be observed in the Star Trek culture.	(Kozinets 2001)
	Entrepreneurs operating in two distinct cultural environments must be able to interact in different ways to be effective in relevant habitus.	(Patel and Conklin 2009)	Consumption practices have an important role in the construction of a new, parallel taste structure. Blogs can be both a key medium and a marker of a new *habitus*.	(Sandikci and Ger 2010)
	Consumers develop emotional attachments to brands that can be stronger than cognitive ones.	(Hahn and Lee 2014)	Fashion blogs can influence consumer behaviour, taste and their habits.	(Halvorsen et al. 2013)
	Taste is a multi-faced concept: It is both physical and symbolic, allowing an appreciation of the embodied, everyday practice.	(Bowlby 2012)	Taste in fashion blogs can be seen in comments like: *"I love this coat, it's beautiful and the colour too!"*	(Mortara and Roberti 2017)
	EXCHANGE OF CAPITALS			
Sociology	Dynamically acquired social capital can be converted into embodied cultural capital.	(Arsel and Thompson 2011)	Future research could examine what Bourdieu called the "*rates of exchange*" and "*modes of conversion*" among types of capital. **KNOWLEDGE GAP**	(McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013)
	Economic and cultural capital describe a two-dimensional model of class where the vertical dimension concerns capital volume, the horizontal dimension relates to the composition of capital or the strength of cultural versus economic capital.	(Bourdieu 1984: 128-129)	Upward social mobility is challenged by bloggers who can climb the fashion social hierarchy without having an endowment in this field (Megaphone Effect).	(McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013)
	HABITUS/FIELD			
Sociology	*Habitus* is a culturally dependent system of acquired dispositions acting as categories of perception and assessment… organising principles that determine the agent's goals and constraints.	(Bourdieu 1984)	SM use for luxury brands and customers contradicts its habitus of exclusiveness and prestige linked with owning such goods and feeling part of an elite.	(Leban and Voyer 2015a)
	Central to Bourdieu's theory is the *habitus*, a multifaceted and misunderstood concept.	(Grenfell 2014)	In SM, fans can appropriate and share practices and SMIs can change attitudes about a brand.	(Booth and Julie 2011)
	Field: where class struggles take place and agents compete for capitals and hierarchy.	(Bourdieu 1984)	Fashion blogs can be deemed as a field.	(McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013)
	PRACTICES/DISPOSITION			
Soc./Marketing	Practice results from the interaction of individual habitus and capital in a field, a shifting system of disposition and feeling, internally structured by individuals and externally by social themes.	(Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992)	Opinions of taste choices and consumption are seen in comments from bloggers to audiences like "how does this look?" or "found the perfect socks at Uniglo… I've been looking for them".	(McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013)
	Special norms and behaviour can be identified in the consumer culture and advertisement of politics.	(Zhao and Belk 2008)	Online communities have specific norms of reciprocity for information sharing.	(Pai and Tsai 2016)

Table 2.6 Bourdieu's Theories and Online Equivalent (Ideological Toolkit)

Having analysed the current gaps in the literature against the theories presented in the "*Ideological Toolkit*" (Table 2.6), Figure 2.9 provides a simplified version of the main constructs used and their online demonstration adopted in this research to identify SMIs' most effective communication strategies, content shared, how relationships are created and finally, the extent of their influence on audiences' beliefs, opinions and consumption habits (Fırat and Venkatesh 1995; Pai and Tsai 2016; Sibai et al. 2014).
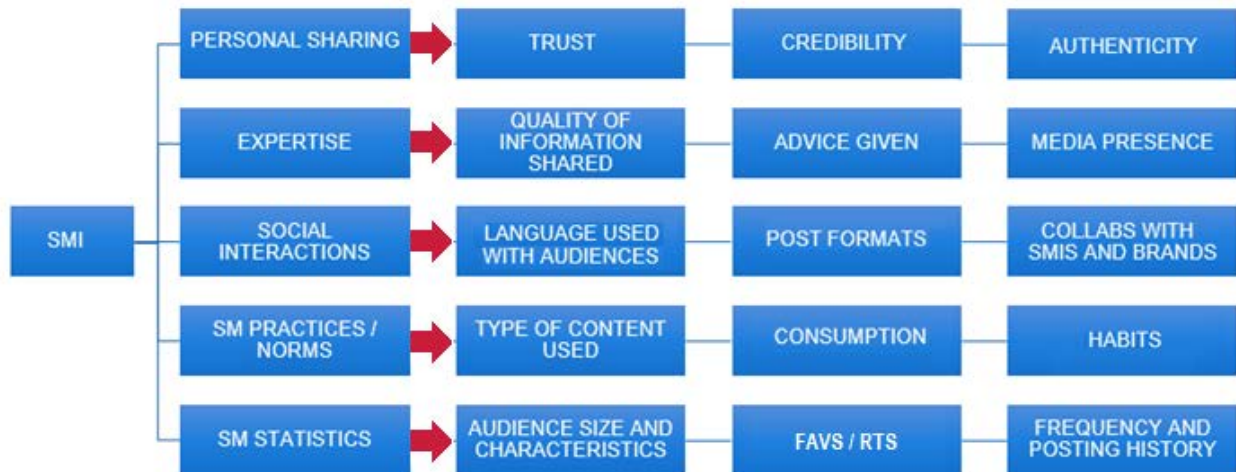
Figure 2.9 Instances to be Studied in SMI−Audience Relationships

2.7 Proposed Model

Just as a brand can benefit from a long-term relationship with a celebrity who has a stable following, assuming there is a strong coherence in the association (Ahmad 2014; Chan, Kara and Fan 2022; Pornpitakpan 2004), it is proposed that a brand should be able to reap the same benefits associating with SMIs that match its identity and values. From a relational perspective, the main constructs in Bourdieu's sociology (the field, capitals and *habitus*) provide a theoretical framework for analysing changes in practices. These concepts are also an effective tool for the analysis of power dynamics within relationships between individuals, groups, associations and institutions (Claussen, Wacquant and Akçaoğlu 2017; Harvey et al. 2020; Tapp and Warren 2010).

Accordingly, a model involving Bourdieu's concepts of "*capitals, field, habitus and practices*" is proposed that captures the relationships between SMIs and their audiences (see Figure 2.10).
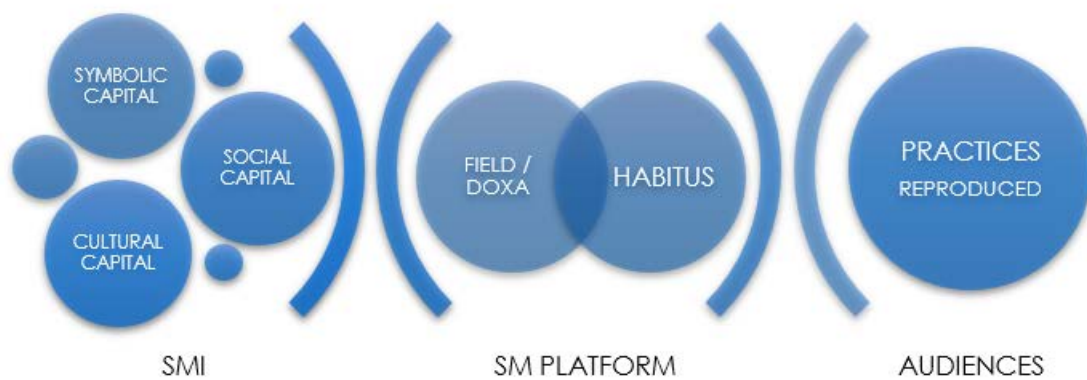
Figure 2.10 Unconfirmed Relational Model

This model makes several assumptions: firstly, that emotional ties can be fostered during branding relationships on SNS and that these can be stronger and have greater longevity than logical ones (Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi 2012; Malär et al. 2011; Turri, Smith and Kemp 2013); and secondly, that the sense of community developed on SM arises from the interactions and identifications between members who bond by sharing their views on given subjects (Bange, Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari 2020; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; McAlexander and Koenig 2012).

As previously mentioned, while numerous business reports support the benefits of incorporating SMIs as part of a brand's marketing strategy, the measures employed to determine the effectiveness of these results are unclear. Furthermore, the technical limitations of measuring results obtained from an SMI's promotional activities and the lack of guidelines about how to select and manage SMIs are ongoing problems. This is due to a lack of knowledge about the role of the SMI and their effectiveness in shaping the opinions, taste and practices of the audience, which is aggravated increasingly as brands publicise increases to their budgets for SMI marketing campaigns (Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Onishi and Manchanda 2012; Uzunoğlu and Kip 2014). Even though these identify who is an "*influencer*", a significant knowledge gap originates from the fact that these reports do not consider how SMIs are building social bonds, trust and authority, the exchange of capitals taking place, the characteristics of the reach and strength of the influence exerted by the SMI or the effect of these digital interactions on consumption. Thus, brands could use the empirical data and insights from the fulfilment of this gap to maximise gains, improve customer relationships and effectively employ SMIs.

2.8   Chapter Summary

The theories referenced in this chapter provide a solid academic foundation for this research, with the literature also demonstrating that the use of SMIs can be a powerful tool for the promotion of brands (Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard 2020; Campbell and Farrell 2020; Delbaere, Michael and Phillips 2021). Through presenting this evidence, the literature review has also enabled the knowledge gap to be addressed by this research to be identified.

Firstly, many industry reports concur about the main challenges that brand owners face in developing an SMI marketing strategy. These comprise: how to select the influencer; how the content should be produced; how to measure results; and how to best manage their relationship with the influencer (Booth and Julie 2011; Canhoto et al. 2015; Zhang, Yuchi, Moe and Schweidel 2016).

Secondly, although the identification of effective sources of influence has been important for academic and practical applications in marketing, previous quantitative research focused on finding SMIs using information diffusion patterns (Alberghini, Cricelli and Grimaldi 2014; Aral 2011; Qiu, Tang and Whinston 2015) fails to describe the reasons for the spread of the influence, or to uncover the factors affecting online social relationships online. Thirdly, research focused on social network analysis (SNA) has not addressed the indicators that link SMIs' promotional activities with purchase intent and customer satisfaction, online engagement and eWOM growth (Contestabile 2018; Shen, Kuo and Ly 2017; Zhang, Yuchi, Moe and Schweidel 2016). Furthermore, existing academic and business literature provides limited tools that can evaluate different types of influence, their strength, limitations and reach of SMIs; and thus, there is little understanding of how SMIs critiquing, endorsing, showcasing and legitimising consumption habits can affect a brand's marketing strategy (Arvidsson and Caliandro 2016; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013; Susarla, Oh and Tan 2016). This research endeavours to bridge these gaps regarding the measurement of social capital within SNS in a worldwide setting.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This project seeks to identify the factors that underpin the rise of the social media influencer (SMI) and how SMIs interact, engage and sway their audiences, especially when it comes to endorsed products and sponsored brands. This chapter begins by outlining the theoretical framework from which the proposed aims and research questions stem. Then, it describes popular methodologies for the study of quantitative and qualitative online behaviour, weighing up their benefits and disadvantages. The selected methodology and its application are therefore discussed in terms of the reasons that make it the best-suited option for answering the proposed research questions (RQs). The chapter concludes with a summary of key points based on the selected methodology and data collection limitations and ethical considerations.

This research focuses on the likelihood that an SMI reaches their audiences and creates specific behavioural changes using their brand of personal influence and social capital. In this research, the "*audience*" of an SMI is defined as the fan base who has subscribed to their content (follow) or users who talk about them without having subscribed to the SMI. The concept of social capital (discussed in the previous chapter) is used to help answer the proposed RQs as this concept is associated with numerous interpersonal behaviours that can be measured. Hence this research uses a mixed methods approach to measure an SMI's social capital based on their interactions with the audience.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

This research applies a *"Bourdieusian"* framework to understand the relational bonds, social dynamics and consumption practices taking place around SMIs in social media (SM) by abstracting the SMI as an agent, working towards the possession of social capital who harness it by exchanging it for other forms of capitals, such as symbolic, personal and economic capital. Moreover, Bourdieu's concepts of field and *habitus* can help understand why audiences follow SMIs and how the exchanges of capitals create practices that are reproduced (Borgonovi, Andrieu and Subramanian 2021; Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe 2007; Khan et al. 2017).

To achieve the research aims, numerous methods and tools for the study of relationships online were evaluated and tested. The most suitable ones then form the theoretical body that is used in the methodology and data collection stage. Bourdieu's capitals or "*sets of actually useable resources and powers*" (Bourdieu 1984; Harvey et al. 2020; Hayes 2020) are made up of four main forms: economic capital (money, clothing and properties), cultural capital (titles or qualifications), social capital (interpersonal connections) and symbolic capital (prestige, authority, nobility, titles or ranked positions) (Bourdieu 1991; Luna-Cortés 2017; Muensit, Thongyou and Lapanunb 2019). The field provides a setting where the agents defer to hierarchies or "*structures*", produce and reproduce specific practices, and exchange and accumulate capitals based on the mediating concepts of the *habitus* and *doxas* (Gambetti 2020; Lyke 2017; Vaara and Faÿ 2012). Because of their flexibility, academic rigour and ease of application, Bourdieu's theories are commonly used in marketing research (Fitzsimmons and Callan 2016; Gambetti 2020; Spence et al. 2017).

The RQs to be addressed by this research have been developed from the critical analysis of the academic and business literature presented in Chapter 2 against the identified knowledge gap to assist planning a methodology that allows the collection of insightful data and hence, are presented in the following section of this chapter.

3.2.1 Research Questions

Initially, the issues to be explored aim to identify factors relating to the characteristics and behaviours of the SMI. These questions originate from the knowledge gap identified in Chapter 2, with the aim to create an understanding of how SMIs interact, engage and influence their audiences, with a focus on the creation and exhibition of social capital online.

- ► Does the influence of an SMI and its audience's susceptibility to being influenced differ between SMIs?
- ► Which personal dimensions (capitals) increase the influential power of an SMI in the eyes of their audience and how are these characterised?
- ► What types of posted messages or content increase the influential power of an SMI in the eyes of their audience and how are these perceived?
- ► Do the personal characteristics of the consumer affect the creation of trust, authority, attachment and legitimacy in their audience?

With this understanding, the aim then is to focus on how SMIs create practices of consumption and legitimisation that are imitated and reproduced within their audiences and the actions that arise from an "*influenced*" audience. The focus is on the resultant actions and online conversations that arise from an "*influenced*" audience, examining content that features sponsored products or brands. By exploring how social capital is exhibited and exchanged online, this research considers the quality and extent of the SMI's influence on the audience's consumer behaviour. Consequently, the questions informing this stage are:

▶ How do the purchasing practices the audience change as a result of the SMI's influence?
▶ In what context do SMIs effectively influence the practices of their audiences?
▶ What other factors have a bearing on the influence exerted by SMIs and the purchasing practices promoted in the eyes of their audiences?

As a result, these are the research questions underpinning this doctoral thesis and its methodology:

▶ RQ.1: Who is an SMI and what are their characteristics?
▶ RQ.2: How and to what extent do SMIs influence their audiences?
▶ RQ.3: In what ways do SMIs create trust, authority and legitimacy?
▶ RQ.4: Under what circumstances are SMIs more influential?
▶ RQ.5: How can SMIs be effectively managed by brand owners?

3.2.2 Main Theories and Research Questions

As this research aims to test a theory of the exchange of capitals and the moderating role of *habitus* on attitudes and behaviours, to facilitate this task a model that explains the dynamics between an SMI and its audiences in SM is presented. Due to the complexity of this model, and to help reduce method bias (Creswell 2014; Podsakoff, Mackenzie and Podsakoff 2012), the methodology has been divided into two stages. The first stage focuses on the SMIs' characteristics, the role of authority and legitimacy as perceived by their audiences in terms of the "*Capitals Theory*" (Bourdieu 1984; Harvey et al. 2020; Lyke 2017). The second stage addresses the moderating role of the *habitus* in promoting or restricting the purchase actions of SMIs' audiences and identifying the specific actions that underpin SMIs' influence over audiences' practices and consumption. Table 3.1 presents a summary of the main theories that guide this research in conjunction with their respective research question.

CONCEPT	THEORY	AUTHOR
RQ.1: WHO IS AN SMI AND WHAT ARE THEIR CHARACTERISTICS?		
Business: Leadership and capitals	Leaders' confidence, hope and optimism stem from their beliefs in themselves, in their psychological capital and in making clear to associates what they need from them to achieve growth and performance at the individual, team and/or organisational levels.	(Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee 2013)
SNA: Identification	Modelling the identification of SMIs.	(Khan et al. 2017)
	Bloggers' characteristics can change online shopping intentions.	(Bayazıt, Durmuş and Yıldırım 2017)
Medicine: Gatekeeper	Those who control access to resources, services and knowledge. There is a hierarchy of knowledge and power in the field which determines the forms of knowledge that are legitimate and can operate as capital.	(Collyer, Willis and Lewis 2017)
Psychology: Leadership	The contributions of positive psychological capital and the moral component of authentic leadership.	(Avolio and Gardner 2005)
RQ.2: HOW AND TO WHAT EXTENT ARE SMIs PERSUADING THEIR AUDIENCES?		
Marketing: Social capital, consumption and taste	It may be worthwhile to re-examine the role of social capital in consumption, building on sociological taste research. It has been noted that Bourdieu's conception of social capital is far removed from that of Putnam and that these two do not exhaust the definitions of social capital. There is an opportunity to evolve understanding of how social capital operates in consumption.	(McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013)
Sociology: Network capital	Network capital is a form of "social capital", ranging from an individualistic framework that emphasises the advantages that individuals can gain through their networks to a collective perspective, focusing on the advantages of volunteerism to a community.	(Sajuria et al. 2015)
RQ.3: IN WHAT WAYS ARE SMIs CREATING TRUST, AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMACY?		
Marketing: Online social capital, source credibility	In the online world, SMIs are constantly working towards building their online social capital to reap dividends from this intangible investment. They do this by maintaining contact, building relationships and delivering engaging content to their audiences.	(Venkatanathan et al. 2012)
	Source credibility is an important factor in attitude formation, behavioural outcomes and eWOM.	(Hansen, Lee and Lee 2014)
Sociology: Social support	The concepts of "bonding" and "bridging" become useful for research as guidelines that can help researchers understand the ways SMIs use certain SM platforms in an effective way.	(Sajuria et al. 2015)
	Social support in SNS can have many benefits.	(Simons et al. 2021)
RQ.4: UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES ARE SMIs MORE INFLUENTIAL?		
Marketing: Capitals and research	Fashion blogs display online consumer behaviour ideal for *Bourdieusian* analysis. Yelp, Pinterest and Houzz.com provide information suitable for ranking members, similar to follower counts for bloggers. Data from the site offers an opportunity to test simultaneously the impact of varying levels of different capitals on the production and consumption of online reviews. These serve as the focus of social action concerning a great number of strangers, indicating that they may reward sociological investigation.	(McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013)
RQ.5: HOW CAN SMIs BE MANAGED BY MARKETING MANAGERS?		
Marketing: Consumer–brand–celebrity relationships, brand selection	The moderating effect of social comparison, trust, tie strength and network homophily affect a brand's identification, engagement, commitment and membership intention in SNS.	(Silva 2006)
	Brands can create a positive relationship with consumers by using digital marketing strategies.	(Confos and Davis 2016)
	Social capital in digital environments influences brand selection.	(Hashemy, Yousefi and Soodi 2016)
	New ways of consumer empowerment – evidence from the Nutella online community.	(Cova and Pace 2006)

Table 3.1 Research Questions and Main Theories

This research can be categorised as innovative and current for several reasons. Firstly, as described in Chapter 2, current academic literature does not cover the study of an SMI's "*online influence*" derived from their accrued social capital or the effect of this on the consumption practices of the SMI's followers. Secondly, the researcher had to engage in a series of technical processes to implement the proposed research methodology, which allowed the access, assessment and interpretation of the data obtained from digital research

methods. The computational processes undertaken as part of the collection, analysis and modelling stages of this research are further discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.3   Ontology and Epistemology

Academic research uses a rigorous systematic approach to increase knowledge and understanding of different phenomena that can support marketing activities (Bell, Bryman and Harley 2018; Creswell 2015; Greenfield and Greener 2016). As the correct methodology and process must be followed to ensure the validity and reliability of the research and its results, the following chapter sections expand on Bourdieu's strong methodological scholarship and the weight that he placed on academic rigour, the need for sound empirical evidence and the practise of *"reflection"* as part of the process of creating empirical knowledge. Therefore a scientifically rigorous approach was used to increase the validity of the results obtained from this research, particularly under the consideration that the insights and guidelines generated will have real world consequences when used by marketers to plan and execute SMI campaigns (Bryman and Bell 2015; Gambetti 2020; Pomiès and Tissier-Desbordes 2016).

As presented in Chapter 2, Bourdieu's theories of the social world and the ideological framework regarding human interactions have been widely used for over four decades in fields including education, medicine, politics, fashion, art, sociology, anthropology, media studies, journalism, feminist studies, business and marketing (Lyke 2017; Pernicka et al. 2021; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020). This robust theoretical research framework does not follow traditional research scholarship, as it promotes a fluid understanding of the research object that is not subscribed to a particular school of thought, but rather, that proposes a flexible approach in the application of the scientific method. The application of this framework is particularly useful when undertaking social and ethnographic work, as it allows the researcher to effectively abstract themself from the research, to easily justify research method selection and to find hidden motives, behaviours and structures characteristic of human relationships and interactions in a network setting (Beckert 2010; Jackson, Rogers and Zenou 2017; Marsden 1987).

Bourdieu used several research methodologies in his research and extensively documented the steps taken with considerable detail. He was deeply concerned with the practice of research, advocating strict adherence to the scientific method and the use of robust research methods. He saw this as essential to avoid the fallacies or *"illusions"* caused by what he considered skewed and myopic views of what constitutes knowledge and meaning in society

that can arise from the use of "*weak*" research strategies. The main research methodologies he used included ethnography, statistical methods, image research and case studies, making him not just a thinker but also a social scientist. Bourdieu's research methodology is foremost presented in *"Homo Academicus"* (Bourdieu 1988) and "*Outline of a Theory of Practice"* (Bourdieu 1977).

3.3.1 Bourdieu's Sociological Enquiry

Although Bourdieu is best known for his social theories, his work as an anthropologist and philosopher centred on what constitutes knowledge, how it is accessed and for what purpose. Accordingly, Bourdieu's views regarding the ontological and epistemological position of his theories and methods rejected traditional notions (DiMaggio 1979; Shin 2013; Wacquant 2001).

In his book "*Practical Reason"*, Bourdieu actively denies adhesion to positions, such as grand theory, universalism, humanism and holism, despite trying to create a unifying theory of the social world (Bourdieu 1998; Lindell 2015; Stevenson 2016). This opposition to tradition and in some cases, the apparent contradiction and misunderstanding of his work, has fuelled criticism. For example, despite wanting to break away from mainstream categorisation, through all his work Bourdieu supports the practice of critical analysis of the social world as part of his duties as a researcher of the social world, to obtain a truth that is not coloured by biased or that lacks methodological foundation (Adam and Rončević 2003; Bourdieu 1998; Eloire 2015). Bourdieu sought to overcome the divide between the subjective (the humanism of Jean-Paul Sartre) and the objective (the positivism of Levy-Strauss), to go beyond the scholastic and the practical, to consider the macro and the micro and that exposes the hidden truths in a form of a narrative account of knowledge based on a rigorous researcher reflection (Ahmad 2014; Bourdieu 1998; Eiteneyer, Bendig and Brettel 2019). He proposes firstly that knowledge should be useful, it has a purpose and does not exist for the sake of a scholastic exercise, as for him the practices of theorising epistemology and ontological adhesion diverted the researcher from practising "*true research*" and limited its ability to find the hidden truths desired to uncover (Camic 2011; Collyer, Willis and Lewis 2017; Wacquant 2015).

Secondly, Bourdieu considered that knowledge of the social world could not be divided into a particular ideology, theory or method, while denying all other relevant aspects of the social world for the sake of being academic. It could be argued that he borrows, and at the same time denies, numerous concepts derived from multiple fields and theorists, which range from

classical thinkers such as Plato to the founding fathers of sociology (Comte, Marx, Weber, Durkheim) and contemporary philosophers, such as Kant, Lévi-Strauss, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and Bachelard (Grenfell and Hardy 2007). Hence, Bourdieu used his version of structural analysis to make sense of the practices (*praxis*) and objective surroundings (field) to create dialectic between the individual (including its place in the field and relationships as the object to research) in contrast with its environment (Bourdieu 1998; Harris and Orth 2020; Otero, Volker and Rozer 2021).

3.3.1.1   Participant Objectivation

Bourdieu's methodological approach sought to bring a practice of reflection and critical thinking into the understanding of the social world. It focused on human interactions and relationships, the "*structuring structures*" and the practices and *doxas* that get reproduced as a set of durable dispositions (Drumwright and Kamal 2015; Lyke 2017; Vaara and Faÿ 2012). The exhaustive thought process that Bourdieu applied in his work is evident in his analysis of the field, agents and their corresponding relationships and dispositions that create the structures in. Bourdieu constantly included an anthropological view in his social analyses and incorporated multiple research methodologies through his work. His ethnographic approach sought to break from tradition from the constraints of how epistemology had been traditionally applied in this form of research (Bourdieu 1975; Lindell 2015; Schmitz, Witte and Gengnagel 2017).

As a proper model of reality must consider the distance between the agents and the behaviour it describes for bridging the gap between theory and practice, this implies that the researcher must objectify their position in the academic space and consider their own biases when conducting research. Bourdieu's concept of "*participant objectivation*" was adopted in this research, as it helps analyse the object of study and the researcher's relationship with it, making the understanding of the principles behind the object of research clearer and the findings more reliable (Bourdieu 1975; Del Rio 2021; Fiesler and Proferes 2018).

3.3.1.2   Practical Knowledge

For Bourdieu, there is no divide between objectivity and subjectivity; instead, he refers to the principles that originate relational structures and those that form and shape relationships in the social world, into what he called "*practical knowledge*" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Lindell 2015; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020).

Moreover, Bourdieu emphasises that the nature of knowledge should be more concerned with the relationships and dispositions at the individual and group level, that provide meaning and structure to the social world, than with the theoretical standpoint of the researcher (Bourdieu and Zanotti-Karp 1968; Lyke 2017; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020). This position led him to create his theoretical−methodological, ontological and epistemological views, known as "*open concepts*". This view was chosen as it allows for the understanding of the capitals and *habitus* in a particular context, while focusing on the application of knowledge in terms of the empirical world and not just as theories that exist as academic exercises or abstract concepts:

> *"The use of open concepts is a…. permanent reminder that concepts have no definition other than systematic ones and are designed to be put to work empirically in systematic fashion. Hence, such notions as habitus, field and capital can be defined, but only within the theoretical system they constitute, not in isolation"* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992)

3.3.1.3   Structuralist Constructivism

Bourdieu describes his ontology for extracting the truths hidden in the social world in "*Theory of (Sociological) Practice*" (Bourdieu 1977), where he explains that the *habitus* and the *field* intersect in two ways; on one hand, the field conditions the *habitus*, on the other, the *habitus* creates social structures in the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Bourdieu sought to go beyond the dichotomies of the *habitus* and field, as he recognised that knowledge, in all its forms, is relational and that cognitive construction is essentially phenomenological, pragmatic and differential (Akpinar and Berger 2012; Feher 2021; France, Vaghefi and Zhao 2016). Although Bourdieu describes his approach as "*general structuralism*", "*constructivist structuralism*" or "*structuralist constructivism*", he takes a flexible approach to the analysis of the "*objective structures*" as they guide and constrain the practices in a way that is independent of the consciousness of the agents (Bourdieu 1990a; Bourdieu 1994; Grenfell 2014).

Figure 3.1 summarises the social phenomena that Bourdieu's theories address which include hierarchies, habits, norms, reproduction and change (Gambetti 2020; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013; Muensit, Thongyou and Lapanunb 2019).

Figure 3.1 Bourdieu's Main Theories

3.3.1.4   Reflexive Practice (Epistemic Reflexivity)

Another relevant aspect of Bourdieu's methodologies is that he sought to locate his critique within the artistic field itself, which helped him define his notions of social class (especially in terms of elite and popular classes) from the different classes of artistic production and consumption that resulted from extensive analyses of empirical data (Bourdieu 1996b; Markus 2021; Spence et al. 2017). The main aspects of this practice are described in "*An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*", where Bourdieu argues that knowledge is not dependent on the background of the researcher or the circumstances surrounding that research (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 36–47, 202–15).

Bourdieu's methodological approach was characterised by the constant caution that the researcher should follow when objectifying their views, as any subjective knowledge that arises from the research process is coloured by the researcher's subjectivity (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). It is through the exercise of his critical philosophy that Bourdieu conceptualises the world as a living laboratory and shifts the focus from the object to the method for extracting the truth (the *"universal pre-logic of practice"*) to discover the structure and symbolism hidden in society (Bourdieu and Nice 1980; Bourdieu 1990b; Bourdieu 1993b). He described his practice of "*reflexively objectifying"* his position and distance as "*researcher"* from the "*research subject"* (Nice 1978). Fundamentally, he sought to find the "*science*" behind the social world and to construct concrete empirical objects. This view allowed Bourdieu to situate the methodological reflection into a stance of "*epistemic reflexivity"*, which is characteristic of his work and teachings (Driessens 2015; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020; Wacquant 2004).

3.4   Research Design

The complexity of the research at hand emerges from the interdisciplinary intersection between marketing, sociology, psychology and data science research methodologies

employed under the policies and technical constraints of a SNS. As the data gathered through digital methodologies comprises of text, photos, videos and metadata, the addition of these supplementary levels of data helps create a more robust data analysis strategy, which not only becomes relevant and innovative but also places this research under a "*Big Data*" approach.

The use of SM has become part of the social fabric in daily life, there is currently a need for practitioners to understand the role of SMIs and how they create strong online ties that can lead to behavioural change, long-term relationships, brand loyalty and ultimately, customer advocacy. The understanding of these relationships provides grounds for brand managers to plan and create their marketing strategy and to justify the decision to include or reject an SMI in it. Figure 3.2 depicts the specific factors taken from sociological and marketing theories that this research focuses on:

Figure 3.2 Specific Fields of Enquiry Used

With the growing popularity of digital platforms as a field of research, it is imperative that future researchers determine how the data collected corresponds to the aims and objectives set for the investigations (Douglas, Shepherd and Prentice 2020; Goodman, Cryder and Cheema 2013; Shepherd and Suddaby 2017). To conduct a study that advances knowledge and enables conclusions to be drawn, it was necessary to place this research within a relevant framework that enabled answering of the proposed research questions, while taking into account that knowledge is not limited to just one field of knowledge, nor will the complex phenomena occurring in technological spaces and human minds be explained by just one study alone (Bourdieu and Zanotti-Karp 1968; Donthu et al. 2022; Pescosolido 1992). Table 3.2 presents the main behaviours associated with the production and exchange of social capital online, as well as a detailed description of other important concepts from Bourdieu's theories and their measurement used in this research are also presented Appendix 2.

SM USERS' ONLINE BEHAVIOURS	Author
Developing social contacts through growing friendships and associations; taking actions; attachments to a range of SNS, developing trusting relationships.	(Ameri, Honka and Xie 2019; Chae and Ko 2016; Reinikainen et al. 2020)
Participation through involvement in groups, communities; membership of networks, groups; social actions.	(Fan and Run 2016; Harris and Orth 2020; Simons et al. 2021)
Relationships and power through the ability to respond to their audience; changes in terms of influencing their followers; expressing opinions and broadening expectations.	(Ng 2020; Saiidi 2016; Shang, Wu and Sie 2017)
Bridging social capital through social interactions with people from diverse backgrounds; sharing information and skills; changes in beliefs about one's choice of products, purchases and that of others.	(Patulny and Svendsen 2007; Sajuria et al. 2015; Venkatanathan et al. 2012)

Table 3.2 Creation and Exhibition of Social Capital Online

This research aims to enrich marketing knowledge about SMIs' audience relationships in an SM environment by exploring how SMIs gain followers, communicate, engage and influence their audiences (Antonakaki, Fragopoulou and Ioannidis 2021; Bello-Orgaz, Jung and Camacho 2016; Birkett et al. 2021; Domingos 2005). Based on the theories and concepts previously described, the following signals and behaviours associated with the presence of social capital are used to guide this research's methodology:

► Growing friendships and associations, networking and creating relationships.

► Using bridging social capital through social interactions with people from diverse backgrounds. Posting content, liking, commenting and re-sharing.

► Using bonding social capital through strong relationships within a typically closed group or community characterised by similarity in their values, attitudes and resources.

► Sharing information, opinions, experiences, advice and skills.

► Using influence to change the audience's beliefs about product choices and purchases.

► Creating identification in the audiences via the content and practices shared, which can lead to the creation of emotional ties and social actions.

► Participation through involvement in groups, communities and network membership.

► Developing authority by responding, expressing opinions and broadening expectations that lead to influencing their audience.

► Developing expertise through the creation and display of practices, consumption and legitimisation to be reproduced.

3.4.1   Mixed Methods Approach

The study of digital interactions and practices can be a complex task given that today's consumers use multiple technologies and ways of communication. As the world becomes more connected, we find ourselves in un-ordered complex context where unpredictability becomes a norm in a world that is constantly changing (Quinton and Simkin 2016; Tamayo-

Torres, Ruiz-Moreno and Verdú 2010; von Mettenheim and Wiedmann 2021). Hence, to fulfil the aims and objectives set out for this research project, the selected methodology needed to preserve the integrity of the features that make up social interactions and relationships embedded within the communications and actions shared in these digital environments (Costello, McDermott and Wallace 2017; Kozinets 2012; Sharma, Ahuja and Alavi 2018).

Mixed methods research integrates different research techniques to provide the means to better understand the structures and processes, under the understanding that qualitative and quantitative methods can both produce accurate and meaningful insights. In a similar way, Bourdieu himself used a combination of ethnographic observation, surveys, interviews, images and other data gathering methods (Bourdieu 1984; Wacquant 2004; Wacquant 2015). It was through the combination of these methods that he was able to uncover *"the structuring structures"* hidden in social interactions (Creswell 2015; Greenfield and Greener 2016; Pedersen, Grønvad and Hvidtfeldt 2020).

3.4.1.1   Quantitative Data Collection

Any type of communication or interaction carried out online has an intrinsic algorithmic component that can be translated into data. Unlike the "*offline*" world, the main advantage in researching SNS is that these platforms allow access to intrinsic quantitative measures of social interactions and engagements. Hence, SNS have built-in capabilities for tracking and tracing both engagement and social metrics in what is known as the "*digital footprint*". This means it is possible to track by whom, when, where and how content was disseminated (Akpinar and Berger 2012; Feher 2021; France, Vaghefi and Zhao 2016) and to gather information that is historical or streamed *"real-time"* (Feher 2021; Rizk and Elragal 2020; Sharma, Ahuja and Alavi 2018).

These measures include profile characteristic, geolocation, engagement statistics, the number of friends (or followers), "*likes*" or "*shares*" and time and metadata information gained from continuous user social signals, interactions and information exchanged. Social signals in SM relate to the number of followers, friends, conversations, reach and favourites, while engagement metrics include likes, shares, clicks and in the case of Twitter, tweets and retweets. The use of these measures has allowed researchers to gain valuable information about the users and content shared which would have been very difficult to obtain via traditional methods. For example, previous research has demonstrated that shocking, funny or

entertaining content is more prone to be shared than content that primarily attempts to sell and, therefore, the value of sharing content as a metric to quantify the effectiveness of an advert lies in its reach (Akpinar and Berger 2017; Berger and Milkman 2012; Berger and Milkman 2013).

A summary of these metrics is presented in Table 3.3, while examples of Twitter research are shown in Table 3.4.

FACEBOOK	TWITTER	YOUTUBE	GOOGLE+	INSTAGRAM	PINTEREST
SOCIAL					
Followers	Followers	Subscribers	Followers	Followers	Followers
Follows	Follows	Subscribed To	Follows	Follows	Follows
Friends	Lists	Playlists	Friends		Interests
Group membership	Interests	Topics	Circles, collection		Topics
User tagging	User tagging	User tagging	User tagging	User tagging	
ENGAGEMENT					
Likes	Retweets	Shares	Shares		Likes
Shares	Likes	Likes, dislikes	Likes	Likes	Re-pins
Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments	Comments
Save	Mentions	Save	+1s	Save	Save
Direct messages, chat	Replies, messages	Referrals, embeds		Replies	
Tags, hashtags	Hashtags	Tags, hashtags	Tags, hashtags	Hashtags	Tags
PTAT: People Talking About This	Favourites	Favourites			
Engagement Rate	Engagement rate	Views	Views	Engagement	Views
Reach		Audience retention		Reach	Reach
Polls	Polls		Polls		

Table 3.3 SM Engagement Metrics

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Table 3.4 Examples of Twitter Research (Zhang, Yuchi, Moe and Schweidel 2016)

Social listening tools (third party ranking statistics) were employed to measure the reach and relevancy of the content shared online by SMIs (Huang 2016; Snidjers 1999; Zhang, Yan et al. 2020) and to complement the methodology selected.

3.4.1.2 Qualitative Data Collection

Data gathered through qualitative methodologies capture the motivation, intent and understanding of the extent of the influence derived from SM interactions between an SMI and their audience. To better understand this relationship, this research used Twitter's API to create a retrospective account of the narratives on this platform. As the aim is to produce a rich understanding of the dynamics between SMIs, audiences and brands, the methodology selected uses a netnographic approach. This kind of approach permeates the boundaries of data mining methodologies, as both methods employ computational resources to collect the data (Bange, Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari 2020; Bello-Orgaz, Jung and Camacho 2016; Leban and Voyer 2015b).

This researcher sought to follow the guidelines depicted in Bourdieu's "*Theory of Practice*" as a well-suited theoretical, ontological and epistemological framework from which to derive knowledge and understanding of human interactions in a digital space. Consequently, it was necessary to adapt the research scholarship developed by Bourdieu for conducting a netnographic approach (MacInnis et al. 2020; Reid and Duffy 2018; Tavakoli and Wijesinghe 2019) to enable the retrieval and analysis of digital data. Popular methods for undertaking netnographic work include online observations; the use of software or computer programming for retrieving tweets and any type of media associated with them.

Based on netnography guidelines (Costello, McDermott and Wallace 2017; Gambetti 2020; Kozinets 2010), a series of phases were devised for the execution of this research, which consisted of the following:

- ► Observation and methodology planning.
- ► Pilot study: API test.
- ► Fieldwork: netnography – full API access (data mining – secondary data gathering).
- ► Revision and additional data gathering.

As part of the netnographic account, a researcher can use structured observations accompanied by detailed logs to provide insights. In this research, Twitter's API was used to capture the SMI−audience social interactions (and associated metadata) tracing back to September 2006, where this additional metadata was not available via other data collection methods including the NCapture browser extension from NVivo or similar products (Antonakaki, Fragopoulou and Ioannidis 2021; Knoke and Yang 2019; Sharma, Ahuja and

Alavi 2018). Additionally, the analysis of relevant industry and news publications, SNS trends, analytics and insights were examined to help put into context any noteworthy events identified as part of the netnographic account. Details of the main phases of data collection, technical considerations, tools and their expected results are presented in Table 3.5.

EXPLORATION PHASE	PILOT PHASE	MAIN DATA COLLECTION

Regulations:
• ESRC manual for SM data collection.
• Twitter's T&C and developer guidelines.
 	
Methods: Familiarisation with:
• Netnography, Bourdieu's ethnography.
• SM discourses, interactions and practices'
• Twitter's API, R, Python and Gephi.
• Measure signals of 'capitals' and *habitus*.
 	
Evaluate datasets from:
• PEW, ESRC, Offcom, National Statistics, Github.
• Social listening: trends, insights, buzz scores.
 	
Indices of *Habitus:*
• Reproduction.
• Coding matrix: matching of:
   • Marketing KPIs.
   • Bourdieu's concepts, social actions.
	Test Twitter's API to identify:
	• Main topics discussed.
	• 'Influential' users.
	• Measure 'capitals'.
	• SM measures: engagement.
	• Rebroadcasting, geolocation, frequency of interactions and timelines.
	
	Test:
	• Extracting the data from chosen/available datasets.
	• Capturing the data from social listening tools.
	• Data clean-up, import into analysis tools, management, security, storage and disposal.
	• Document and address possible issues to be solved.
		Full Twitter Data (Firehose):
		• Receive feedback.
		• Collect additional data to complete missed items.
		• Check data integrity, ethics compliance and any emerging issues.
		• Data clean-up and import into analysis tools.
		• Check ethics compliance.
		
		Quantitative and qualitative methods:
		• Measurements and statistics.
		• NLP.
		• Sentiment analysis
		• SNA

Table 3.5 Outcomes of Methodology Phases

A pilot study was developed before the main observation stage. This type of study allows the researcher to test and validate the effectiveness of the research instruments, particularly in regards to answering the study's research questions (Bryman and Bell 2015; Greenfield and Greener 2016; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009). After gaining ethical approval and running a pilot study, the researcher refined the data collection technique to produce accurate results and map the dissemination pathway followed, as the tweets proliferate over the network.

3.4.1.3 Ethnography

This research falls into the category of netnography (online ethnographic fieldwork), since the "*participant observation*" undertaken covers the observation and analysis of the behaviour of a particular group over a lengthy period (Elish and Boyd 2017; Muskat 2020; Woermann 2018). Traditionally, ethnography is a qualitative research methodology that originates in the anthropologic tradition and is used to generate a detailed account of the life of an individual or group based on intensive fieldwork (Fetterman 2009; Gobo 2016; Wainwright and Turner 2008). This research's methodology relies heavily on systematic observations, interviews and interactions to gain inside access and understanding of the subject in their natural context or environment. To address the many criticisms of this method's subjectivity, modern versions of

ethnography incorporate tools, such as in-depth interviews, surveys, questionnaires, video recording, images and so on; to increase its objectivity and academic rigour (Barker 2004; Feher 2021; MacArthur et al. 2017). Bourdieu realised that he needed to perform the "*objectivation*" of the participant observation to put underlying practices and norms into context while he was undertaking an ethnographic account of the Kabyle culture in French-occupied Algeria (Bourdieu 1979; Nice 1978; Pernicka et al. 2021).

In his research, Bourdieu advanced the practice of ethnography by moving away from a simple exercise of narrating experiences and feelings; to using this methodology as a "*social laboratory*" for uncovering the structures, social relations and power struggle hidden in a group by adding a "*reflexive component*" to this practice. As a result, the divide between the objective and subjective is reduced by applying scholarly rigour to the practise of ethnography (Muskat 2020; Wacquant 2004; Woermann 2018).

3.4.2 Selected Platform: Twitter

With over 336 million monthly active users and more than 500 million tweets created each day, Twitter is the third most used SNS and has become a heavily used platform for academic and marketing research (Bruns 2020; Raamkumar et al. 2019; *Statista* 2018). At this point, it is important to clarify the distinction between an SNS and an online community. Although both share similar characteristics, the closeness of the members' ties and practices differ. In an online community (OC) social ties are close-knit, members communicate, are engaged in working together and exhibit norms of reciprocity (Ballantine and Martin 2004; Brodie et al. 2013; Parrott, Danbury and Kanthavanich 2015). Although members can exhibit communal practices and norms of reciprocity in SM, their social ties are loose and members may not know each other, nor expect to do so (Burt 2000; Godes and Mayzlin 2004; Pescosolido 1992).

After a systematic study of academic literature of the main SNS, Twitter was the chosen platform for its many advantages. Firstly, Twitter data is rich in context-dependent information in the form of metadata and text, where influence is quantifiable in the form of retweets, clicks, likes, shares or using a set action (conversion). Thus follower interactions and information flow on this SNS is observable, measurable and can be mapped via "*follower's graphs*". Secondly, a tweet's purpose is to make a public statement and, therefore, public tweets do not require additional consent to be used. Further details about Twitter's data privacy policy are discussed in the *Ethics section* of this chapter.

Twitter's API (Application Programming Interface) was selected as the source (entry point) from which the data was to be collected. The API is a computer-generated interface that allows a script to gain access to Twitter's server's and programming so that users can contribute to, engage with and analyse the conversations happening on Twitter (*Twitter Inc.* 2019; *Twitter Inc.* 2021). The advantages and disadvantages of using this API are discussed in Table 3.6.

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Table 3.6 Pros/Cons of Twitter Data (*Twitter Inc.* 2018; *Twitter Inc.* 2021)

Given the research questions and ontology of this research, the advantages of using this data source outweigh the disadvantages, while giving support for the scientific and fact-based creation of knowledge as the tweets would be taken directly from Twitter itself without any type of modification, and without being subject to subjectivity (Fielding, Lee and Blank 2017; Li, Larimo and Leonidou 2021; Phillip and Dennis 2011).

3.4.2.1   Influencer Selection

Research has shown that *"referral data"* (information about the website or platform where a user that completed an action on a website, such as making purchase or aligning up, came from) can be used for the identification of SMIs. This type of data can help measure an SMI's *"buzz"* (user rebroadcasting), resonance and credibility in the same manner that *"consumer data"* allows companies to increase the value of their offerings by appealing to a favourable *"fit"* with the consumer and increase purchasing *"worthiness"* that goes beyond a purely utilitarian purpose (Bayazıt, Durmuş and Yıldırım 2017; Hughes, Swaminathan and Brooks 2019; Simons et al. 2021).

To increase the validity of this research the SMIs selected must have had a trajectory that has deemed them as notable in the field of beauty. This means that they should have a considerable number of followers and have collaborated with recognisable brands. Furthermore, the content that the chosen SMIs have shared needed to be of similar quality across different SNS, thus, the researcher aimed to create knowledge that is not dependent on the social network chosen. Hence, if the selected SMIs were to be examined in a different SNS from Twitter, such as Facebook or Instagram, the findings should be comparable to those uncovered in this research. The basis of this rationale is that prior academic research has demonstrated that top users can maintain their follower base across different SNS and, therefore, their reach metrics follow similar patterns across different platforms (Leigh and Melwani 2019; Rogers, Chapman and Giotsas 2012; Van der Lans et al. 2010).

This research explores the role of the SMI under the "*Megaphone Effect*", which implies that they cannot have any previous ties to cosmetics companies or formal education in the fields of beauty, aesthetics and makeup artistry. Based on the previous requirements, Table 3.7 presents information and statistics of prominent SMIs (excluding celebrities, political or religious leaders and athletes as described by *"The Megaphone Effect"*), which includes subscriber numbers, topic, type of content developed and brands highlighted in the SMIs' posts. These statistics evidence that the content produced by prominent SMIs can be viewed by millions of people, who can simultaneously engage with the content by liking it, sharing it or commenting. Examples of how brands have paired with SMIs are presented in Table 3.8.

	TOP USERS	AUDIENCE	TOPIC	CONTENT	BRANDS
YOUTUBE	**PewDiePie**	57M	Gaming	3.5K videos	
	Michelle Phan (USA)	8.89M	Beauty	254 videos	Lancôme, L'Oréal, MAC Cosmetics
	Zoella (UK)	12M	Lifestyle, Beauty, Fashion	358 videos	ASOS, Primark, Boots, Bodyworks, Homeware, Miss Selfridge, Boohoo, Sephora, Zoella Beauty (own brand), Golden Grahams, Mac Cosmetics, Zara, Cosmopolitan, Chanel, Topshop, New Look, H&M, Lush
	PointlessVlogBlog: Alfie and Zoella (UK)	4M	Entertainment	1K videos	ASOS
	PointlessBlog: Alfie Deyes (UK)	5.5M		254 videos	
	Huda Beauty (Dubai)	2M	Beauty	303 videos	Own Brand
	Nikkie Tutorials (Netherlands)	8M	Beauty	636 videos	
	Fleur DeForce (UK)	1.5M	Beauty	773 videos	L'Oréal, Estée Lauder
	Pixiwoo	2M	Beauty	835 videos	
	Vsauce	12.6M	Education	343 videos	
TWITTER	**Cameron Dallas (USA)**	14.6M	Entertainment	37K Tweets, 34.7K Likes	Tommy Hilfiger, Dolce & Gabbana
	DanTDM (UK)	1.21M	Gaming	13.6K Tweets, 25.6K Likes	HMV
INSTAGRAM	**Cameron Dallas (USA)**	20.6M	Entertainment	1,5K Posts	Christian Dior, Dolce & Gabbana, Tommy Hilfiger
	DanTDM (UK)	2.6M	Gaming	723 Posts	HMV, Xbox

Table 3.7 Top SM Users

COMPANY	CAMPAIGN	USE	INFLUENCER
BEAUTY AND PERSONAL CARE			
L'Oréal Paris	True Match (Foundation)	Product launch for diverse ethnic backgrounds and age representation	Amena Khan – Muslin beauty blogger AJ Odudu – Fitness expert
	Beauty Squad	Brand awareness, 5 of UK's most influential bloggers	Kaushal Modha – British Asian Blogger Patricia Bright - Nigerian makeup and fashion blogger
	L'Oréal Men Expert	Men's facial skincare	Lewis Hamilton – car racer
Estée Lauder	Diversity in advertising	Men's facial skincare	Pietro Boselli – SM star
CoverGirl	CoverBoy	First CoverBoy James Charles	James Charles – makeup artist and SMI
	Collective influencer program	Link online influencing content in-store: create looks and feature them on SM and POS	
Clinique	Clinique for men	Guy Squad #behindtheface	Male influencers
Cosmopolitan	Influencer Network	Attract millennial men	Millennial influencers
Rimmel	Road Trip 2017	Engage target audiences	12 beauty influencers for videos
FASHION			
New Look	Brand ambassador	Men's Sportswear	Sanny Dahlbeck – martial arts athlete and SMI
Boohoo	FW/2016 Collection	Team up with model and SM star	Jordin Woods
	Style Squad	Brand awareness	60 influencers across key markets
Missguided	Reach target demographic	Partner with celebrity bloggers and SMIs	
FOOD AND SNACKS			
Danone	Light & Free Yogurt	Spotify	8 lifestyle-focused influencers
TRANSPORTATION AND HOTELS			
Turkish Airlines	Videos and #FortuneTraveller	YouTube, Twitter, Instagram	Invited 10 leading YouTubers to go to Turkey
Marriot International	YouTube	Content co-creation with influencers	French Kiss, The Navigator Live, The Two Bellmen
	Millennial Snapchat	Influencers for videos and other media	

Table 3.8 SMIs Employed by Mainstream Brands

Beauty SMIs were chosen as the focus of this research for the following reasons. Firstly, this group presents a fertile ground for research as brands rely increasingly on SMIs to promote them (Bezjian-Avery, Calder and Lacobucci 1998; Duffy and Hund 2015; Uzunoğlu and Kip 2014). Secondly, despite ample industry literature revealing the collaborations between SMIs and beauty brands, there is a gap in knowledge regarding the extent to which SMIs increase a brand's presence and the associated influence on consumers (Contestabile 2018; Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Wen 2014).

As this research aims to study the impact of an SMI's influence on their audience, it was necessary to choose SMIs who are self-made, with no previous training in their field and with large numbers of followers. This research evaluates factors, such as network size (number of followers), with the main topics taken from the tweets related to beauty and brand collaborations. To study the social capital inherent in online interactions, this research adheres to the selection methodology of SMIs under the "*Megaphone Effect*" (Khamis, Ang and Welling 2016; Ki and Kim 2019; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013). Hence the SMIs studied had to not be a beauty insider or a professional and to not be endowed through prior family connections in the beauty industry. The selected SMIs are named along with their Twitter username and a brief description of their profiles. To understand how the selected SMIs have

achieved prestige and notoriety in their field, it is important to describe prominent events in their careers, the brands they have collaborated with, and to discuss in detail how the concepts of distinction, taste, influence and consumption operate in their relationship with their audiences (Clement 2020; Rasool 2019; Sunikka-Blank, Galvin and Behar 2017).

► @JAMESCHARLES**:** He is a self-taught makeup artist and YouTuber known for his over-the-top glamorous eye makeup looks and tutorials. In 2016, he became the first ever "*Cover Boy*" (male spokesmodel) for COVERGIRL cosmetics (Lang 2016; Upadhye 2016). Consequently, he worked alongside brand ambassador Katy Perry (Lang 2016). Shortly afterwards, he was invited to appear at the Ellen DeGeneres Show, an important US nationwide broadcast that helped him gain more notability and recognition (Frey 2018). JAMES CHARLES collaborated with brand MORPHE BRUSHES to launch makeup brushes and palettes (Parker 2019; Shop and Box 2019). JAMES CHARLES has built on both YouTube and Instagram a following of over 15 million and has become one of YouTube's highest-paid content creators (Parker 2019; Robehmed and Berg 2018). Although he has been associated with high-profile celebrities throughout his career, he has suffered criticism and backlash for his actions, which have included engaging in numerous feuds, being dishonest, manipulative and making racist and abusive comments.

Figure 3.3 JAMES CHARLES (Fisher 2016)

► @JEFFREESTAR: Jeffrey Lynn Steininger Jr., aka JEFFREE STAR, is a self-taught makeup artist and YouTuber. In 2014, he co-founded JEFFREE STAR COSMETICS, which sells an estimated $100 million annually (Robehmed and Berg 2018). He is an unusual case amongst the chosen SMIs. JEFFREE STAR was a musician in California, which gave him pre-existing popularity (Robehmed and Berg 2018) before becoming a makeup artist. He had his start on Myspace and quickly became the most followed person on this platform as he pursued a musical career as an electro-pop singer (*Forbes* Magazine 2019a; *Myspace LLC* 2014; Nilles 2019). JEFFREE STAR

became a frequent performer in the LA nightclub scene who made top iTunes charts for this genre in 2007 (Lecaro 2006; Lecaro 2007). He had over one million followers on Myspace before joining any other SM platform (*Myspace LLC* 2014). He is additionally known for having made racist comments on Myspace when he was still in a band (Barbour 2018). JEFFREE STAR transitioned to YouTube to promote his music but changed his focus to makeup instead. His YouTube channel has more than 12 million YouTube subscribers (Hanson 2019) and has been ranked as the *"Most Popular YouTube Channels as Of May 2020"* (Clement 2020). JEFFREE STAR's "*Kylie Skin Review with Shane Dawson*" video became the No. 7 Top Trending videos of 2019 according to *Forbes* magazine (Vorhaus 2019).

Figure 3.4 JEFFREE STAR (Steininger 2021)

► @MANNYMUA733**:** Manuel Gutierrez, aka MANNY MUA, is a self-taught makeup artist and YouTuber who made beauty history by becoming the first male ambassador for cosmetics brand MAYBELLINE (Cherrington 2017; Natividad 2017; Reimel 2017).

From the selected SMIs, he has collaborated with most brands, including GERARD COSMETICS (*Gerard Cosmetics* 2019; Gutierrez 2015), OFRA COSMETICS (Gomez 2019; *Ofra Cosmetics* 2020), MORPHE BRUSHES, JEFFREE STAR COSMETICS and MAKEUP GEEK to name a few (Gomez 2019). MANNY MUA was part of *Forbes*' 2017 Top Beauty Influencers (*Forbes* Magazine 2017a; *Forbes* Magazine 2017b) and in 2018, he founded makeup brand LUNAR BEAUTY (Gomez 2019). In 2019, he launched the *#MORPHEXMANNYMUA* palette collaboration (*Morphe Brushes* 2019; Tietjen 2019).

Figure 3.5 MANNY MUA (*Good Morning Britain* 2019)

► @MICHELLEPHAN: MICHELLE PHAN is a self-taught makeup artist and YouTuber who was one of the first people to gain a huge following on YouTube for her "*celebrity transformation*s" makeup tutorials. MICHELLE PHAN is a "*beauty*" SMI who is well known in the business world. By the time she was 27, MICHELLE PHAN had been involved in four business ventures, including being the co-founder of IPSY, a subscription makeup company that grossed more than $120 million in 2014 (Adams 2015). In 2015, she is featured in *Forbes*' Top 30 under 30 (*Forbes* Magazine 2015) and in 2017, made the list of *Forbes*' Top Beauty Influencers (*Forbes* Magazine 2017c). IPSY, which was valued at more than $500 million according to *Forbes*, making her the first woman to build a $500 million business from her online videos and product lines. From 2015 to 2019, MICHELLE PHAN stepped away from SM to focus on her mental health (O'Connor 2017).

Figure 3.6 MICHELLE PHAN (*Adweek* 2014)

► @NIKKIETUTORIALS: With over 7.2 million followers on Instagram and more than 11 million YouTube subscribers, Nikkie De Jager is a Dutch YouTube star and self-taught makeup artist. NIKKIE TUTORIALS' claim to fame is creating looks that transform a

person's appearance. Her breakout video *"The Power of Makeup"* became viral and gained over 42 million views (*ABC* News 2015; de Jagger 2015). In 2017, she became a "*makeup creator*" by collaborating with OFRA COSMETICS (Abelman 2017; Avila Uribe 2017), followed by brand TOO FACED COSMETICS (Fuller 2017; Tenbarge 2019). That same year, she made the list of *Forbes*' Top Beauty Influencers (*Forbes* Magazine 2017c).

Figure 3.7 NIKKIE TUTORIALS (Day 2020)

► @ZOELLA**:** Zoe Sugg, aka ZOELLA, is a beauty and lifestyle blogger and YouTuber who had her start doing haul videos of clothing and makeup purchases and was named of Forbes' "*Top Beauty Influencer of 2017*" (O'Connor 2017). In 2014, ZOELLA launched her "*Tutti Frutti*" beauty range with UK drugstore SUPERDRUG (Gale 2014) which sold out (Young 2017). Since then, this range has enjoyed record sales, becoming SUPERDRUG's fastest-selling beauty launch (O'Connor 2017; Parsons 2019). She has since built up her line of beauty and lifestyle products (*Forbes* Magazine 2019b), with three best-selling books (Tivnan 2014), over eleven million followers on YouTube, around ten million on Instagram (Young 2017).

Figure 3.8 ZOELLA (Sugg 2017)

An important clarification is that from this point onwards, the Twitter screennames of SMIs, brands and other celebrities are used as the main way to refer to them. Capital letters are used to facilitate ready recognition, to avoid confusion in the cases where their proper name is unrelated or distant from their Twitter one and to facilitate their identification when used in hashtags.

3.4.3 Ethical Considerations

This section describes the ethical considerations and approvals of this research project. This research adhered to Coventry University's rules and regulations and followed academic best practices to maintain objectivity and integrity, which encompassed:

- ► Privacy and dignity.
- ► Protection from personal harm.
- ► Preserve confidentiality.
- ► Obtaining 'Informed Consent' from participants.
- ► Disclose financial support.
- ► Acknowledge contributions.

To meet these guidelines the Privacy Policies of the top SNS and regulating authorities have been examined. The following sections synthesise the analysis undertaken, as the application of traditional ethical marketing concepts applied to an online environment can become difficult because of the many rules and technical aspects that relate to SNS. Moreover, the application of marketing theory in a digital environment can carry negative conceptual, practical and ethical issues if it is not carefully planned and implemented (Biswas, Biswas and Das 2006; Erfgen, Zenker and Sattler 2015; Zook et al. 2017). Because of the many nuances present in SM, government and academic organisations have created special regulations for conducting research online. These guidelines address topics such as:

- ► Group owner's permissions.
- ► Online surveys, focus groups and interviews consents and disclosures.
- ► Quotations with participants' consent.
- ► Use of images or other types of user-generated content (UGC).
- ► SNS and platform regulations.

Consequently, an especially important reason for having chosen Twitter relates to the ownership and use of the data collected, which simplified the process of obtaining ethical approval for this research. As described in Twitter's Data Privacy Policy, the purpose of this platform is the public sharing of information, hence the data collected via its API has already been consented to be shared for the use of third parties:

"Twitter is primarily designed TO HELP you share information with the world…. Twitter Broadly and instantly disseminates your public information to a wide range of USERS …and services, including … organisations such as UNIVERSITIES … and market research firms that analyse the information for trends and insights… Our default is almost always to make the information you provide through the Services public" (*Twitter Inc.* 2021)

This policy provides a considerable advantage in the access, sampling and ethics approval of this project. This policy also applies to the content re-shared on Twitter from other SNS, as users often disseminate the content that they have posted on Facebook, on other platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok or Twitter. Based on these considerations, this research falls into the category of "*medium risk*" as it involves primary data collection. The possible risks for the users whose data is used in this research can be qualified as minimal as this was collected and analysed using computational methods, which eliminate any concerns that could arise from carrying out face-to-face interactions. In addition, previous research has revealed that Twitter users feel more comfortable participating in large scale research where these methods are used (Cumbraos-Sánchez et al. 2019; Fiesler and Proferes 2018; Mogaji, Balakrishnan and Kieu 2021).

Furthermore, central to the discussion of ethics in SM is the concept of "*informed consent*", while the specific term appears solely in the Market Research Society Code of Conduct (*The Market Research Society* 2019), the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR) published guidelines on SM research (*ESOMAR* 2011) regarding "*who grants consent if the research participants have already granted consent for their data to be owned by a social network?*" and "*are participants in a position to refuse access for data about themselves, which they do not own?*". An alternative view is presented in Table 3.9 which argues that even if a research participant has given consent for their data to be used, exploitation of it for research purposes may be prohibited by the SNS codes.

Table 3.9 Consent Code and Context (Nunan and Yenicioglu 2013)

Approaches to privacy taken by leading SNS are summarised in Table 3.10. On one hand, they declare that content ownership belongs to the individuals who posted it; on the other, they have allowed themselves to use the content for a wide range of unspecified purposes. Conversely, there are two key protections offered by all the main SNS: firstly, end-users can choose to delete data and prevent it from being used for commercial purposes; and secondly, personally identifying (and non-public) information is removed before sharing with commercial partners (Nunan and Yenicioglu 2013).

Table 3.10 Consent Policies for Leading SNS (Nunan and Yenicioglu 2013)

Full ethical approval for all elements of the study was gained from the Coventry University Ethics Committee, where Appendix 1 contains the evidence of the successful ethical approval for the pilot and main data collection phases and additional Terms and Conditions of Leading SNS are presented in Appendix 3.

3.4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter illustrates the research strategy selected for the measurement of the capitals exchanged between an SMI and its audience online and to determine the role of *habitus* in these interactions. A three-stage process involving exploration, pilot and main data gathering, has been followed, in line with academic guidelines that aim to reduce method bias (Antonakaki, Fragopoulou and Ioannidis 2021; Creswell 2014; Podsakoff, Mackenzie and Podsakoff 2012) under Bourdieu's guidelines for conducting research (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu, Coleman and Coleman 1991; Bourdieu 1996b).

This research seeks to understand how influence is transmitted online and the main factors that facilitate such influence in the context of brands. Based on best practices in social research (Bruns 2020; Lopez, Magliocca and Crooks 2019; Tsatsou 2016), two stages have been set in this research: Stage 1, to measure the influence of the SMI resulting from the exchange of capitals and Stage 2 to measure the impact of that influence based on the audience's *habitus*. Furthermore, measures, social network analysis and netnographic strategies. This means that data collected from an SMI's, users' or a brand's public profile is therefore public, as expressed by most SNS' terms and conditions (Antonakaki, Fragopoulou and Ioannidis 2021; Peterson and Merunka 2014; Templeton 2021).

4. TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The main drivers for people to take actions on social networking sites (SNS), such as to share information, feelings, opinions and aspirations with the world, are innate and deep within human psychology. While the notion of "*human needs*" is not new, the use of SNS to fulfil the need to socialise, belong and be recognised, has ignited the interest of marketing professionals and academics to explore how consumers share information, create relationships and are influenced in a digital environment. Furthermore, this interest has increased greatly over the figure of the social media influencer (SMI), as these users are currently at the forefront of opinion leadership for their massive audiences and hence can be valuable assets in a brand's social media (SM) campaign.

This chapter describes the technical aspects, obstacles faced and other relevant considerations derived from the methodology employed. It presents the results achieved so far and describes future steps undertaken as part of the ongoing research. Due to having selected a data mining approach and the fact that over nine million tweets dating back as far as to 2008 were downloaded during the collection stage, this research falls under the category of "*Big Data Research*" (Fielding, Lee and Blank 2017; Gelman and Vehtari 2021; Upreti et al. 2021).

As described in Chapter 2, billions of pounds exchange hands in the forms of sponsorship and endorsements of SMIs creating the need for brands to be able to know if their investment is justified. This research aims to develop knowledge around connectedness and social capital by extending the theoretical framework of Social Network Analysis (SNA) to include the interactions between an SMI and its audience. To do this, the theories of field and social capital set out by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu form the theoretical framework of this research. Hence, a multifaceted *"Big Data"* approach based on computer data mining techniques based on marketing, sociology and data science theories in the methodology and data analysis stages.

The process of analysis undertaken followed Bourdieu's ethnographic research. Bourdieu aimed to construct a better way to analyse the social interactions that occurred between people back in his time (Wacquant 2004). The first stage relates to the power recognised in the field. The second stage considers the structure (topography) of the field itself based on

economic, social and symbolic capital; the exchanges taking place in a particular field. Bourdieu introduces a third step that breaks away from the known concept of ethnography "*a heroic exploration of otherness*" by including the studies of social structure and sentiment in his analysis:

"Some ethno-methodologists want to reduce conversation analysis to only text, completely ignoring the data on the immediate context that may be called ethnographic (traditionally labelled the "situation"), not to mention the data that would allow them to place this situation within the social structure" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992)

4.2   Background

By using the "*Megaphone Effect*" (Ki and Kim 2019; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013; Wang et al. 2021) it is possible to understand how SMIs went from being ordinary people by leveraging the power of social connections and interactions made on digital sharing platforms to gain access to sizeable audiences and benefit from financial rewards. The popularity and the opinions of the SMIs have created a new narrative in terms of how marketing practices are carried out online, it is the consumer who leads the communication about a product (Antheunis and Schouten 2011; Binkley 2017a; Hughes, Swaminathan and Brooks 2019) in its price, quality and benefits.

The knowledge gap identified in Chapter 2 evidenced that brands wanting to promote awareness, loyalty and satisfaction by using SMIs must face uncertainty in terms of the effectiveness of SMI as brand ambassadors. This is a difficult situation as today's tech-savvy consumers lack trust in traditional forms of advertising and use multiple platforms to investigate and purchase products, which creates technical limitations and challenges for marketers wanting to identify their consumer journey (Binkley 2017b; Poor, Duhachek and Krishnan 2013; Smith and Fischer 2021).

4.3   The Twitter Data

Although there is a lack of consensus within academic and business literature regarding how best to perform research in the Twitter environment, it is important to clarify the main technical aspects of the data that is available from Twitter. Each tweet contains 62 different attributes

that include visible items such as username, favourites (Favs), retweets (RTs), creation date and text, as well as "*hidden*" dimensions that are only made available thru programming interfaces, like its geographical coordinates (latitude and longitude) or whether the author's account was verified (*Twitter Inc.* 2019). As the processing of all attributes would require significant processing capabilities not available to the researcher, only relevant attributes, such as username, date, text, language, URL, hashtags, mentions and emojis; were preserved in the data collected.

The data retrieved from Twitter's API through the Full Archive Search supports a variety of use-cases which include identifying and comparing past trends, periods or event life cycles; informing new campaigns by analysing historical data to calibrate new models and analytical solutions and identifying and giving context to the topics, opinions and sentiments found in Twitter conversations *(Twitter Inc. 2018)*. Given that this research aims to enhance the knowledge and understanding of how the influence from an SMI operates in SM, a three-pronged approach was chosen to examine the strength and reach of this influence:

► Strategic approach: By studying the networks, audience reach, growth, retention, influential topics, measurement of engagement (Uzunoğlu and Kip 2014), rebroadcasting behaviour (Zhang, Yuchi, Moe and Schweidel 2016) and social capital analysis (Subbian et al. 2014). Many tools exist today to measure the strength of attachment towards a brand; which can also be used to help identify indicators of consumer commitment and investment in a brand (Pham, Valette-Florence and Vigneron 2018; Schau, Muñiz and Arnould 2009; Wolny and Mueller 2013).

► User approach: By analysing personal characteristics, profile statistics, demographics, interests, relationships, location, actions and opinion leadership identification (Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; Kauffmann et al. 2020; Susarla, Oh and Tan 2016).

► Communication approach: By identifying trends, social signals and influential messages in conversations and participating SMIs (Kratzer et al. 2016; Rosenthal 2014; Sakdiyakorn, Golubovskaya and Solnet 2021).

Due to the amount of data collected and the technical nature of how it is coded API, it was necessary to apply a series of data manipulation processes before any type of analysis is performed. These processes are described in the following sections.

4.3.1 Hashtags, Emojis and Slangs

Twitter's programming allows users to quickly insert references to other people, topics, events or emotions as a way to help create a better structured of the content within its 280-character limit. Thus, users can incorporate in the textual part of their tweets firstly, "*mentions*" to help identify users with a "*handler*", that is their unique Twitter "*name*" preceded by the at sign (*@username*). Secondly, users can include hashtags to help link important events, trending topics and occurrences, by adding the prefix "#" and finally, users can include graphical representations of emotions known as "*emojis*" (Dahlen and Rosengren 2016; Dwivedi et al. 2021; Rauschnabel, Sheldon and Herzfeldt 2019).

Emojis and their predecessors, "*emoticons*", are icons or symbols usually associated with feelings. The word emoji comes from the Japanese *e* (絵, "picture") and *moji* (文字, "*character*") and were originally introduced by Apple in 2011 (Burge 2019; Danesi 2017; Davis and Edberg 2020). An emoji is a visual representation (icon) that is associated with an animal, food, nationality, symbol, idea, belief, action, place or feeling. People use emojis for many reasons, such as to overcome character limitations on SNS, facilitate communication, make their tweets more attractive, emphasise their message or depict associated feelings, ideas, moods, activities, desires or attitudes that simply cannot be expressed with words. In addition, the adoption of emojis has been such that it has even generated a language of its own, where "*emoji phrases*" can represent sentences in a manner that is comparable to Egyptian geoglyphs (Broni 2020; Burge 2019; Solomon, Burge and Kelly 2019). Figure 4.1 illustrates the increasing popularity of emoji usage over the past years where in 2015, 50% of all Instagram messages contained emojis, in 2017 five billion emojis were sent daily on Facebook Messenger and today one in five tweets contain emojis (Broni 2020; *Emojipedia* 2020a; *Instagram Engineering* 2015).

Figure 4.1 Emoji Usage Over Time (Instagram Engineering 2015)

4.4   Programming Language and Software Used

The first approach to access Twitter's API used NODE (programming language). This approach proved unfruitful as there was limited documentation on how to gain access. The second approach, which was the one adopted due to its success, used R Studio (statistical programming suite), Python (programming language) and Gephi (SM data collection and manipulation software) as these were amply documented and in addition included libraries and tools for data mining, analysis, visualisation, statistics, machine learning (ML), artificial intelligence (AI) and other uses. All the solutions used were "*Open Source*", meaning that these have been created, owned and are maintained by a community of volunteer developers. These languages and packages are free to use, modify and distribute for any purpose (Bonzanini 2016; Fitzgerald 2006; Grus 2019). Other dependencies also had to be installed to run Python properly, which included libraries for accessing Twitter's API and manipulating the data into actionable formats.

Most of the libraries and tutorials used are available from Twitter's Developers site, YouTube and GitHub; an online repository and open source developing community with over 28 million users and 58 million repositories hosted (GitHub Inc. 2018). During the testing stage, the researcher realised that the latest version of Python at the time (version 3.6) was not working

properly and had to revert to version 3.4. In addition, the script that retrieved the older tweets required the installation of Python 2.7+, hence requiring both versions of Python to run simultaneously.

4.4.1 Python Scripts

Several scripts were employed to access Twitter's API in its raw format and retrieve the data. These scripts took the information contained in a tweet (text and metadata) and exported it to a file. The output file formats of the scripts used are described in Table 4.1.

EXTENSION	TYPE	OUTPUT RESULT
JSON	Data and metadata programming language file	File
CSV	Comma Separated Values – Text file	File
JPG	Image format	File folder

Table 4.1 Scripts Extension, Type and Output Files Results

To better explain how the scripts worked, a fragment of tweets from MANNY MUA's timeline shows a comparison between what a person sees (human-readable format as seen in Figure 4.2) and what they look like at the code level (presented in Figures 4.3 and 4.4).

This item has been removed due to 3rd Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be found in the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

Figure 4.2 Fragment from MANNY MUA733's Twitter Timeline

This item has been removed due to 3rd Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be found in the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

Figure 4.3 Fragment of Twitter Data Retrieved as a JSON File

Figure 4.4 Fragment of Twitter Data Retrieved as a CSV File

Figure 4.5 Fragment of JPG Images Retrieved from user MANNY MUA

This research made use of three main scripts:

1. Twitter search (Galea 2018): This script gathered information based on keywords, phrases and usernames. This script relied on the traditional API, which was restricted in the download rate's speed (one hundred tweets every ten minutes) and back-date (only tweets from the last thirty days could be accessed). The output of this script was a JSON file. This script became the main source of data used for validating the data downloaded by other means.

2. Programmatic old tweet retrieval (Henrique 2018): This script, although based on (Henrique 2018), was greatly modified to fit additional fields like emojis and the original language the tweets were written in, solving some problems in the code itself. In addition, the researcher had to write additional scripts to filter out mentions, hashtags, location and emoticons so that these could be added to the data. Furthermore, the problems with limited speed and the back-date ability of this API were resolved with the use of this script. This script was then tested successfully and then used during the main data collection stage. Its output was a CSV (Comma Separated Values) file containing the tweet information from the referenced user. An example of the same tweet in a CSV file for username MANNY MUA can be observed in Figure 4.4.

3. Image downloader (Fujino 2018): This script downloaded all the images of the referenced username. This script proved to be highly valuable as none of the other

scripts used downloaded the images; instead, they only referenced the URL. Its output was a folder with JPG files. A fragment of the output JPG images for MANNY MUA is presented in Figure 4.5.

When running the script to retrieve older tweets, a message indicated that Python required additional installations in order to run, such as the Windows Visual Studio suite and Windows Visual Studio Community Python Tools. The size of this latter software was 56GB, which surpassed the computer's storage capacity to deal with this issue. The researcher used the Visual Studio Python Toolbox, which is a subset of the prior installation with a file size of only 5 GBs. Another problem faced was gaining access to Twitter's "*firehose*" (full data archive). After many failed attempts the company remained unresponsive. To overcome this problem, the researcher modified programming code available from GitHub to gain access and download Twitter's public data.

4.4.2 R Statistical Programming

To collate and analyse the data retrieved, it was necessary to select a tool that provided scientific rigour and processing power to transform it into meaningful insights. After reviewing several mainstream options, R statistical programming was adopted. R has been succinctly described as a programming language and environment for statistical analysis and graphical visualisation (Dwivedi et al. 2021; Fox and Weisberg 2018; Pedersen, Grønvad and Hvidtfeldt 2020). This tool has been widely used by researchers in a numerous fields (Bunn 2008; Fox and Weisberg 2018; Jacomy et al. 2014) and employs a series of packages (computing libraries) that facilitate the process of exploring and analysing data, such as:

► Data Mining: Using Twitter's API to gather data.
► Text Mining: Document classification. document clustering, document summarisation, entity extraction, sentiment analysis.
► Graph Mining: Finding influencers and followers.

A wide range of libraries in R can be used to perform different kinds of analysis and create visual representations in the form of graphs and charts. The presence of these features and advantages represents a significant advantage over alternatives such as Excel, NVivo and SPSS. Unfortunately, the use of R was limited by the processing power of the computer used.

4.4.3 Gephi Visual Data Processing

Gephi is a software package that allows the collection and manipulation of SM data. This is an open source application that provides a graphical interface for the manipulation of data and the creation of different types of network maps and layouts based on a multiple algorithms (Csardi and Nepusz 2006; Sarica, Luo and Wood 2020; Tsvetovat and Kouznetsov 2011).

4.5 Data Collection

As a result of having critically analysed the advantages and disadvantages of popular data analysis methodologies, the following steps summarise the process of collecting the data:

1. Evaluation of current literature on Twitter's API programming, use and libraries.
2. Gaining "*developer access*" to Twitter, obtaining API (Application Programming Interface) credentials and creating a "*test application*" to test the retrieval of data.
3. Testing programming language by creating an access script to retrieve test data.
4. Retrieving test textual data based on keywords, language and geographical location.
5. Saving retrieved text data into a file.
6. Checking that the imported data was suitable for manipulation and analysis.
7. Testing retrieving and saving image, video and emoji objects and resolve any inconsistencies or problems found.
8. Completing the scripts needed for the final data collection step.
9. Running the final scripts and prepare the data for the analysis stage.

As with any research study and following Coventry University's guidelines, ethical approval was obtained for the testing and the final data collection phases (see also section 3.4.3). The undertaking of SM research with the aid of NLP and AI tools present a series of advantages that are not available in traditional research methods, such as lower costs, access to additional instances (metadata) and reduction of the time required for the data collection (Bruns 2020; Ghauri, Grønhaug and Strange 2020; Lopez, Magliocca and Crooks 2019) seen in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6 Advantages of an AI Approach to SM Research

4.5.1 Twitter's API

Twitter's Application Programmable Interface (API) can be understood as a doorway to access, collect and engage with Twitter's data based on computer programming. This is a powerful tool available in most SNS that allows third parties to programmatically monitor, analyse and reply to the conversations (tweets) taking place on Twitter (Castillo 2019; Elish and Boyd 2017; *Twitter Inc.* 2019).

As the API is based on computer programming, the scripts created to interact with it can be adapted to fit countless uses and applications, where the only limitations are those imposed by Twitter itself in terms of the rates (amount and speed) of data that can be manipulated at one time and the exclusions referenced in its "*Privacy Policy*" and "*Terms and Conditions*" (*Twitter Inc.* 2017). This API also provides insights into the users, media, favourites, retweets, likes and location of the tweets accessed and paid advertisement metrics. It supports programming languages such as Python, Node, Ruby and Javan and provides two types of API access:

► Representational State Transfer (REST) API: The Rest API pulls data from Twitter for download.
► STREAM API: The Stream API continuously pushes messages to Twitter and allows data to be downloaded in real-time.

Twitter Data is available from the API in two main formats:

► Free data is limited and only the latest six months of data are accessible.
► Twitter Enterprise (formerly known as Gnip) data is paid and gives access to all 65 measures of each tweet dating back to 2006 when Twitter started (*Twitter Inc.* 2021).

4.5.2 Image Download

Recent digital advances allow users to communicate in multiple ways by digitally transferring media, including images and videos, as part of a user's message.

Consumption behaviour and the factors that drive it can be easily observed online through the comments, images and videos that users post, making SNS a key medium for understanding new tastes, trends, practices and *habitus* (Gambetti 2020; Mogaji, Balakrishnan and Kieu 2021; Tavakoli and Wijesinghe 2019). Therefore to support netnography and identify these practices (Camiciottoli, Guercini and Ranfagni 2012; Cho, Fiore and Russell 2015; Woermann 2018), all images contained in the tweets were downloaded and analysed using programming scripts.

4.5.3 Emoji Gathering and Processing

An added benefit of having chosen Twitter for this research is the active use of emoji that users have on this platform. Emojis and emoticons are probably the most meaningful part of data collection as these directly represent sentiments, emotions and feelings. The difference between an emoji and an emoticon is that the emoji is an image, whereas the emoticon is a graphical representation that can be written using a keyboard. An example is the "*wink*" emoji 😉 whose equivalent in emoticon would be **;)**. Due to the initial character limitation within tweets being only 280 characters "*tweeters*" started using abbreviations in their tweets to increase the number of ideas in a tweet. Some of the most common ones are "*lol*" (laugh out loud) and btw (by the way). Consideration of special inputs and characters are of importance to this research given that their inclusion in the subsequent analysis of this data in conjunction with the textual part of the tweet can form a deeper understanding of the emotion or sentiment within each tweet. This principle is academically known as the "*semantic meaning*" (Bilro, Loureiro and Guerreiro 2019; Grus 2019; *Instagram Engineering* 2015).

Since an emoji is a digital occurrence, each one corresponds to a word (or set of words) that are set by a regulatory body (Unicode) after being approved for their use (Davis and Edberg 2020). This means that this is a universal correspondence, regardless of context and use is given by the user that has incorporated them. Hence, the process of downloading and analysing emojis requires an additional step of translation to associate to them their inherent meaning and category. This information is documented and updated in the latest Unicode version (*Unicode Inc.* 2020). For example, the emoji "*grinning face*" is part of the category

"s*mileys & emotion*", its Unicode name is "*face-smiling*", its coding equivalent is "*U+1F600*" and the keywords associated with it are "*face*", "*grin*" and "*grinning face*". These meanings and categories are presented in Figures 4.7 and 4.8.

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unabridged version of the thesis
can be found in the Lanchester
Library, Coventry University.

Figure 4.7 Categories of Emojis (*Unicode Inc.* 2021)

This item has been removed due to 3rd Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be found in the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

Figure 4.8 Emoji Category, Name, Code and Keywords (*Unicode Inc.* 2021)

The Python script was corrected to properly collect emojis, as Python does not normally have the encoding possibilities of retrieving their graphical form. Subsequently, it was necessary to re-download the encoded version of the emojis (UTF-8) from Twitter, as emojis are not only full of meaning, but can also change the meaning of the sentence containing them.

4.6   Trustworthiness, Validity and Reliability

Academic guidelines for conducting research were rigorously followed to increase the trustworthiness, validity and reliability of this research (Peterson and Merunka 2014; Templeton 2021; *The Market Research Society* 2019), consequently, the collection strategy was designed to meet the following constructs:

► Credibility: the findings are "*truthful*".
► Transferability: the findings are applicable in other contexts.
► Dependability: the findings are consistent and reproducible.
► Confirmability: neutrality or the extent to which a finding can be definite.

Although the researcher learned to program in R and Python and how to use Gephi, these were not easy tasks. Despite the many difficulties faced and the considerable amount of time needed to learn these languages and to write the scripts, this approach enabled the collection of robust, extensive and meaningful data. While both R Studio and Gephi allowed the gathering of additional and supplementary information, Python was used to complete most of the data analysis, due to the large number of tweets processed. However, a "*comparative analysis*" perspective was used to increase its reliability and validity of this research by using several sources of information for the data collection stage (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2020; Pink 2016; Reid and Duffy 2018). Digital data collection methods are not completely fail-proof, and therefore when dealing with large number of files, images and media, it is possible that some becomes corrupted.

4.6.1 Data Collection

This section describes methodologies and approaches undertaken for the analysis stage that guide the collection of the data. This research uses computational analysis, which is an optimal way of providing robustness in the handling of big datasets, offering increased validity and reliability by automating calculations. Consequently, the effect of "*researcher bias*", which can be a feature in qualitative fieldwork and arises from "*human error*" and "*subjectivities*" present during the analysis and interpretation processes is decreased (Costello, McDermott and Wallace 2017; Kuru and Pasek 2016; Podsakoff, Mackenzie and Podsakoff 2012).

To improve the validity of this research and collect additional instances of the data, for example the direction of the tweets and their geolocation that were not available via the Python script, additional graphical data collection procedures were implemented. Two types of network data collection and manipulation software were used to gather, pre-process and create graphs of the Twitter data. Firstly, R Studio, a widely used programming interface based on R statistical programming, was used; and secondly, Gephi, an open source SN data collection and network graphical processing software package, was applied. This decision was based on the premise that the data gathered with one programming language helped fill the gaps from the data gathered by the others. For example, while Python data lacked geographical information, this was available from the R and Gephi data. Furthermore, the presentation of the results obtained follows best practice guidelines to assure that the tables, diagrams and graphics presented would be pertinent, clear and support answering the proposed RQs (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Gilad 2019; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2020).

This research followed several steps, sequenced to examine how capitals are exchanged from an SMI to their audiences and the moderating role of *habitus* in these transactions. To ensure the validity and reliability of this study, the researcher took a triangulated approach for conducting the collection process using three different methods:

1. A Python programming script using web-scrapping and Twitter's API to collect text, emojis and images.
2. An R programming script using Twitter's API and R's Twitter listening function (twitteR) to collect "*friend*" and "*follower*" information.
3. Running the Twitter Listener interface in Gephi (network data collection, analysis and visualisation software) to collect text and emojis.

4.6.2 Data Cleaning and Pre-Processing

In programming languages such as R, the presence of special characters, capital letters, empty spaces and the incorrect definition of a variable (defining a number as a character string), can greatly alter the effectiveness and reliability of the results obtained. Additionally, special consideration and care had to be placed on making sure the data analysed was adequate for further processing. As such, the processing and analysis of Twitter data encompassed the following steps:

► Extract tweets and user information.
► Clean text, transform to lowercase, remove punctuation, extra whitespaces, numbers, hyperlinks and stop words.
► Stemming, stem completion and creation of term-document matrix of corpus text.
► Identify, categorise and analyse topics.
► Perform emoji, opinion and sentiment analysis.
► Analyse follower, friend, favourited and retweet relationships.

The raw data downloaded was formatted in a way that a person without programming knowledge would not be able to understand. Hence, it was necessary to perform a series of steps to clean it, correct errors and transform it into useable information. Figure 4.9 exhibits an example of the character inconsistencies that had to be corrected.

Figure 4.9 Format and Text Errors in the Raw Data

This research analysed the top terms from each of the SMI's datasets, after removing common "*stop words*" of the English language, such as *in*, *on*, *the* and *was*. These words were removed to improve the speed of the analysis given that their inclusion would not add any value in answering the RQs. Additionally, text data contains instances such as white spaces, punctuations, stop words, abbreviations and misspellings that needed to be isolated, as these characters interfere with the processing of the data and do not add value to the textual analysis. Numbers, graphical characters, URLs, exclamation marks, punctuation symbols and special characters were removed to "*clean*" the data collected and make it suitable to be interpreted. The data was changed to a lowercase format to prevent duplication, as words with capital letters are processed as different instances. Figure 4.10 shows a sample of these variations for the word "*please*".

```
.replace('ohhh', ' ohh ')
.replace('pleasezzzz', ' please ')
.replace('pleasezzz', ' please ')
.replace('pleasezz', ' please ')
.replace('pleeeeaaaasssseeee', ' please ' )
.replace('pleeeeaaaasssseee', ' please ')
.replace('pleasesssss', ' please ')
.replace('pleasessss', ' please ')
.replace('pleasesss', ' please ')
.replace('pleasess', ' please ')
.replace('pleases', ' please ')

.replace('giiirrrlllll', ' girl ')
```

Figure 4.10 Fragment of Spelling Correction Script

The second step in this stage was to "*stem*" the text. This is the process of reducing inflected, verb tenses and derived words into their stem or root form (Ihezuonu and Enweonye 2019; Jiao and Qu 2019; Upreti et al. 2021).

4.6.3 Text Analytics

Text analytics refers to the insights gained from the process of extracting knowledge and useable text from a raw data file (Fielding, Lee and Blank 2017; Karami et al. 2020; Kauffmann et al. 2020). While the application of Natural Language Processing (NLP) and

Machine Learning (ML) as analytics techniques is still emergent in the measurement of large scale, multi-node data, packages like *Corpus, TextBlob* and *NLTK* (NLP Toolkit) provide modules for extracting information from raw files and perform tasks like:

► Corpus creation and statistical analysis.
► Word frequency analysis and "*word clouds*" visualisation.
► Tokenisation (coding) of text for the thematic analysis.
► Word association and categorisation.
► Identifying and classifying references, such as people, places and organisations.
► Applying Machine Learning (ML) techniques.

ML techniques (ML) techniques were used to examine the feelings, beliefs and opinions that would produce meaningful outcomes given that an exploration of the expressions and words used by the audiences to express views and sentiments required extensive time if done by a person. ML uses semi-supervised and supervised clustering techniques to classify SM data based on "*known*" patterns of polarity and meaning, where common uses include:

► Sentiment orientation, opinion definition, extraction and summarisation: Establishing opinions and sentiments to extract from a document can be difficult as these are subjective and can be ambiguous, but it is achieved by identifying subjective sentences. These hierarchical classification techniques use a dictionary of emotional words and pre-defined keywords to identify expressions of mood in a document and categorises them as positive or negative (Fielding, Lee and Blank 2017; Tsolmon, Kwon and Lee 2012; Upreti et al. 2021). The opinions and sentiments are then summarised, ranked and categorised as either positive or negative and objective and subjective with sentimental classification (Antonakaki, Fragopoulou and Ioannidis 2021; Colladon, Guardabascio and Innarella 2019; Misopoulos et al. 2014). These methods are often used for evaluating opinions in product reviews (Alaei, Becken and Stantic 2019; Fielding, Lee and Blank 2017; Jiao and Qu 2019). Hence this technique was used to classify the sentiment of the tweets and the opinions expressed, as a way to measure the nature of the social capital shared with the SMI's audience.

► Topic modelling algorithms: These cluster words measure their distribution, frequency and calculate similarities, to uncover themes or topics (Antonakaki, Fragopoulou and Ioannidis 2021; Mogaji, Balakrishnan and Kieu 2021; Sarica, Luo and Wood 2020). The main methodologies used for topic modelling are LDA (Latent Dirichlet Allocation Model) and LSA (Latent Semantic Analysis). LDA maps the text in a document

according to the context, while considering that a word can have different meanings depending on its use. These concepts are presented in Figure 4.11. In this research, LDA was used in the first instance to remove stop words, find particular words, help calculate a tweet's importance and to obtain relevant statistics, such as the number of words used. Subsequently, LSA was used to help model the communities and clusters formed by the mentions and hashtags in the SMIs' networks.
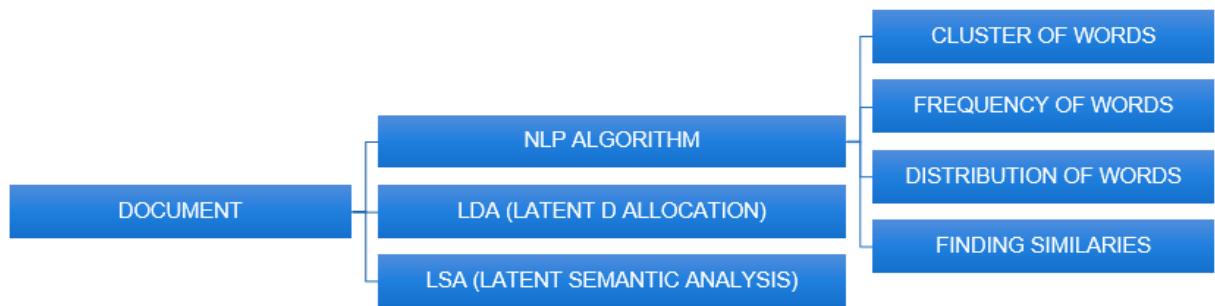
Figure 4.11 Topic Modelling Process

► Transaction-based rule change mining (TRCM) for topic detection and tracking (TDT) and homophily: Twitter is a platform where hashtags serve as labels in the communication that can be analysed to detect changes using association rules (ARs). The application of these rules help detect pattern variations by classifying topics as "*emerging*", "*new*", "*unexpected consequent*", "*unexpected conditional*" and "*dead*" using LDA (Latent Dirichlet Allocation) and CTM (Correlated Topic Model) algorithms (Alaei, Becken and Stantic 2019; Douglas, Shepherd and Prentice 2020). Homophilyn, a clustering technique used in topic modelling, creates a graphical output of the opinion formation process which can lead to the identification of the nodes that are affected (or not) by an SMI based on TRCM and TDT models (Colladon, Guardabascio and Innarella 2019; Han, Caldwell and Ghadge 2020; Knoke and Yang 2019).

One example is by categorising opinion-based themes and ranking them to determine their polarity (Bruns 2020; Pagolu et al. 2016; Pandey and Pandey 2019). An application of these techniques in this project was the creation of a script that teaches the computer to differentiate two similar phrases, such as "*this lipstick is fucking amazing*" and "*this lipstick is a fucking waste of money*". While the words that make up these phrases are similar their sentiment is opposite and the opinion being given is different.

4.6.4 Social Capital Measurement

In addition to the methods already described, this research uses quantitative scales to assess the volume and strengths of the digital interactions between the SMI and its audience. Popular examples of how previous studies have quantified social capital and their explanation are:

► Topic/Issue Mapping can detect trends and topics that users are talking about in a network of Twitter (or SNS) users (Fielding, Lee and Blank 2017; Kauffmann et al. 2020; Mogaji, Balakrishnan and Kieu 2021).

► Prevalent SNA theories about the measurement of social capital are presented in Table 4.2. However, this table shows that the main differences between these centred on the function of social capital and whether it should be measured at the individual or network (Leban et al. 2020; Lopez, Magliocca and Crooks 2019; Poushter 2016). As an example, the Social Capital Inventory measures a person's ability to connect with others who hold specific resources or influential behaviours, such as decision-making (Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Eloire 2015; Reinikainen et al. 2020).

CONCEPT	AUTHOR
Social capital is relational and can explain differences in class and power. It is the sum of the resources linked to a network of mutual acquaintance or special recognition. The amount of social capital possessed will depend on the size of the network and the volume of each its member's capitals.	(Bourdieu 1986)
Uses the notions from Granovetter (1982) to situate social relationships as embedded in the network but places social capital at the individual level. Social capital is relational, structural and functional.	(Coleman 1988)
Places social capital at the community level and, therefore, it should be measured as a collective construct.	(Putnam 2001)
Social capital should be assessed based on social relations and networks.	(Portes 1998)

Table 4.2 Social Capital Measurement Theories

4.7 Chapter Summary

SMIs have disrupted the status quo by changing the way that advertising and marketing activities take place online and offline. They are not only helping promote products and changing opinions in the marketplace but are changing the way brands communicate with consumers by adding a dimension of product use in the form of product demonstration, recommendations and comparisons shared online as posts, comments, reviews, pictures, videos, tutorials and how to guides. SMI−brand relationships have evolved to the point where brands are co-developing products with world-renowned SMIs. Furthermore, while traditional media is subject to editorial and production reviews, the instant nature of SNS and the ability that followers have of responding immediately create an environment where intermediaries are bypassed. Hence, a mixed methods approach was implemented for this research, guided

by Bourdieu's ethnography, to identify useful indicators for measuring the influence exerted by SMIs on their participant audiences based on their SM engagement, given that scholars have established that individuals can create, invest in and maintain networks from which they can access a wide range of resources, such as information, support, employment, growth, power, connections, opportunities, knowledge and trust (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo 2004; Husemann 2012; Soda, Mannucci and Burt 2021).

As Twitter is a platform where users publicly voice and share their opinions about a gamut of different topics, the introduction of new parameters, such as the use of mentions, hashtags and emojis, as part of today's digital communication is changing the way people communicate. These instances, in addition to SMS related slang and lingo, are becoming a legitimate method of expression in all languages (Alharbi 2017; Bajde, Nøjgaard and Sommer 2019; Ihezuonu and Enweonye 2019). The data harvested from Twitter's programming interface comprised of over nine million tweets and 2,500 images. It is possible to measure the impact of these on the digital responses and behaviours that a tweet received and that of their connections using statistical and social network visualisation, with programming languages that offer specialised tools and libraries for this purpose.

In this research, three programming data sources (Python, R and Gephi) were used to increase the accurate data gathered in terms of missing, incomplete or corrupted data. This approach was guided by best practice for business research methods (Bell, Bryman and Harley 2018; Creswell 2015; Ghauri, Grønhaug and Strange 2020), ensuring that any shortcoming in one of the methods was counteracted by using data from the other two collection strategies.

Another important observation made during the process of data clean-up was that despite using several algorithms to clean up the data, there was still a need for significant manipulation to bring it into a concise format. This issue was identified when it was noticed that the audiences did not use any plausible patterns in the way they were spelt. These variations in spelling ranged from common misspellings and typos to multiple repeated letters, the use of phonetics instead of grammar rules and, in some extreme cases, the text was separated letter by letter to make them stand out. Therefore in addition to the technical implementation of the methodology presented in Chapter 4, the researcher engaged in further programming to overcome this problem and to rank the tweets based on their importance, which in itself has led to advances in the technical implementation of the methodology described in Chapter 5.

5. COMPUTATIONAL ANALYSIS AND MODELLING

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the technical and analytical strategies and models used to interpret the data collected. It reviews the processes, models and theoretical frameworks that were used to examine the data in a "*Big Data*" framework. This research also offers an analysis of how social capital has been deployed by SMIs to influence their audiences as part of a strategy that facilitates the understanding of their practice. It also describes the analytical contributions made by this study, as part of broader research that sets out to measure and analyse:

- ► Interactions and practices: These include social signals, such as likes, views, comments, retweets, impressions, ratings, click-thru rates and replies.
- ► User analysis: To identify influential users, groups and communities in an SMI's audience.
- ► Influence: To examine the quality and reach of an SMI's influence on its audience and followers.
- ► Information flow: To identify the direction, strength and reach of the messages posted by an SMI or an audience member.
- ► Opinions and sentiment mining: To identify the range of emotions present in the text of the conversations between SMIs and their audiences on Twitter.
- ► Events: To situate specific events that impacted the strength of the SMI's influence.

Each of the following sections contains a detailed description of the quantitative, social network and qualitative analyses that were performed for each SMI. Three distinct methodologies were adopted to triangulate the inferences derived from each SMI and to equip the researcher with a comprehensive understanding of the research findings and answer the RQs proposed in Chapter 3.

5.2 Unit of Analysis

In this research, the unit of analysis is each tweet, irrespective of its author or content. Thus, each retweet (messages that get re-broadcasted) is a data point. This means that a tweet that is retweeted by ten different users represents ten data points with unique ID numbers, independently from whether the content, dates or author are the same. The reasoning behind

the selection of this method of analysis is based on literature that advocates the positive effect of recurring brand messages, as part of an aggregate advertising response (Kronrod and Huber 2019; Nicolson, Huebner and Shipworth 2017; Parrott, Danbury and Kanthavanich 2015).

Previous research has documented that the analysis of Twitter data obtained via digital methods can be a difficult process, especially for someone without computational and programming knowledge, as this type of data contains over 62 instances of information (metadata). Given that the textual part of a tweet can be qualified as being "*noisy*" due to the inclusion of images, hyperlinks, emojis and special characters, this type of data needs extensive pre-processing and cleaning before it can be properly analysed (Bonzanini 2016; Bruns 2020; Grus 2019). Hence, this chapter includes a summary of the steps taken to decode and format the data downloaded from its raw form to one that was suitable for later analysis and interpretation.

5.3   Summary of Data Collected

This section describes the specifics of the user-generated data collected, which was contained within the tweets and images downloaded. The data was obtained using data mining techniques that allowed the retrieval of tweets dating back several years. Another important benefit of having used this data collection strategy was that it allowed the gathering of comments and responses to the SMIs' tweets, giving access to deleted data for JAMES CHARLES' and MANNY MUA's suspended Twitter accounts.

Normally, researchers use parameters, such as geolocation, date range or language to produce more specific and narrow results. Throughout the data collection scripts, all parameters that impacted the results of the research were set as wide as possible to produce a robust analysis based on how an SMI's influence arises and expands by gathering all relevant tweets. The data downloaded contained over nine million tweets and 2,500 images downloaded as part of the information shared by the SMIs and their audiences.

The tweets collected date from 2008 until the present day and were written in 51 languages. It is important to bring attention to the fact that no data from Twitter is available before September 2006, since this was Twitter's creation date. The numbers of followers and tweets displayed in the Twitter profile for each SMI have been enumerated in Table 5.1; these numbers establish a starting point from which the analysis of the data can build.

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SMI	ACCOUNTS FOLLOWED	FOLLOWERS	TWEETS
JAMES CHARLES	1,827	4.5M	25.4K
JEFFREE STAR	84	6.1M	38.7K
MANNY MUA	733	1.5M	36K
MICHELLE PHAN	733	0.9M	32.7K
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	428	1.8M	48.2K
ZOELLA	268	12.3M (Combined Accounts)	32.1K

Table 5.1 Summary of SMI Specific Statistics

To prove the relational model proposed, the data collected needed to cover two different perspectives; firstly, the tweets produced by the influencers themselves (ego-centric network data); and secondly, the conversations, comments and responses from the audiences (socio-centric network data). An advantage of having also collected the audience's tweets is that historic tweet data dating back to 2008 for JAMES CHARLES and MANNY MUA. These SMIs' Twitter accounts were suspended and, therefore, those tweets were lost. A summary of information and downloads, authored by each chosen SMI along with their corresponding audiences, is presented in Table 5.2.

SMI	TWEETS	IMAGES	DATE OF FIRST TWEET
JAMES CHARLES	4.28M	338	24/01/2013 Account suspended before this date
JEFFREE STAR	2.34M	378	19/12/2008
MANNY MUA	0.66M	230	20/08/2014 Account suspended before this date
MICHELLE PHAN	0.10M	291	27/11/2008
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	1.1M	334	10/12/2008
ZOELLA	0.46M	679	16/04/2009
TOTAL	9M	2,250	27/11/2008

Table 5.2 Summary of Twitter Data Downloaded

The information found in Table 5.3 depicts the average number of languages spoken, the number of users in the audience and the follower's percentage for each SMI. This table can help put the downloaded data into perspective in terms of their global reach, which establishes them as being international.

SMI	LANGUAGES	AUDIENCE'S # OF USERS	FOLLOWER %
JAMES CHARLES	51	5,000,000	16.6%
JEFFREE STAR	45	7,200,000	22.5%
MANNY MUA	43	1,400,000	5.5%
MICHELLE PHAN	40	900,900	3.3%
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	46	2,000,000	6.6%
ZOELLA	47	12,315,343	45.4%
TOTAL		28,816,243	
AVERAGE	45.3	4,802,707	16.65%

Table 5.3 SMIs' Languages and Audiences

The data collected contains information about the time, platform, geographic location, user information, communications and social actions taken, which are inherent in the SNS where it

was posted. The question that arises is "*How to effectively approach the complexity of the analysis considering the abundance of data collected and the focus on interactions between SMIs audiences while preserving its integrity?*" To answer this question, it was necessary to first identify common methodologies used to study SNS and SMIs. The main aspects of these methodologies are described in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 SM Content, User and Research Types (Snelson 2016)

Because of this analysis, the researcher concluded that it was necessary to use a tool that facilitated the mapping and visualisation of the connection and social ties embedded in the tweets in the form of number of friends and followers, frequent relational terms used within the tweets, hashtags and mentions. This research also incorporates the analysis of the tweet's emojis, as the results obtained by applying sentiment and opinion mining analysis in social sciences can then be formalised as academic constructs and empirical knowledge.

5.4   Approaches and Strategies Employed

A network approach based on previous SM studies was used to access the conversations and meaningful social actions in the context of SM interactions. This approach allowed the identification of patterns of connectedness and social ties that propagate the influence of the SMI. This approach uses variables, such as social capital, habits and consumption, to develop network types. Examples of popular methods that convert raw network data into insights that can be interpreted include natural language processing (NLP), topic modelling, social network analysis (SNA) and sentiment (polarity and subjectivity) classification.

A detailed explanation of the definition and usage of these techniques is presented in the subsequent chapter sections.

5.4.1 Identification and Measurement of Bourdieusian Concepts

The following sections describe current academic literature that links social capital with the transmission of information in a network with eWOM and user behaviours exhibited online. These guided the selection process measures used to quantify the "*reach and strength*" an SMI's influence and social capital, their effectiveness in changing opinions and *habitus*, the legitimisation of practices and lastly, the exhibition of consumptive behaviours in their audiences.

5.4.1.1   Measuring Capitals

SM has allowed new ways of challenging barriers and creating upward social mobility using the web-sphere, opening up new avenues within field-specific areas, such as increased notoriety, recognition and social capital (Amiraslani et al. 2021; Godart and Galunic 2019; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2016). It is possible to argue that SMIs view audiences as resources from which they can cultivate social capital if they invest their own. By gaining followers, they hope to be able to capitalise on their social ties, loyalty, notoriety and power, which can be accumulated and exchanged from one form to another in the same way as money (Behtoui 2016; Lőrincz et al. 2019; Zugravu-Soilita et al. 2021). Hence, it was necessary to identify a tool that can validly quantify changes in Bourdieu's capitals as their measurement can be a difficult process. For example, a report by the Productivity Commission (Productivity Commission 2003) made the following observation about the complexities in measuring social capital:

> "Like the theoretical literature, the empirical literature is evolving. Because social capital as a concept is relatively new, multifaceted and imprecise, 'hard data' on it are not readily available. Inevitably, many early studies have had to rely on rough proxies for social capital and/or have been somewhat experimental. Hence, the results need to be interpreted with care; in most cases they are 'suggestive', rather than definitive" (Productivity Commission 2003)

Academics have explored the concept of social capital at different levels, ranging from the individual to social groups, associations and even nations (Coleman 1988; Pil and Leana 2009; Tiwari, Lane and Alam 2019). Rather than measuring social capital at the aggregate level, this research places it at the individual level as it is endowed on the SMI by its network (Mathews et al. 1998; Otero, Volker and Rozer 2021; Subbian et al. 2014). Sociological

research has indicated that an SMI's social capital originates in same way online and offline as and its characteristics are context-dependent (Fourcade 2007; Fussey and Roth 2020; Mortara and Roberti 2017).

Academic literature has reported the most common dimensions of social capital to be trust (Chae and Ko 2016; Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner 1998; Rotter 1980); rules and norms governing social action (Coleman 1988; Fukuyama 2001; Gulledge, Roscoe and Townley 2015); types of social interaction and network resources (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000; Snidjers 1999; Tiwari, Lane and Alam 2019). Some of the main strategies for measuring social capital are presented in Table 5.5.

STRATEGY	UNIT OF ANALYSIS	METHOD/MEASURES	DATA DIMENSIONS	DESCRIPTION	AUTHORS
On-site Sampling	Relational and non-relational data measured at the dyadic level. Used dyadic scores and Multiple Regression Quadratic Assignment Procedure (MRQAP) Analysis Analysis of Convergent and Discriminant Validity	Questionnaires Measures: • Social Interaction • Trust, Trustworthiness • Shared Vision • Resource Exchange and Combination • Product Innovation Control Variable: Business unit size	Relational data: Sociometric techniques, SNA to compute locational properties (or centrality measures, such as "*in-degree centrality*" or "*betweenness*" (Brandes, Borgatti and Freeman 2016; Freeman 1977). Non-relational data: Traditional statistics	Asked the respondents to indicate the nature of their relations which each unit along with a set of dimensions identified in their questions. Questions using Likert-type scales	(Tsai and Ghoshal 1998) (Brandes, Borgatti and Freeman 2016; Freeman 1977) (Ibarra 1993; Powell, Koput and Smith-Doerr 1996)

Table 5.5 Common Methodologies used in Social Capital Research

Theories for measuring network social capital mainly use relational dimensions such as network connectivity and interactions and cognitive dimensions such as interpersonal trust and social support. As shown in Table 5.6, an SMI's social capital can be measured by analysing conversations between the SMIs and their audiences, taking into consideration the quality and quantity of the SMI's social capital (structural dimensions, such as the size and density of the network), the position of key players (nodes) and the strength of the connecting social ties.

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Table 5.6 Dimensions and Measures of Social Capital (Susarla, Oh and Tan 2016)

For the purposes of this research, the strength of social ties can be measured by the size of the networks, the time invested in maintaining the ties, the emotional intensity and the degree of intimacy, the level of reciprocity in the relationship and the amount of resources (economic, cultural or symbolic) that the SMI can mobilise (Behtoui 2016; Huszti, Dávid and Vajda 2013; Zugravu-Soilita et al. 2021). This research has been framed under the field of beauty, by analysing the main product uses, brands, messages and practices shared around an SMI.

5.4.1.2   Identifying Practices and Taste

As described in Chapter 2, the study of the concept of "*taste*" shared between an SMI and their audience becomes central in this study, as it is linked to key concepts such as distinction, authority and authenticity. For example, while reviews rated as "*cool*" can index symbolic capital, the number of reviews written can index cultural capital (Ahmad 2014; Arsel and Bean 2013; Spence et al. 2017).

Taste, as defined by Bourdieu, transcends aesthetic preferences to an individual's disposition, shaped by their class, social status and power (Barker 2004; Kobayashi, Jackson and Sam 2017; Lareau 2015). It is a multifaceted concept that is both physical and symbolic. Taste is physical, as a consumer's preferences can be displayed in their clothing or choice of home furnishings and symbolic, as established by the case of luxury brands, where the choice of a certain brand can confer status and prestige for a consumer (Leban et al. 2020; Liu, Shin and Burns 2019; Pham, Valette-Florence and Vigneron 2018).

On SNS, users display and share opinions about taste preferences in the form of images and comments made regarding their likes, dislikes and opinions about an item (Kudeshia, Sikdar and Mittal 2016; Lieber-Milo 2021; Mortara and Roberti 2017) and exhibit distinctive characteristics and behaviours, such as those exhibited by luxury brand advocates in OBC (Godey et al. 2016; Leban et al. 2020; Parrott, Danbury and Kanthavanich 2015). Therefore the study of comments and opinions can illustrate the role of the SMI in changing and shaping this culturally shared attribute in their audiences.

5.4.1.3   Evaluating Practices, Consumption and *Habitus*

Bourdieu uses the *habitus* to refer to the structures and dispositions in an individual that consciously or unconsciously produces practices in the field. This concept provides a robust

framework for the study of practices in a particular field and explains social group interactions (MacArthur et al. 2017; Muensit, Thongyou and Lapanunb 2019; Scott et al. 2017). In previous research, the concept has been measured through qualitative methods to examine the interlinked dispositions that underpin the notion of *habitus* (Caletrío 2012; Connolly and Dolan 2017; Drumwright and Kamal 2015). Table 5.7 illustrates common cognitive, discursive and behavioural dispositions employed by researchers to study the *habitus* from a *"Bourdieusian"* perspective.

METHODOLOGY	AUTHORS
Surveys for virus-related sociological research: A WeChat survey module explored the *Virus-Combat Social Capital* generated from the COVID-19 pandemic. *Virus-Combat Social Capital* is defined as the intensity and extensity of social connectedness under conditions of physical isolation in response to viral spreading. It has three constructs that were measured by the survey: physical isolation, intimate relations and information diversity to determine *Preventative Habitus*.	(Bian et al. 2020)
In-depth interviews for alcohol consumption research: The interviews explored the participants' views and experiences of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis use at the individual and group level. The study aimed to explore motivations, wider cultural norms and behavioural changes within the context of *habitus*.	(MacArthur et al. 2017; Mak, Wong and Chang 2011)
In-depth interviews for tourism research: Multiple in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of tour operators, tour guide associates, monitoring authorities and government officials in both Hong Kong and Macau to determine the level of professionalism the service provided.	(MacArthur et al. 2017; Mak, Wong and Chang 2011)
Ethnography for wedding rituals research: Observations were made of engaged and newly married couples and gift-givers regarding the rituals and practices thy beyond the scope of traditional gift-giving, inclusive of ritual participant roles.	(Bradford and Sherry 2013)
Ethnography and semi-structured interviews for fashion research: Semi-structured ethnographic interviews with key store people and journalists and the observation, for one month, of the editorial production of a fashion magazine to explore the processes of cultural mediation, interrogating the ways buyers and journalists act as intermediaries between the fields of production and consumption during London's Fashion Week.	(Entwistle and Rocamora 2006)

Table 5.7 Common Research Methodologies for the Study of the *Habitus*

Prior studies have established the value of Bourdieu's theory of "*Reproduction*" (Bourdieu 1973; Bourdieu 2001; Vaara and Faÿ 2012) to explain and predict people's behavioural changes and how these are internalised and replicated (DiMaggio 1979; Ki and Kim 2019; Nash 1990). However, it is still necessary to investigate consumer responses to the SMI's influence (for example, practices and purchase behaviour) and the moderating role of *habitus* and *doxa* in accepting or opposing these responses (Freberg et al. 2011; Gambetti 2020; Lyke 2017).

5.4.2 Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis of a dataset describes the data based on numbers and statistical measures. These measures represent the volume, amount and occurrence of the different variables present in a given dataset (Creswell 2014; Creswell 2015; Ghauri, Grønhaug and Strange 2020). A simple example of quantitative analysis of Twitter data is comparing the number of times a tweet has been favourited against the times that it has been retweeted.

Given that this study centres on the relationships and interactions between SMIs and their audiences, a series of methods, such as textual, word frequency and timeline analysis, facilitated the task of quantifying these relationships. Each of the analysis undertaken are further explained in the upcoming sections of this chapter.

5.4.2.1   Statistical Analysis

Quantitative researchers use statistical methods, such as Chi-square tests, linear regressions, correlation coefficients, Poisson and binomial distributions, to interpret their findings and convert data into useable information (Cohen 2013; Gelman and Vehtari 2021; Gravetter et al. 2018). The relevant quantitative measures and statistics that were used to help gain an understanding of the measurable data found in the tweets collected are described below.

5.4.2.2   Textual Analytics and Topic Detection

Textual analysis techniques allow the analysis of unstructured text data in a way similar to numerical data and have been used in multiple scenarios to inform decision-making processes in both industry and organisations (Barton and Lee 2013; Jiao and Qu 2019; Pandey and Pandey 2019). Thus, it was of the utmost importance to perform quantitative text analysis as the tweets downloaded consisted mainly of written words and emojis.

Several methodologies were used to analyse the tweets, which included corpus analysis, textual analytics and topic detection. Corpus analysis is a popular textual technique that allows the study of a collection of text documents that can be assigned to a variable for later manipulation (Grus 2019; Karami et al. 2020; McKinney 2012). The first step in this analysis was to create a term-document matrix where every row is transformed into a document vector, with one column for each term of the corpus and an additional one its frequency. A series of R packages were used to perform this analysis, which included *Tm, Corpus, Quanteda* and *Tm map* and *TextBlob* and *NLP* for Python.

For the textual analytics, two techniques we used to quantify the number of times that a word was used in the tweets: word frequency and n-gram analysis. Word frequency is a useful technique for identifying terms that co-occur frequently (collocations) in natural speech. R's *Quanteda* package is a useful tool for this type of analysis and Python's *NLTK* library, as these support n-grams operations.

In addition, this research analysed the number of times that the names of SMIs, brands and words that denote social capital were referenced in the tweets. By identifying these references, it is possible to compute the associated importance and sentiment of each tweet as metrics that would support the evaluation of the strength of the bonds created, the flow of information and the extent of the influence exerted by an SMI on its audience. Also, by analysing the frequency of these references after separating the tweets from the SMI from those of the audience, it is possible to isolate the opinions of the audiences, their main topics of conversation and to map a network of tweets and their reach using SNA (Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard 2020; Knoke and Yang 2019; Tsvetovat and Kouznetsov 2011).

5.4.2.3   Timeline Analysis

Time-oriented data can be visualised as a chronological sequence of observations based on specific variables. The analysis of this type of data has many real world applications and their importance lies in helping to identify critical decision-making events and planning processes, which has been particularly used in business, finance, medicine, demography and meteorology (Harris and Orth 2020; Meltzer 2020; Montgomery, Jennings and Kulahci 2015).

Academic research has shown that longitudinal studies are an ideal method for detecting variations in the characteristics or behaviours of the target population at both the individual and group level (Claussen, Wacquant and Akçaoğlu 2017; Harvey et al. 2020; Tapp and Warren 2010). This type of study helps establish sequences of events and assess changes over time by aiding the establishment of correlation and causality (Davies 2017; Kozinets, Patterson and Ashman 2016; Miell, Gill and Vazquez 2018). Timeline analysis techniques are a form of longitudinal studies that offer a way to examine relationships in a set of data and how a certain variable grows or decreases over time. While numerous studies focus on the quantitative time series on Twitter, the number of these that relate to the study of SMIs is low (Julien 2015; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013; Zaglia 2013). Hence, given that a significant portion of the meta-data collected links quantitative and longitudinal information, timeline analysis was used to explore changes in the numbers of:

- ► Retweets and favourites over time.
- ► Follower/friend acquisition and growth.
- ► Fluctuations in the audience statistics, such as number of tweets.
- ► Filter out SMI statistics, such as tweets, friends, followers and favourites.

Unfortunately, the use of quantitative time series analysis was unsuitable, as this method centres on phenomena with relatively clear patterns where statistical analysis can be performed (Gelman and Vehtari 2021; Saeed et al. 2019; Shumway and Stoffer 2017), which was not the case in this research, as no seasonal or periodic patterns were identified in the data collected for any of the selected SMIs.

5.4.3 Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis methodologies describe the content of a dataset based on features and narratives. This type of analysis is expressed as themes and categories to describe topics, emotions, ideas and other forms of abstract concepts (Eagar and Dann 2016; Pandey and Pandey 2019; Pedersen, Grønvad and Hvidtfeldt 2020). A simple example of qualitative analysis on Twitter is asking people why they follow a certain person or asking what type of content they prefer to see on their feed.

Twitter offers access to its massive historical information archive and hence it can be conceptualised as a giant text and media record of its users' communications, discussions and exhibitions of social norms and behaviours. Despite Twitter's ethos being "*We serve the public conversation*" (*Twitter Inc.* 2021)*,* access to this information requires advanced programming skills, language processing knowledge and hefty computational power to be able to properly conduct robust research that is meaningful. To increase the validity of the results obtained in this research, the SMI's tweets were analysed independently from those produced by the audience, so that the resulting sentiments would correspond solely to one or the other.

5.4.3.1   Netnography

One of the most valuable aspects of Twitter is that this SNS allows the study of relationships based on multiple dimensions of social interactions, such as following, friendship, sharing, liking, commenting, trending topics, retweeting and favourites. An example of the results that can be obtained with this type of analysis is the identification of influential followers and messages across the network. It was possible to contextualise these instances, based on their location and proliferation over a timeline, allowing the tracking of message propagation, social actions, comments, replies and reach (Bange, Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari 2020; Muskat 2020; Shang, Wu and Sie 2017).

Bourdieu's work centred on the study and analysis of the individual (agent) in relation to power (class, prestige, distinction and social status), culture (norms, beliefs and education), taste (aesthetics and dispositions) and group associations (such as the family, schools, government, the church and even nations). Thus, Bourdieu relied on a series of strategies that allowed him to create context-dependent models of social reality for the analysis of the field, agents and *habitus* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Pernicka et al. 2021; Scott et al. 2017). Hence, this research follows a three-stage *"Bourdieusian"* approach:

1. Analyse the position of the *field* vis-à-vis the field of power.
2. Map out the objective structure of relations between the positions occupied by agents who compete for the legitimate forms of specific authority in a field.
3. Examine the *habitus* an agent as a system of dispositions acquired by internalising a distinct social and economic position.

5.4.3.2   Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment analysis (sentiment classification) is the process of determining whether a text document has an associated positive, neutral or negative emotion. This method originates from market analysis and is used for products, services, events or people. It deals with the establishment and classification of subjective information present in a text document by discovering expressions that can be classified as positive or negative (Alaei, Becken and Stantic 2019; Bakshi et al. 2016; Kauffmann et al. 2020).

Sentiment analysis of Twitter data has been used in multiple academic fields to predict stock market changes, categorise product reviews and to identify fake news and hate speech (Antonakaki, Fragopoulou and Ioannidis 2021; Bruns 2020; Burgess and Bruns 2012). It produces two measures: "*sentiment polarity*" and "*sentiment subjectivity*". Sentiment polarity is a number between 1 and -1, where a value above 0.75 denotes high positivity, while one below -0.5 indicates high negativity. The second measure, sentiment subjectivity is a number between 0 and 1, where 0 denotes a "*very objective*" text, while a value of 1 indicates high subjective. Figure 5.1 shows a simplified step-by-step model of this method.

Figure 5.1 Sentiment Analysis Process

The data collected was divided into text and emojis to increase the validity of the results and decrease the processing time needed for this analysis, as the treatment of words is different from that of the emoji's graphical representation. Then, each instance analysed was associated with one of eight emotional categories: anger, fear, disgust, trust, surprise, sadness, joy and anticipation. The resulting emotions were then labelled as positive, neutral and negative. Python's NLTK library was used to perform this task, however, multiple R and Python packages perform this type of analysis, with most using the NRC Emotion Lexicon (dictionary) to determine the polarity of the sentiment.

5.4.4 Social Network Analysis (SNA)

While the relationships found in a SNS can be explored through social network analysis (SNA), using graphs and matrices to represent relationships and flow of information as well as measures of centrality and cohesion to analyse prestige, cliques and power (Birkett et al. 2021; Castells 2001; Han, Caldwell and Ghadge 2020), academic research in the social sciences has used SNA methods to understand the social capital found in the bonding and bridging of agents in a social group, centrality and structure (Birkett et al. 2021; Han, Caldwell and Ghadge 2020; Salman and Saives 2005). To produce an interdisciplinary analysis that is nestled between computing, social science and marketing and to fulfil the aims set out in the research, this research used algorithmic solutions to support the chosen mix-methods approach in terms of:

► Netnography, time series analysis and influential node detection: To interpret patterns of social ties and relationships among actors in a network, detecting important events, observing participants and identifying influential nodes with network analysis (Bayazıt, Durmuş and Yıldırım 2017; Du et al. 2014; Knoke and Yang 2019).

► Textual and sentiment (emotion) analysis: To recognise the attitudes, observations, opinions, conversations and expectations of stakeholders or the general population and how these change over time (Grus 2019; Sharma, Ahuja and Alavi 2018; Subbian et al. 2014).

The use of similar approaches in the application of SNA have been employed in areas such as emergency management and responsible computing, to help create an integrated understanding of the actors and networks at play (Alaei, Becken and Stantic 2019; Fielding, Lee and Blank 2017; Sarica, Luo and Wood 2020).

5.4.4.1   Network Characteristics, Statistics and Visualisation

Statistical analysis of a network can help produce centrality measures that help represent and score the power and influence that forms clusters and cohesiveness, which include degree, "*betweenness*" and closeness.(Fielding, Lee and Blank 2017; Kratzer et al. 2016; Lőrincz et al. 2019). In addition to the methods mentioned, graph theory is an effective SNA method for the analysis of large datasets, facilitating the identification of the network's characteristics, such as structure, node distribution and strength of the connections (Elish and Boyd 2017; Sharma, Ahuja and Alavi 2018; Subbian et al. 2014). This method can produce visual depictions and filter patterns (Fielding, Lee and Blank 2017; Miell, Gill and Vazquez 2018; Sarica, Luo and Wood 2020) which can be created using R Studio Version 1.1.463 – © 2009-2018 and *tidyverse*, *ggplot2* or *igraph* libraries; Python's *NetworkX* library and the software Gephi 0.9.2 – © 2008-2017, facilitate the rendering of calculations and visual representations of a network.

5.4.4.2   Cluster and Community Detection Analysis

SNA can help understand how social capital operates at the personal level, by studying the interactions, relationships and connections between individuals (nodes) instead of focusing on the general structure of a network (Colladon, Guardabascio and Innarella 2019; Huszti, Dávid and Vajda 2013; Khan et al. 2017).

Given that practices result from the interaction of individual *habitus* and capital in a field, a shifting system of disposition and feeling, internally structured by individuals and externally by social themes (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Pernicka et al. 2021), SNA methodologies such as cluster and community detection analysis techniques allow researchers to identify the maximally connected components of a network and their number of connections (Lőrincz et al. 2019; Meek et al. 2019; Shang, Wu and Sie 2017), which lead to the identification of communities of practices, which are a central element studied in the present research.

5.4.4.3   Information Flow and Influential Node Detection

SNS are extremely fast platforms for an SMI to send information back and forth to an ever-expanding audience. While these messages can be easily rebroadcast with the added benefit

of these platforms being "*free*", partially regulated and "*loosely*" restricted (de Veirman and Hudders 2020; Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Lee 2017), their spread and any social actions associated with them leave a "*digital footprint*" as the information flows (Feher 2021; Krämer 2017; Ng 2020).

Mainstream methods for finding influencers mainly use this "*digital footprint*", left by a process of information diffusion, to discover the nodes with maximum information spread (Biggart and Beamish 2003; Castells 2004; Templeton 2021), based on the premise that the more influential a user is, the wider the spread of information. In these methodologies, the information flow is modelled using a network structure with static or dynamic edge probabilities, which are estimated from past observation of information flow.

Furthermore, the research capabilities in SNS have been expanded by using graphs to map the social capital found in a network structure, to measure actors' prestige, to explore rumour spreading or to model whether certain people can influence the behaviour of others using the edges to represent the transfer of resources between nodes or the value of the ties and relationships (Chae and Ko 2016; Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Shen, Kuo and Ly 2017).

5.5   Methodological Contributions

Connectivity, complexity and super-spreading of the new networks calls for a new understanding of the characteristics and functioning of SNS, as organisations and people both must adapt to manage the way communications and interactions of everyday life due to globalisation and technological advances (Bruns 2020; Krämer 2017; Poushter 2016). While the current literature provides tools and indicators to identify and evaluate the different capitals in a defined field (Coulson et al. 2015; Meek et al. 2019; Molina et al. 2017) and models capture the process of information diffusion and the process of influence from a node-to-node perspective, they fail to offer insights on the actual social value of collaborations and the influence in the context of whole network.

Hence, this study has sought to help fill the gap in terms of examining what Bourdieu called the "*rates of exchange*" and "*modes of conversion*" among types of capital (Markus 2021; Tóth et al. 2022; Yang and Li 2016). This was done by analysing the conversations, networks and statistics present in the data collected between the selected SMIs and their audiences. For this purpose, this research uses a series of algorithmic solutions, some developed by the author, to identify how SMIs create capitals and use these to influence the opinions and

behaviours of their audience. Thus, the following sections explain how those methodological challenges were resolved and the steps taken to produce fully working scripts that transformed the data collected into insightful information to be analysed as part of the present research. The creation of these solutions constitutes the basis of methodological advances undertaken to develop the forthcoming quantitative, qualitative and SNA analysis.

5.5.1 Textual Processing and Vocabulary Script

As the data collected was analysed with computer algorithms, these are unable to differentiate between Target (an American superstore) and target (noun or verb) without extensive and advanced AI and ML coding. Therefore corrections made to the spelling of words and names were essential as otherwise each variation or misspelling would have counted as a different word. It was observed that common variations and misspellings included words, such as "*thank you*", "*friend*", "*follower*", the SMIs' name and relevant brand names.

In the field of natural language processing, the principle of "*semantic meaning*" states that words with the same meaning used in a sentence can be treated as one (distributional hypothesis). Based on this principle, common SMS abbreviations and slang were translated into their corresponding equivalent using the script created by the researcher, as all datasets presented a high percentage of improper or incomplete mentions and hashtags, which would have led to obtaining erroneous results after processing the data. Thus, to increase the quality and reliability of the data, pre-processing script standardised the abbreviations, hashtags and mentions were formatted to represent their corresponding equivalent.

5.5.2 User and Tweet Ranking (Network Weight)

As the data collected consisted of over nine million tweets, there were significant difficulties in the processing stage that needed to be overcome. For example, when mapping an SMI's network, the resulting graphs were extremely complex and dense, making it impossible to distinguish any structures or linkages. The processing of these networks was a great strain on the computer used, which crashed when performing this process. The analysis of the totality of the SMIs' networks would require a powerful workstation, with significant memory capacity to handle the density and scale of the whole dataset.

Given that the academic literature has demonstrated the links between social capital with the transmission of information in a network with eWOM and content "*virality*" (Eiteneyer, Bendig

and Brettel 2019; Simons et al. 2021; Van der Lans et al. 2010), it is possible to assert that viral messages, meaning those that have high levels of being *"re-broadcasted"* within a network (sometimes in the order of millions of times), can be used as indicators of social capital in a network. Thus, to solve this problem and to facilitate the analysis of the data, the author proposed the use of a measure of "*network weight*" to calculate the social impact of an individual tweet, based on its social impact (favourites and retweets accumulated) and multiplied by pre-existing factors (number of followers and friends).

This proposed measure aims to solve the problem of finding influential nodes and measuring the strength of the social capital of a user by employing a combination of social signals, network size and rebroadcasting indicators to quantify the importance, reach and social capital of a tweet. The network weight was calculated using the following formula to score the relative importance of each tweet collected:

$$\text{NETWORK WEIGHT} = (\text{FAVOURITES} + \text{RETWEETS}) \times (\text{FOLLOWERS} + \text{FRIENDS})$$

Furthermore, the researcher used the results of this calculation to create a subset of the most important tweets, those above a defined value of *"network weight",* which were to be processed in the data analysis stages. The result was an increase in the processing time and resources needed, as any tweet below this value was filtered out rather than be taken into consideration. The resulting subset contained tweets with a network weight value that exceeded 19,000,000. This number was chosen after an extensive process of evaluating the results of the SNA that would produce the most meaningful results and network graphs that were dense enough to provide a solid understanding of the relationships between SMIs and their audiences, but readable enough to be interpreted.

5.5.3 Signals of Social Capital

This research proposes that mentions and hashtags on Twitter can be used as indicators of social, symbolic and cultural capital that allow for it to be quantified and evaluated based on the knowledge that references *"others"* (either people or concepts) in a tweet, can be conceptualised as a form of "*giving*" a capital, which at the same time is "*received*" by the *"other"* being referenced.

Given the interlinking nature of the Twitter algorithm, an important consideration that arises from the inability of computational methods to differentiate usernames from regular words, such as in the case of "*Pointless Vblogs*" (username of ZOELLA and ALFIE DEYES' shared

YouTube channel) and consider misspelt, conjugated or abbreviated words, is the need for an efficient way to normalise tweet content. It was important to standardise such occurrences in the text format to count these towards their respective mention for names, hashtag for collaborations and emoticons for emotions. Other types of unusual characters also had to be formatted to avoid the presence of misspelt, incomplete, inaccurate or invalid data that would interfere with the analysis. The risk of not taking this step is that word variations and misspellings can produce erroneous or inconclusive results, as these are treated as different word.

To ensure the quality and homogony of the data collected, all tweets were processed for "*mention completion*" and "*hashtag completion*" as part of the pre-processing stages. For "*mention completion*" the SMI's names, nicknames or other known names that they go by (correctly and incorrectly spelt) were identified and converted it to their corresponding mention. For example, if the tweet contained the words ZOE SUGG, these would be categorised by the script as a mention of ZOELLA. This process was repeated to include other prominent influencers, celebrities and brand names to enable the identification of influential factors other than the SMIs themselves. Similarly, important concepts, topics and ideas were matched with their corresponding hashtags. This process identified and reshaped keywords into hashtags already used by Twitter users, a process that was instrumental to identify important topics and collaborations between SMIs and brands within the tweets. For example, JEFFREE STAR COSMETICS (JEFFREE STAR's own label) becomes *#JEFFREESTARCOSMETICS* and a collaboration between MAC Cosmetics and singer RIHANNA would become *#MACXRIHANNA*.

Most of the data lacked geolocational information, leading to problems in measuring how great was the geographical reach of a tweet. To solve this problem, a script was created to identify and extract the main countries and cities from the textual content (words) of each tweet and from the profile description of the audiences that were available for download.

5.5.4 Emoji and Emoticon Translation

The principle of "*semantic meaning*" was also applied to emojis. This was done by treating them as text with special inputs and characters of specific importance to this research, given that their inclusion in the data analysis in conjunction with the textual part of the tweet can form a deeper understanding of the emotion or sentiment (Bilro, Loureiro and Guerreiro 2019; Grus 2019; Instagram Engineering 2015).

Special considerations were made when processing emojis and abbreviations, as these can be expanded into different formats and spellings. For example, the most popular emojis have similar semantics to words such as "*lol*" (☺), "*xoxo*" (❤) and "*omg*" (😲), whereas emojis like ☺ (ranked first in emoji usage) are alternatively represented by abbreviations, such as lol, lolol, loll, lolll, lollll, lololol, lolz, lolololol, ahahah, hahaha, ahaha, ahah, ahha, ahahaha, ahhaha, lml, lmfao, lmaoo, lmao, lmfaoo, lmaooo and lmfaooo (Danesi 2017; Ihezuonu and Enweonye 2019; Indrajith and Varghese 2018).

Emoticons were translated into their respective emoji equivalent and then these were identified by the script and filtered out of the text part of the tweet so that these could be analysed independently from the textual part of the tweet. This allowed the researcher to add another level of analysis by contrasting the results obtained from the sentiment analysis of the emojis versus that of the tweet's text.

5.6   Chapter Summary

The metrics and statistics that make part of the quantitative analysis of tweets are valuable sources of information that helps to quantify the level and extent of the relationship between an SMI and their audience. This research complements these results by adding a qualitative and SN analysis to explore the context of these engagements, instead of only observing the numbers without their pertinent background.

While academic theory points toward longitudinal case studies as the best research strategy for investigating behaviour over time (Bailey et al. 2018; Çetin et al. 2021; de Mello, Da Rocha and Da Silva 2019), many researchers have reported avoiding this methodology because of the extensive time and effort that it requires. These difficulties were overcome using R and Python programming to access the required Twitter data. The data collected covered years-worth of tweets downloaded over a few months after removing all limits and constraints in the number, language, location or date of creation of the tweets to be retrieved. This approach allows the proper identification of unknown ego-centric and socio-centric networks that would not have been possible to identify if the programming script had been subject to restrictions.

Extensive processing was used to assure that the text analysed was meaningful, homogeneous and "*clean",* hence increasing its reliability before this data was analysed. The

resulting scripts integrated the data from different sources and provided a solid way to rank the importance of tweets, identify mentions and hashtags, while obtaining reliable longitudinal data, process emojis and vocabulary. Due to the success of the results obtained from this technique, a programming approach was used to perform the quantitative, qualitative and SNA analysis of this research. Lastly, this chapter discusses the limitations of this research in terms of answering how SMIs create and nurture relationships and lastly exert their influence on their audiences from a quantitative viewpoint.

6. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS AND RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the quantitative analysis of the data collected. Because the purpose of this research is to understand the relationship and influence that a Social Media Influencer (SMI) exerts over their audiences under the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) framework, it becomes imperative to consider the context in which the interactions, practices, messages and meanings have taken place, so that these can be interpreted in terms of the consumer and their environment (Amiraslani et al. 2021; Pai and Tsai 2016; Venkatesh and Peñaloza 2014) to help answer the RQs formulated in Chapter 3.

As described in Chapter 2, this research employed a simplified approach to Bourdieu's theories by concentrating on the analysis of social capital, practices, *habitus* and consumption. Therefore Figure 6.1 presents a snapshot of the SMIs' numbers of followers, to help put the statistics in this chapter in the context of their audience size.
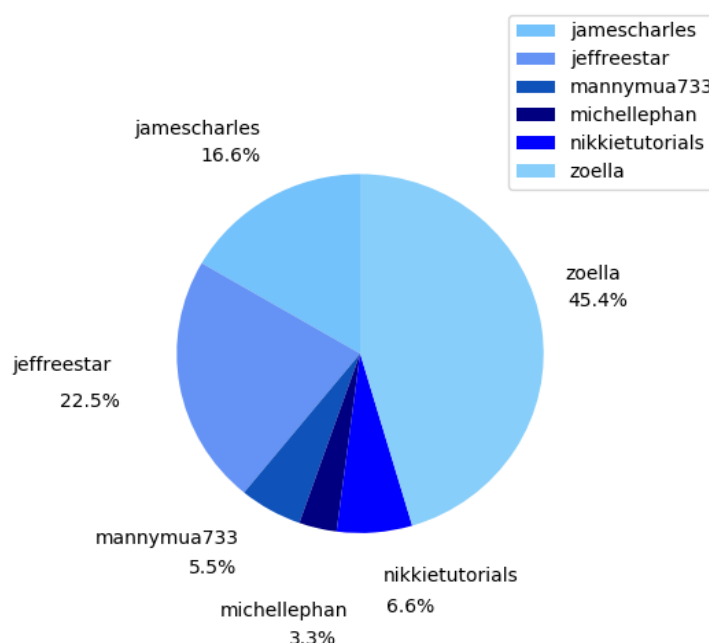
Figure 6.1 Percentage of SMI Followers

Therefore, the quantitative analysis undertaken sought to measure the strength and value of the interactions between SMIs, audiences and brands. These results are also discussed in terms of how these results help answer the following RQs:

► RQ.1: Who is an SMI and what are their characteristics?
► RQ.2: How and to what extent are SMIs influencing their audiences?
► RQ.3: In what ways do SMIs create trust, authority and legitimacy?
► RQ.4: Under what circumstances are SMIs more influential?

To answer these questions, this analysis centres on the measurement of text metrics and social signals, where the following sections will present the main descriptive, textual and timeline statistical analysis performed.

6.2   Tweet Statistics

The quantitative analysis consists of metrics and statistics, which are a valuable source of information for quantifying the extent of the relationships between SMIs and their audiences. These metrics and statistics are generated from the analyses of the tweet's text, favourites and retweets. While these statistics help put the data into a quantitative context, regretfully the massive file size of the datasets and the limited processing capacity of the available equipment inhibited the processing of group comparison tests, such as t-tests, ANOVA or ANCOVA and hence these were not calculated.

To assess the social capital shared between the SMIs it is important to first establish which SMIs are following their peers. Table 6.1 illustrates the "*being followed/following*" status, where the column on the left names the SMI and the columns on the right indicate who they follow. It was observed that these relationships were not necessarily reciprocal; for example, while JAMES CHARLES follows MICHELLE PHAN, she does not follow him.

SMI	WHO THEY FOLLOW					
	JAMES CHARLES	JEFFREE STAR	MANNY MUA	MICHELLE PHAN	NIKKIE TUTORIALS	ZOELLA
JAMES CHARLES		✘	✔	✔	✔	✘
JEFFREE STAR	✘		✘	✘	✔	✘
MANNY MUA	✔	✘		✘	✔	✘
MICHELLE PHAN	✘	✔	✘		✔	✘
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	✔	✔	✘	✔		✘
ZOELLA	✔	✘	✘	✘	✘	

Table 6.1 SMIs Followed/Following Status

The SMIs' and audience's top tweets are presented in Table 6.2, while Table 6.3 presents statistics such as the percentage of engagement, the number of unique tweets, favourites, retweets, mentions and hashtags for all SMIs. These tables show that firstly ZOELLA is the SMI with the most hashtags, followed by JAMES CHARLES and JEFFREE STAR, who were

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also the SMIs with the most mentions. Secondly, ZOELLA had the lowest percentage of favourites and retweets despite having the biggest audience, with 12.3 million followers, while JAMES CHARLES who has the third biggest audience in size had by far the greatest number of favourites and retweets.

SMI	USER	RTS	FAVS	TEXT	OTHER
JAMES CHARLES	JAMES CHARLES	58K	300K	me: I'm NOT falling for a boy again me 5 minutes later: twitter.com/itslaurvolk/status/1077665509116690432	NO
JAMES CHARLES' AUDIENCE	PULLIAM SYDNEY	89K	436K	girls coming back to school after getting the James Charles palette for Christmas pic.twitter.com/8DXGxG8Y9a	MEDIA
JEFFREE STAR	JEFFREE STAR	72K	398K	But where was that energy when you fucked all those other hoes and she was with the baby at home??	EMOJI
JEFFREE STAR'S AUDIENCE	UHMAN DERRZ	23K	103K	All I want for Christmas is Jeffree Star's metabolism.	NO
MANNY MUA	MANNY MUA	65K	203K	My dad actually works for me and is SO PROUD of me sorry bout it.	EMOJI
MANNY MUA'S AUDIENCE	JACLYN HILL	4K	25K	I believe in new year, same bitch.	NO
MICHELLE PHAN	MICHELLE PHAN	10K	18.5K	His last words were heart-breaking. It made me think how we don't take mental illness seriously until it is too late. Imagine feeling so broken to the point where living becomes a burden, but your livelihood depends on you putting up a smile, so everyone thinks you're happy.	NO
MICHELLE PHAN'S AUDIENCE	BETHANY MOTA	1K	10.5K	Soo happy that @michellephan and @sWooZ1e could make it to the show tonight! I was so excited to see you guys there.	MEDIA EMOJI
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	NIKKIE TUTORIALS	44K	171K	THIS WINS 2017 HALLOWEEN.	NO
NIKKIE TUTORIALS' AUDIENCE	PEOPLES CHOICE	3K	1.5K	Vote for NikkieTutorials by retweeting this post: #nikkietutorials #thebeautyinfluencer #pcas	MEDIA
ZOELLA	ZOELLA	13K	10K	Wina bundle of signed Jelly and Gelato goodies! Retweet this image and follow us to enter! Open worldwide Comp ends 23.59 GMT 07.08.17	MEDIA
ZOELLA'S AUDIENCE	IDGAFOS JESS	30K	79K	William dragging Zoella is everything chcjcjdhagsh	MEDIA

Table 6.2 Statistics for Top Tweets

SMI	TWEETS	FAVS	% FAVS	RTS	% RTS	MENTIONS	% MENTIONS	HASHTAGS	% HASHTAGS
JAMES CHARLES	4.2M	150M	64.46%	14M	68.69%	0.9M	34.62%	0.27M	**17.53%**
JEFFREE STAR	2.3M	32.4M	13.92%	2.4M	11.21%	1.2M	46.15%	0.39M	**25.32%**
MANNY MUA	0.66M	25.4M	10.92%	2.1M	9.81%	0.2M	7.69%	0.08M	**5.19%**
MICHELLE PHAN	0.13M	1.6M	0.69%	0.3M	1.40%	0.15M	5.77%	0.07M	**4.55%**
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	1.1M	18.4M	7.91%	1.5M	7.01%	0.07M	2.69%	0.26M	**16.88%**
ZOELLA	0.46M	4.9M	2.11%	0.4M	1.87%	0.08M	3.08%	0.47M	**30.52%**
TOTAL	9M	8.7M		232.7M		20.7M		2.6M	
AVERAGE		1.45M	16.67%	38.78M	16.67%	3.45M	16.67%	0.43M	16.67%

Table 6.3 Tweet Engagement for Total Audience

6.3   Descriptive Statistics

This section presents a summary of common descriptive statistics, including measures of centrality, variability, engagement, retweets and favourites. These measures help conceptualise the extent to which social capital signals, such as tweeting, retweeting and favouriting; are distributed amongst the SMIs and their audience population. These statistics are a valuable source of information for quantifying the strength of the relationship between an SMI and its audience.

6.3.1 Measures of Central Tendency

A measure of central tendency, also known as a central location, is a measure that describes a dataset with a single value that represents the centre or middle point of its distribution (Cohen 2013). The mean is the average or central value in a set of numbers, the mode is a measure that describes the most frequently occurring value in a set of data and the median is the value separating the lower half from the higher half in a set of numbers (Fornell and Larcker 1981; Gravetter et al. 2018; Little and Rubin 2019). For all SMIs the value of the median and the mode was zero, while the value for the mean was 2.65 for retweets and 22.19 for favourites. In the same manner, the values for retweets ranged from 0 to 52,133 while the values for favourites ranged from 0 to 243,815, demonstrating that the six SMIs studied presented a clear and strong linear correlation between favourites and retweets.

The values of the main descriptive statistics corresponding to the retweets and favourites behaviour of each SMIs audience are presented in Table 6.4.

SMI	MIN. – MODE – MEDIAN RTs/Favs	MEAN RTs	MAX. RTs	MEAN RTs	MAX. Favs
JAMES CHARLES	0.00	3.08	89,746	30.4	**436,539**
JEFFREE STAR	0.00	1.16	72,973	1.27	**397,922**
MANNY MUA	0.00	3. 74	65,211	44.16	**203,363**
MICHELLE PHAN	0.00	4.52	10,106	17.49	**18,480**
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	0.00	2.49	44,517	29	**327,199**
ZOELLA	0.00	0.95	30,246	10.86	**79,390**
Average	**0.00**	**2.65**	**52,133.17**	22.19	**243,815.5**

Table 6.4 Descriptive Statistics for Retweets

6.3.2 Measures of Variability

A measure of variability, also known as dispersion or spread, summarises the statistics that quantify how "*spread out*" is the dispersion of a dataset (Stevens 2009). These values represent the distance that the different data points can reach from a calculated centre. Here, a low dispersion value indicates that the data points clustered tightly around the centre and a high dispersion value signifies that they tend to fall further away (Hillmer 1985).

Variance is a measure of variability centred on the calculated mean, the standard deviation is a measure of the dispersion within a given data set and the range is the difference from the minimum to the maximum values in a data set (Peterson and Merunka 2014). Skewness is the difference in the extreme values of a dataset from the mean and kurtosis is the imbalance and

asymmetry from the mean to the extreme values in any tails (Little and Rubin 2019). Table 6.5 describes the measures of variability for the retweets, whereas Table 6.6 describes the mainstream descriptive statistics for favourites. These tables show that all values for skewness and kurtosis were different from zero and positive, meaning that their distribution is not *"perfectively normal"*. Instead the distributions of these are right skewed, peaked and possess thick tails (Little and Rubin 2019; Schafer 1997; Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). As referenced in academic research, these results are in the range of commonly reported values in the social sciences, as most reports in this field present non-normal distributions (Cohen et al. 2014; Gelman and Vehtari 2021; Gravetter et al. 2018).

SMI	VARIANCE	STD. DEVIATION	RANGE	SKEWNESS	KURTOSIS
JAMES CHARLES	10,972.35	104.74	44,517	208.46	69,481.92
JEFFREE STAR	21,293.21	145.92	38,868	195.85	49,378.25
MANNY MUA	26,660.67	145.92	38,868	156.54	45,242.02
MICHELLE PHAN	21,293.21	145.92	38,868	195.85	49,378.25
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	10,972.35	104.74	44,517	208.46	69,481.92
ZOELLA	4,259.32	62.26	79,390	298.99	117,126.80
Average	15,908.52	118.25	47,504.67	210.6917	66,681.53

Table 6.5 Measures of Variability for Retweets

SMI	VARIANCE	STD. DEVIATION	RANGE	SKEWNESS	KURTOSIS
JAMES CHARLES	2,310,229.42	949.46	466,563	123.65	23,329.74
JEFFREE STAR	283,123.31	532.09	149,848	220.66	60,878.56
MANNY MUA	971,107.45	532.09	149,848	60.55	6,958.92
MICHELLE PHAN	283,123.31	532.09	149,848	220.66	60,878.56
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	10,490.38	949.46	335,552	150.43	43,106.10
ZOELLA	97,840.83	312.79	30,246	20.28	22,975.48
Average	659,319.1	634.6633	213,650.8	132.705	36,354.56

Table 6.6 Measures of Variability for Favourites

Pearson's correlation coefficient (also known as r) is a measure of the strength in the association between two variables, using a range of 1 to -1 (Arnau et al. 2013; Cohen et al. 2014; Little and Rubin 2019). The average R-value was 0.78, confirming that there is a strong positive association between the favourites and the retweets. This means that if the favourites increase, so do the retweets, as R-values above 0.5 indicate a strong positive correlation (Cohen et al. 2014; Gravetter et al. 2018; Kuru and Pasek 2016) in this linear relationship. P-value measures the significance of the empirical analysis using a value range of 0 to 1: for the selected SMIs its value was 0.0, demonstrating the strong relationship between favourites and retweets.

It is important to mention that many statistical modules render a value of 0.0 when the value of this variable is extremely low (Creswell 2015; Grus 2019; McKinney 2012). The Pearson's correlation coefficient and P-value for favourites and retweets are presented in Table 6.7.

SMI	PERSONS CORRELATION COEFFICIENT	P-VALUE
JAMES CHARLES	0.76	0.0
JEFFREE STAR	0.74	0.0
MANNY MUA	0.93	0.0
MICHELLE PHAN	0.74	0.0
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	0.77	0.0
ZOELLA	0.75	0.0
Average	**0.78**	**0.0**

Table 6.7 Pearson's Correlation Coefficient and P-Value for Favourites and Retweets

Covariance indicates the direction of the linear relationship between variables. Variance measures the variation of a random variable (Hillmer 1985). The combination of the covariance and variance metrics creates a covariance matrix, where the value of the variances appears along the diagonal and the value of the covariances appears in the off-diagonal elements (Huber 2004). There was a positive relationship between retweets and favourites, as the values of the covariance matrix are positive. The values of the covariance matrix for the selected SMIs (Table 6.8) confirm that the number of favourites varies more than the number of retweets.

SMI	FAVOURITES	RETWEETS
JAMES CHARLES	0.99	0.76
	0.76	1.0
JEFFREE STAR	971,105.99	119,921.79
	119,921.79	26,660.63
MANNY MUA	283,120.58	72,730.02
	72,730.02	21,293.00
MICHELLE PHAN	971,105.99	119,921.79
	119,921.79	26,660.63
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	90,489.59	76,871.96
	76,871.96	10,972.34
ZOELLA	97,840.63	15,475.15
	15,475.15	4,259.31

Table 6.8 Covariance Matrix for Favourites and Retweets

The resulting shape of the linear regression for all SMIs was similar, as observed in Figures 6.2 to 6.7, with little variation evidencing the strong relationship between favourites and retweets.
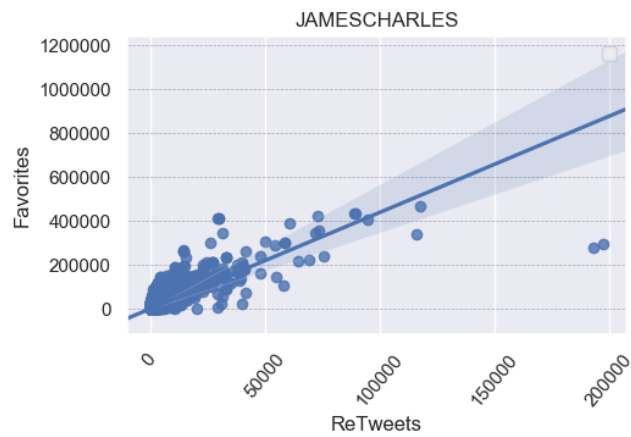
Figure 6.2 JAMES CHARLES' Favourites/Retweets Linear Regression
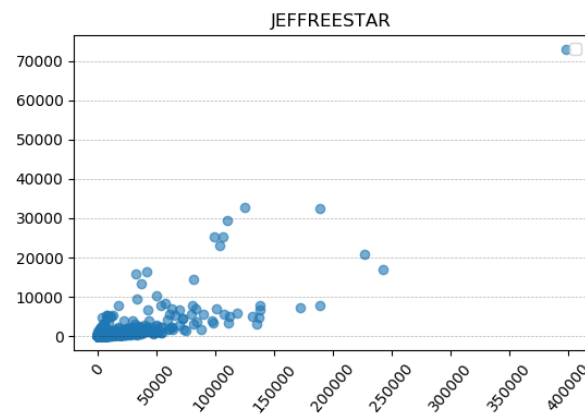
Figure 6.3 JEFFREE STAR's Favourites/Retweets Linear Regression
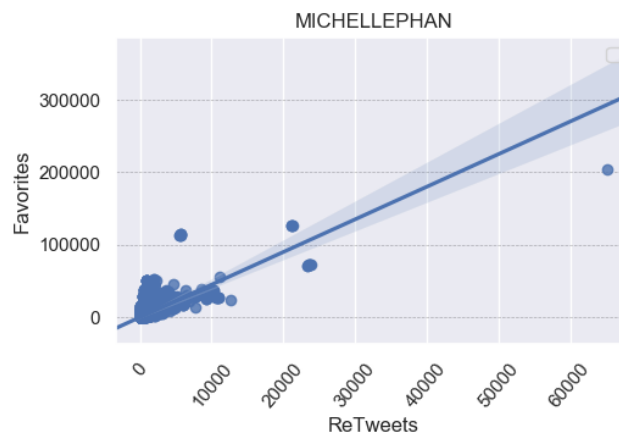
Figure 6.4 MANNY MUA's Favourites/Retweets Linear Regression
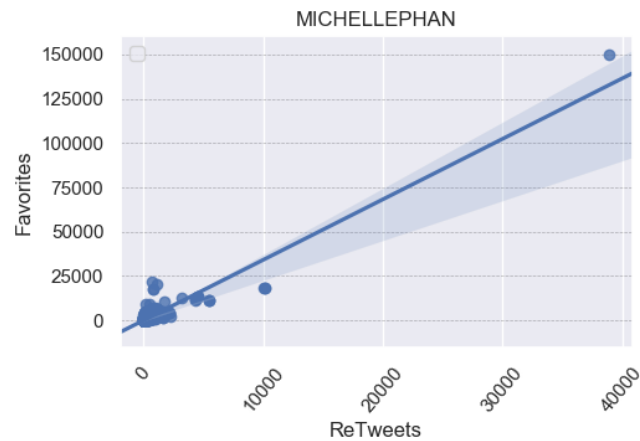
Figure 6.5 MICHELLE PHAN's Favourites/Retweets Linear Regression
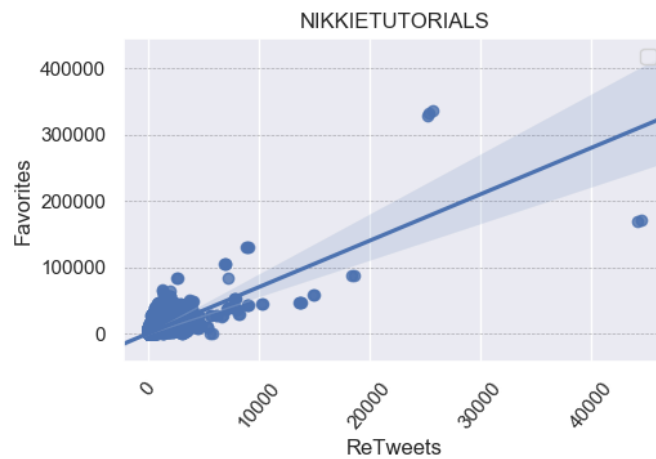
Figure 6.6 NIKKIE TUTORIALS' Favourites/Retweets Linear Regression
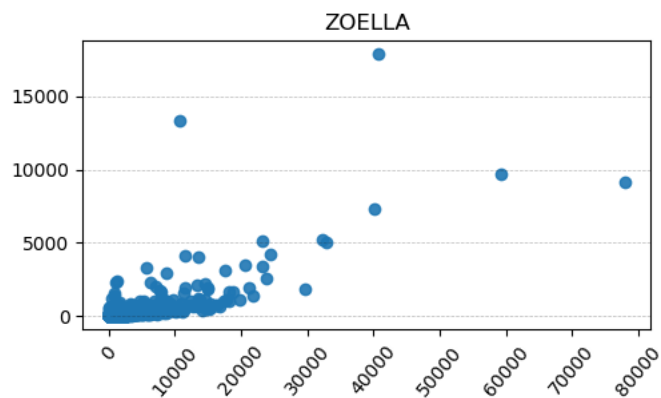
Figure 6.7 ZOELLA's Favourites/Retweets Linear Regression

6.3.3 Univariate and Multivariate Analysis

Univariate and multivariate analysis are commonly used methods for describing statistics (Colladon, Guardabascio and Innarella 2019; Ho 2006; Huberty and Morris 1989). This

section presents the results of the analysis of the measurement of interactions and social signals, such as likes, comments, retweets, impressions, ratings, click-thru rates, number of friends, number of followers and replies to quantify the levels of engagements in the SMI's audience. It also analyses the SMI's audience to identify influential users, organisations and groups within an SMI's audience and how these relate to each other.

6.3.3.1   Uniqueness of Tweets

Twitter is a platform where users can author tweets and share those created by others, known as retweets. The results from this research, presented in Table 6.9, revealed that most of the tweets posted were unique and only a fraction of these was retweeted. The results imply that while most of the content posted is new, their reach does not extend beyond the user who authored it and the number of favourites accrued.

SMI	UNIQUE TWEETS	UNIQUE T. RETWEEDED	UNIQUE TWEETS FAVOURITED
JAMES CHARLES	81%	19%	28.17%
JEFFREE STAR	13%	86.6%	35.05%
MANNY MUA	95.2%	4.8%	35.05%
MICHELLE PHAN	95.2%	4.8%	35.05%
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	92.6%	7.38%	35.05%
ZOELLA	99.4%	0.6%	35.5%
Average	79%	21%	34%

Table 6.9 Statistics for Unique Tweets

6.3.3.2   Favourites and Retweets

The percentages of tweets with favourites and retweets are indicators of the SMI's audience engagement with the content posted by the SMI or their peers. This research identified the presence of low level of audience engagement, where only 32.99% of tweets have favourites and 24.99% had retweets. Table 6.10 shows that most tweets have only one favourite (15.26%) and one retweet (4.24%). However, MANNY MUA and JEFFREE STAR presented the highest levels of engagement, which suggests that these SMIs are more likely to be able to mobilise their audiences based on the social capital shared with them.

SMI	T. WITH FAVS	T. WITH RTS	T. WITH 1 FAVS	T. WITH 1 RTS
JAMES CHARLES	25.61%	6.73%	13.40%	3.44%
JEFFREE STAR	35%	59.19%	16.06%	4.96%
MANNY MUA	40.80%	59.19%	16.6%	4.90%
MICHELLE PHAN	35.86%	11.65%	16.06%	4.90%
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	25.61%	6.73%	13.40%	3.44%
ZOELLA	35.06%	6.42%	16.06%	3.82%
Average	32.99%	24.99%	15.26%	4.24%

Table 6.10 Percentage of Favourites and Retweets

6.3.3.3   Users Who Tweet

While social capital theories assert that the number of connections in SM is an indicator of social capital levels, the findings indicate that this number is not linked to the engagement levels of the SMI's friends or followers. Most tweets and retweets authored by the audience were unevenly distributed across the audience population. Table 6.11 depicts user engagement for each SMI, showing the percentage of users who tweet against those who do not and the percentage of tweets that are generated by the top ten users, excluding the SMI.

SMI	USERS WHO DO NOT TWEET	USERS WHO TWEET	SMI TWEETS	TOP USERS	OTHER USERS
JAMES CHARLES	98.10%	1.90%	60.6%	32%	68%
JEFFREE STAR	88.94%	11.06%	15.27%	19.05%	80.95%
MANNY MUA	87.24%	12.76%	6.17%	12.88%	87.12%
MICHELLE PHAN	95.60%	4.40%	6.17%	19.05%	80.95%
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	88.17%	11.83%	2.99%	0.24%	99.76%
ZOELLA	98.86%	1.14%	0.40%	2.99%	97.01%
Average	**92.82%**	**7.18%**	**15.27%**	**14.37%**	**85.63%**

Table 6.11 Users' Tweet Statistics

For example, despite ZOELLA and JAMES CHARLES being ranked the first and third SMIs with most followers, their follower's engagement levels were only 15.7% and 1.35% respectively, indicating that the ties with their audience are weak. An interesting observation is that MANNY MUA is one of JAMES CHARLES' most active users with a 7.4% engagement level. This statistic evidences the strength of the relationship between the two SMIs, which is greater than the engagement levels of the audience.

6.3.3.4   SMIs as Authors

Table 6.12 illustrates how only 0.42% of tweets authored by the selected SMIs reference any of the other selected SMIs despite any friendships or collaborations between them. In contrast, 97.94% of the audience's tweets referred to other SMIs apart from the one referenced in their dataset, indicating the social capital between these SMIs in the eyes of the audience.

SMI BEING TALKED ABOUT	% of TWEETS AUTHORED ABOUT OTHER SMIS						
	J. CHARLES	**J. STAR**	**M. MUA**	**M. PHAN**	**N. TUTORIALS**	**ZOELLA**	**AUDIENCE**
JAMES CHARLES	0.53%	0.001%	0.045%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	99.42%
JEFFREE STAR	0.002%	0.028	0.015%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	99.97%
MANNY MUA	0.002%	0.003%	1.44%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	98.55%
MICHELLE PHAN	0.00%	0.00%	0.008%	0.55%	0.00%	0.00%	99.43%
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	0.003%	0.003%	0.015%	0.005%	7.4%	0.001%	92.57%
ZOELLA	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.31%	97.68%
Average	**0.09%**	**0.47%**	**0.25%**	**0.09%**	**1.23%**	**0.39%**	**97.94%**
General Average	**0.42%**						**97.94%**

Table 6.12 SMIs and Audiences as Authors

6.4   Textual Analytics

Two popular text analytics techniques were used to quantify the frequency and use of words in each dataset, these were word frequency and n-gram analysis (Bonzanini 2016; Grus 2019; Pandey and Pandey 2019). The results obtained from these suggests that SMIs and their audiences express social capital by including references to usernames as mentions and important concepts as hashtags in their tweets, replies and comments instead of writing them as normal text. Mentions and hashtags are interactive links on Twitter and hence, their use shows the transmission and reception of social capital in the network.

The mentions analysis revealed that JEFFREE STAR had the most mentions within all datasets, and that ZOZOEBO (a secondary to the ZOELLA account), GLAM LIFE GURU (beauty SMI), FLEUR DE FORCE (beauty SMI), SPRINKLE OF GLITR (beauty SMI) and BETHANY MOTA (comedic SMI) had a prominent number of mentions. Since these are well known SMIs, this finding suggests the presence of both social and symbolic capital. After applying the filter of "*author*" the results show that MANNY MUA authored the most tweets naming other SMIs and that none of the other SMIs mentions MICHELLE PHAN, even though ZOELLA, NIKKIE TUTORIALS and MANNY MUA are referenced frequently in her dataset. As described in Table 6.1, it is evident that despite both NIKKIE TUTORIALS and JEFFREE STAR following MICHELLE PHAN, they do not mention her within their tweets or retweet content which evidences lower levels of social capital between her and these SMIs. Furthermore, this result also suggests that the that the mentioning of SMIs is not related to whether there is a following-follower relationship between them.

6.4.1 Common Terms Used

Word frequency is a useful measurement used to determine terms that co-occur repeatedly (collocations) in natural speech (Jiao and Qu 2019; Pandey and Pandey 2019; Upshall 2014).

As described in the *"Ideological Toolkit"* presented in Chapter 2, the measurement of words such as "*thank you", "teaching*" and "*love",* can help assess the level of social capital in a conversation. The main words used by all SMIS are "*I*" and "*you".* Table 6.13 describes the SMIs' most frequently used words, which consist of their name and "*my", "you*" and "*I*". It illustrates frequency distribution and average values for these words. Furthermore, the word "*sister*" demonstrated high levels of social capital in the JAMES CHARLES' dataset, while the 19th most repeated one for MANNY MUA is JEFFREE STAR, suggesting the confer of social

and symbolic capital. MICHELLE PHAN's dataset also presented frequent use of the words "*teach*," "*perseverance*" and "*love*," hence supporting the presence of social capital generated from the knowledge transfer and reciprocity shared between this SMI and its audience.

SMI	TOP WORD 1	TOP WORD 2	TOP WORD 3	BRAND NAMES
JAMES CHARLES	YOU 66.7%	SISTER 16.7%	PIC 16.7%	TWITTER 5.4%
JEFFREE STAR	I 7.9%	YOU 7.9%	MY 7.9%	YOUTUBE 5.4%
MANNY MUA	MY 7.9%	PIC 7.9%	ME 7.9%	TWITTER 5.4%
MICHELLE PHAN	I 7.9%	YOU 7.9%	MY 7.9%	TWITTER 5.4%
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	VIDEO 7.9%	LIKE 7%	MY 7%	YOUTUBE 5.4%
ZOELLA	MY 7.9%	VIDEO 7.9%	LIKE 7.9%	YOUTUBE 5.4%
Average	I 7.9%	YOU 7.9%	ME 7.9%	YOUTUBE / TWITTER 5.4%

Table 6.13 Word Frequency Analysis

For all selected SMIs, there was an exponential drop of the counts from the first to the tenth word, which indicated an uneven distribution of the importance of the totality of words used in each dataset. These included mentions of other SMIs and celebrities and the presence of user ANIMAL RIGHTS PH, an animal rights organisation that is concerned about the use of animals for testing, in all datasets. Moreover, the presence of this organisation adds an ethical perspective that is important for both SMIs and their audiences.

6.4.2 Hashtags and Mentions Analysis

Celebrities and other SMIs' were also frequently referenced as hashtags, providing evidence of the presence of social capital derived from collaborations, relationships or feuds between these parties. Furthermore, the results identify how the audiences frequently voiced their desire for an SMI to collaborate with another SMI or celebrity, hence providing insight into how audiences can take proactive role in "*instructing*" the SMI about the associations that they want to see materialise. This finding confirms the importance of the audience's opinion in the generation of "*new*" social capital and practices for the SMI as well. The main characteristics and effects of these are described and put into context in Chapter 9.

The main groups of hashtags referenced in the tweets included SMI's name, references to "*animal testing awareness*" and brands names, particularly those owned by or that collaborated with an SMI's. The most popular hashtag was *JEFFREESTARXMANNYMUA*, which refers to the product collaboration between these two SMIs manufactured by JEFFREE STAR COSMETICS. The relevance of this hashtag not only lies in the fact that the association of these SMIs demonstrates the presence of social and symbolic capital, but also the fact that it was produced by an SMI also suggested a bearing in terms of the preference of the audience to consume products where the SMI is completely in control of this product. The next

set of prominent hashtags included ZOZEEBO (one of ZOELLA's additional Twitter accounts), FLEURDEFORCE (beauty SMI) and SPRINKLEOFGLITR (beauty and lifestyle SMI) and brand MAKEUP GEEK. This group of SMIs was mentioned in a tweet from MICHELLE PHAN's dataset that was retweeted multiple times and that evidences the presence of social capital between these SMIs and a relationship with the brand. *ASKZOELLA* was another frequently used hashtag by ZOELLA's audience to ask her for beauty advice, personal preferences and lifestyle questions, once again evidencing the presence of social capital between this SMI and her audience, suggesting that the bonds between them are close enough to address any queries via this medium.

The next group of frequent hashtags referred to NIKKIE TUTORIALS' palette with TOO FACED COSMETICS, *THEPOWEROFMAKEUP* and the collaboration between *MORPHEXJAMESCHARLES.* Other important mentions included JEFFREE STAR COSMETICS (JEFFREE STAR's own label), LUNAR BEAUTY (MANNY MUA's makeup brand and his LIFES A DRAG palette) and the collaboration between ZOELLA and her partner from POINTLESS BLOG (Sugg Life x Pointless Blog: *SLXPB*). Lastly, JAMES CHARLES is the only SMI that presented "*negative*" hashtags, as the presence of the hashtags *#CANCELLED* and *#JAMESCHARLESTHEPARTYISOVER* refer to the audience's discontent with the behaviour of this SMI, as explained in the netnographic account presented in Chapter 7. These statistics are summarised in Table 6.14.

SMI	TOP HASHTAGS	BRANDS
J. CHARLES	JAMESCHARLES 26% CANCELLED 25.9%	MORPHEXJAMESCHARLES 35.6%
	UNLEASHYOURINNERARTIST 7.1%	
J. STAR	JEFFREESTAR 33%	JEFFREESTARCOSMETICS 11.1%
	MANNYMUA733 22% MAKEUP 11.1%	
M. MUA	**JEFFREESTARXMANNYMUA 36.8%**	LIFESADRAG 22.6%
	BBMASTOPSOCIAL 11.5% MANNYACS 9.4%	LUNARBEAUTY 15.7%
M. PHAN	ZOZEEBO, FLEURDEFORCE, SPRINKLEOFGLITR, MICHELLEPHAN 37.4%	**MAKEUPGEEK 37.4%**
	PERSEVERANCE 25.6% ANIMALTESTINGAWARENESS 12.8%	TEENCHOICE 4.2%
N. TUTORIALS	THEPOWEROFMAKEUP 36.2%	OFRAXNIKKIETUTORIALS 13.5%
	NIKKIETUTORIALS 13% ANIMALTESTINGAWARENESS 12%	TOOFACEDXNIKKIETUTORIALS 13.2%
ZOELLA	ASKZOELLA 37%	SLXPB 15.3%
	ZOELLA 17.1% GIRLONLINE 11%	ZOELLABEAUTY 11%

Table 6.14 Statistics for Hashtags

"*Collaborations*" between SMIs have become a popular practice for increasing the numbers of followers, gaining more exposure producing new material and transitioning into new areas of expertise (Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard 2020; Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020). Previous studies have demonstrated that associations between people can increase their social capital whereas associations on Twitter are displayed in the form of "*mentions".* The percentage of mentions that talked about topics other than the SMI was 50.14%. This distribution of topics covered by these was wide and evenly spread, with no one topic having a

predominant spike against another. It is evident to see the prominence of mentioning SMIs and the even distribution across other topics in Table 6.15. ZOELLA was the only SMI where her dataset contained mentions of her cosmetics line and the names of ZOELLA's brother and boyfriend, evidencing the strong social capital existing between them.

SMI	TOP MENTIONS	BRANDS
JAMESCHARLES	JAMESCHARLES 31.2%	YOUTUBE 1.7%
	GLAMLIFEGURU 2.2% JEFFREESTAR 1.8%	
JEFFREESTAR	JEFFREESTAR 52.96%	MORPHE 7.9%
	YOUTUBE 2.2% MANNY MUA733 1.8%	
MANNYMUA	MANNYMUA733 20.7%	YOUTUBE 18%
	JEFFREESTAR 18% BTS_TWT 1.8%	
MICHELLEPHAN	MICHELLEPHAN 62.7%	YOUTUBE, IPSY 0.9%
	GLAMLIFEGURU 2.9% MANNYMUA733 0.5%	EMCOSMETICS 0.7%
NIKKIETUTORIALS	NIKKIETUTORIALS 28.8%	YOUTUBE 9.3%
	JEFFREESTAR 0.9% MANNYMUA733 0.5%	TOOFACED 0.3%
ZOELLA	ZOELLA 16.1%	YOUTUBE 2.7%
	POINTLESSBLOG 2.7% JOE_SUGG 0.8%	ZOELLABEAUTY 0.9%

Table 6.15 Statistics for Mentions

6.4.3 Mentions of Selected SMIs

Textual analysis techniques allow the analysis of unstructured text in a similar way to numerical data. These types of statistics have been used in numerous scenarios to inform decision-making processes in industry and organisations (Barton and Lee 2013; Jiao and Qu 2019; Pandey and Pandey 2019). While SMIs publicly display on SM their friendships with other influential (who also have an audience), to create additional affective bonds from their combined audiences, it was observed that the mention of others is not a reciprocal relationship. For example, none of the other SMIs mention ZOELLA despite MICHELLE PHAN, NIKKIE TUTORIALS and MANNY MUA being frequently referenced in her dataset. It is evident that although NIKKIE TUTORIALS and JEFFREE STAR follow ZOELLA, there were no mentions of her within their tweets and retweet content.

On average 26.63% of the tweets mentioned JAMES CHARLES while the mentions for all other SMIs were below 1% and 71.67% talked about other topics. As shown in Table 6.16, these statistics demonstrate the presence of social capital.

SMI	SMI TWEET MENTIONS						
	J. CHARLES	J. STAR	M. MUA	M. PHAN	N. TUTORIALS	ZOELLA	OTHER
JAMES CHARLES	**26.63%**	0.90%	0.66%	0.0006%	0.05%	0.06%	71.67%
JEFFREE STAR	0.03%	**15%**	0.39%	0.0052%	0.0002%	0.014%	44.95%
MANNY MUA	0.42%	3.65%	**34.87%**	0.0094%	0.15%	0.041%	60.83%
MICHELLE PHAN	0.03%	0.15%	0.39%	**52.96%**	0.02%	1.46%	44.95%
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	0.013%	0.016%	0.004%	0.0006%	**0.006%**	35.20%	64.75%
ZOELLA	0.013%	0.016%	0.004%	0.0006%	0.006%	**35.20%**	64.75%
Average	**4.52%**	**3.29%**	**6.05%**	**8.83%**	**0.04%**	**12.00%**	**58.65%**

Table 6.16 Mentions Analysis

JEFFREE STAR's dataset presented most of the content related to other topics and this SMI was the one to not be part of the main tweet authors in his dataset, suggesting that JEFFREE STAR's audience is not as heavily invested in talking about him and that he is not as invested in addressing the audience as other SMIs in this study. Conversely, MICHELLE PHAN's dataset had the highest percentage of mentions of her name and the lowest percentage of content related to other topics, evidencing how important she is in her audience's conversations. Other topics identified across all datasets covered issues that mainly ranged from beauty to makeup, teaching and a minority of sensitive topics, such as animal testing awareness (cruelty-free), gay pride, racism and homophobia. The netnographic account presented in Chapter 7 explains in more detail the events associated with these topics.

6.4.4 Emoji Analysis

A benefit of having chosen Twitter for this research is the active use of *emoji* that users have on this platform. Emojis, also known as emoticons, are conceivably the most meaningful part of data collection as these directly represent sentiments, emotions and feelings (Burge 2019; Danesi 2017; Solomon, Burge and Kelly 2019). Although these are full of meaning by themselves, they can change the meaning of the sentences they are appended to.

N-gram analysis identifies the nth number of adjacent elements in a document for generating language models that are employed in speech recognition programs. One form of n-grams is bi-grams or di-grams, which are sequences of two adjacent elements from a string of tokens (Bonzanini 2016; Grus 2019; Upshall 2014). The results of the emoji analysis for all datasets categorised them as having a "*somewhat positive*" polarity. It was observed that the most used emojis were 😂 (face with tears of joy) to express laughter and 😍 (smiling face with heart-eyes) to denote infatuation or love. Other emojis frequently used expressed negative emotions, such as 😬 (grim face) for tense emotions as nervousness or awkwardness and 😐 (neutral face) for mild irritation or concern (Emojipedia 2020b; FileFormat.Info 2020). Table 6.17 summarises these results using a 5-point scale to categorise the sentiments, ranging from negative to positive.

SMI	BIGRAM 1	%	BIGRAM 2	%	BIGRAM 3	%	SENTIMENT
JAMES CHARLES	😂 😂	2.14%	❤️ 😂	0.80%	👭 😂	0.75%	SOMEWHAT POSITIVE
JEFFREE STAR	❤️ ❤️	4.43%	😂 😐	1.55%	❤️ 😽	1.28%	SOMEWHAT POSITIVE
MANNY MUA	😂 😂	33%	😍 😍	26.7%	😭 😭	14.9%	SOMEWHAT POSITIVE
MICHELLE PHAN	😂 😂	0.82%	😬 😬	0.72%	😍 😍	0.55%	SOMEWHAT POSITIVE
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	😍 😍	1.62%	😂 😂	0.96%	💥 🎇	0.57%	POSITIVE
ZOELLA	😂 😂	2.02%	❤️ ❤️	1.46%	😍 😍	0.65%	POSITIVE

Table 6.17 Emoji Bigram Analysis

6.5   Timeline Analysis

Timeline analysis can be used to accurately and chronologically identify dates and times of significant events, which can help yield a rich and insightful understanding of the actors, topics and circumstances involved. It creates a snapshot (often graphical) of how an event evolves by analysing the evolution of the occurrences before, during and after a given incident (Antonakaki, Fragopoulou and Ioannidis 2021; Tsolmon, Kwon and Lee 2012; Zapf, Dormann and Frese 1996). This type of analysis uses data visualisation to help discover patterns and links hidden in these occurrences and to eliminate those moments that are less pertinent (Brooker et al. 2018; Gelman and Vehtari 2021; Tsolmon, Kwon and Lee 2012).

One of the most common representations of an interval of time is the line plot, which is used in timeline analysis to reveal patterns, such as trends, level shifts, periods (seasonal or cycles) and unusual occurrences (Harris and Orth 2020; Shumway and Stoffer 2017; Sujay et al. 2018). Line plots were used to help answer the proposed research questions, as moments that presented substantial changes in social signals, which included favourites, retweets, friends and followers, were identified as these evidence the creation, reproduction or decrease in social capital. Also, it was necessary to limit the number of these moments to be analysed to the most representative ones, as the data collected extended over 12 years and involved six different SMIs. Hence the following sections present the results of the analyses of relationships, such as being "*friend*" or "*follower*" develop over time and identifies the most common usernames, topics, practices and beliefs being talked about in the tweets. These "*pivotal moments*" are explored and put into context in the netnographic account presented in Chapter 7.

6.5.1 Retweets and Favourites Over Time

Analysis of the retweet and favouring behaviour of the audiences can provide insight into the engagement level of an SMI's audience. An engaged audience is more likely to interact with the SMI's tweets, to respond to them and to post comments related to the SMI they follow. Although the graphs below corroborate the existence of a proportional relationship between favourites and retweets, however, these behaviours are not always related to positive content. Some people on Twitter can favour negative tweets, feeling that they reflect their position or opinions better. Upon further inspection of each SMI's timelines, the spikes in the number of retweets and favourites corresponded to specific moments in time. This analysis identifies

moments of significant change, which are discussed in detail in the netnographic account presented in Chapter 7.

Four moments were identified for JAMES CHARLES (see Figure 6.8), corresponding to the beginning of 2017, the middle and the end of 2018 and March to April of 2019. Three moments have been identified for JEFFREE STAR (see
Figure 6.9), occurring around the middle of 2017, the ends of 2018 and 2019. Figure 6.10 shows four distinctive occurrences for MANNY MUA, at the beginning of 2017, middle of 2018 and end of 2019.
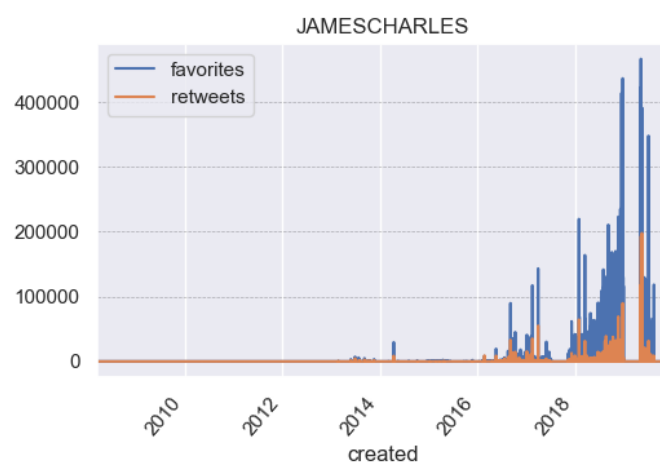
Figure 6.8 JAMES CHARLES' Favourites vs Retweets
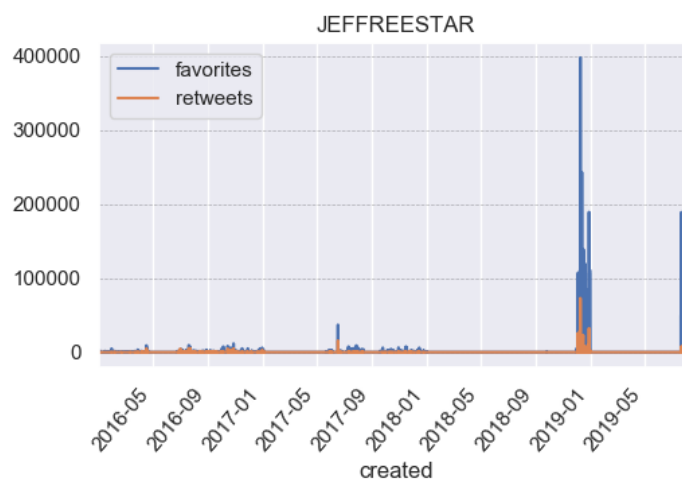
Figure 6.9 JEFFREE STAR's Favourites vs Retweets
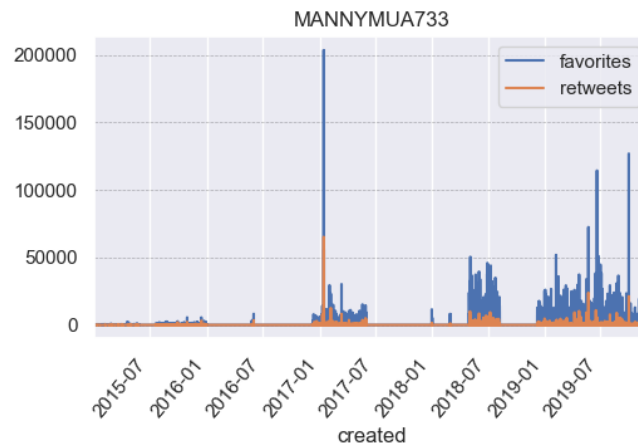
Figure 6.10 MANNY MUA's Favourites vs Retweets

Furthermore, three moments have been identified for MICHELLE PHAN, at the end of 2018, September 2019 and the end of 2019 (see Figure 6.11). For NIKKIE TUTORIALS, four occurrences have been identified, in the middle of 2010, March-May of 2011, beginning of 2013 and February of 2014 (see Figure 6.12). Finally, five distinctive instances have been identified for ZOELLA, taking at the beginning of 2017, August of 2017 and August to September of 2018 (see Figure 6.13).
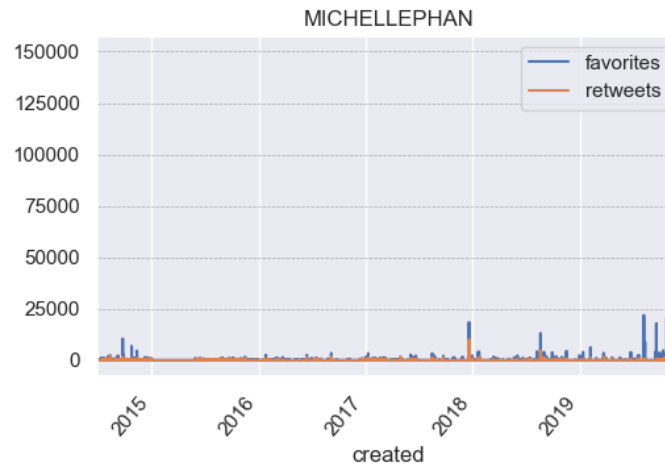
Figure 6.11 MICHELLE PHAN's Favourites vs Retweets
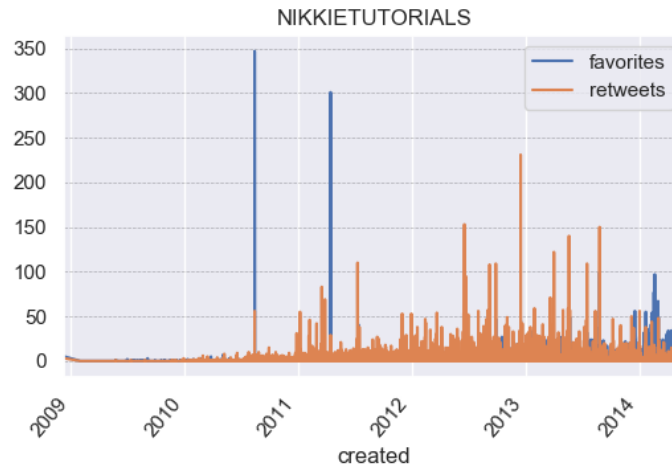
Figure 6.12 NIKKIE TUTORIALS' Favourites vs Retweets
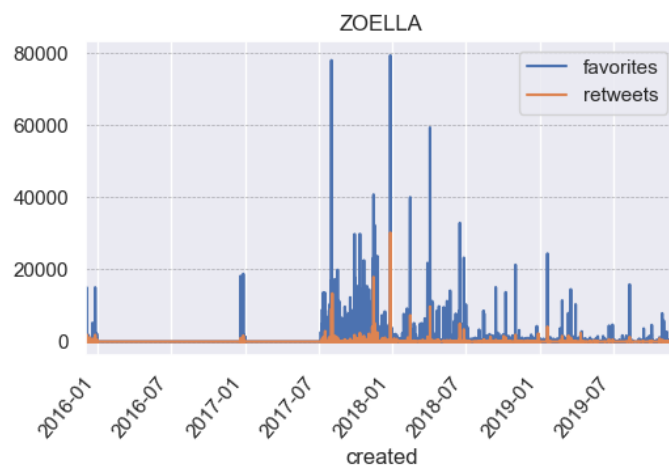
Figure 6.13 ZOELLA's Favourites vs Retweet

6.5.2 Followers, Favourites and Retweets

An important part of the analysis involves identifying whether the users who favourite and retweet are followers of the selected SMIs, to assess if there are differences in the behaviours of followers versus those who were not. The tweets that had the most favourites and retweets were mainly authored by the SMIs or by users who were not followers. For retweets, the numbers that belonged to users who were also followers of the SMIs were low and, therefore, lacked statistical significance.

The respective graphs for these behaviours for each SMIs are shown in Figure 6.14 to Figure 6.25.

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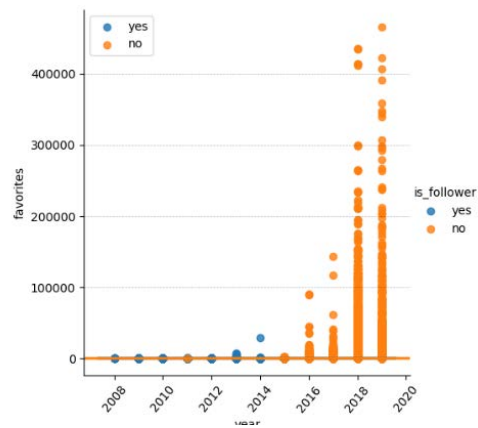
Figure 6.14 JAMES CHARLES Followers' Favourites
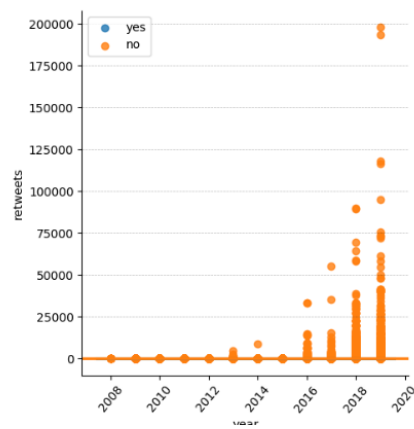
Figure 6.15 JAMES CHARLES Followers' Retweets
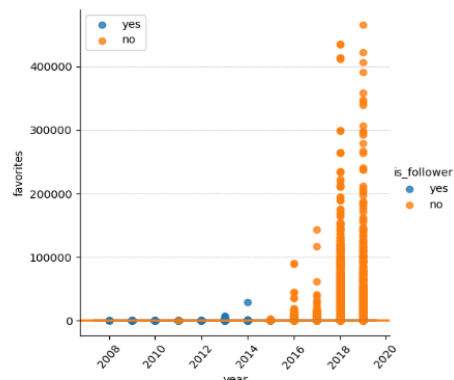
Figure 6.16 JEFFREE STAR Followers' Favourites
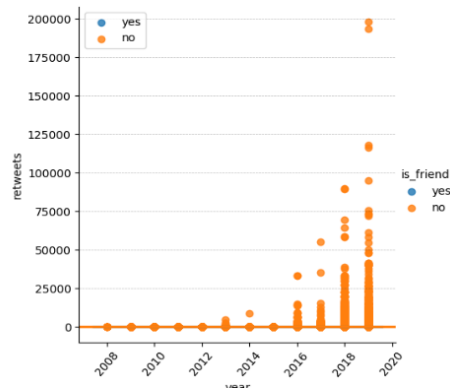
Figure 6.17 JEFFREE STAR Followers' Retweets
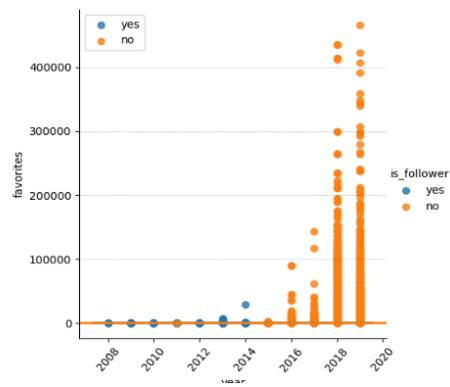
Figure 6.18 MANNY MUA Followers' Favourites
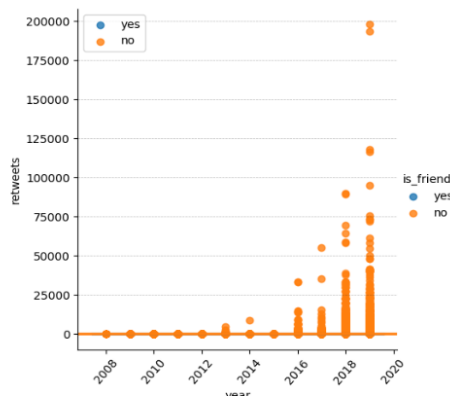
Figure 6.19 MANNY MUA Followers' Retweets
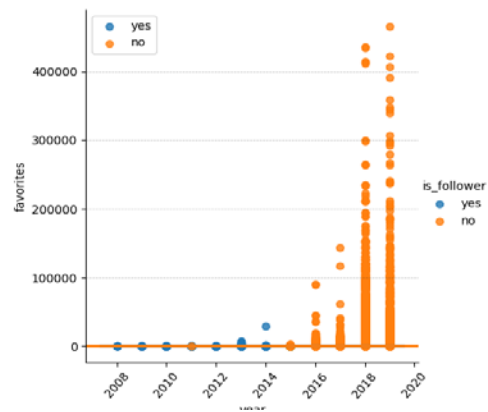
Figure 6.20 MICHELLE PHAN Followers' Favourites
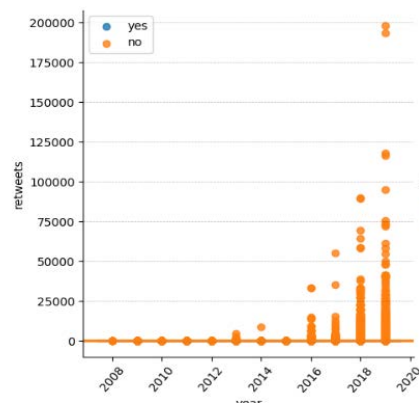
Figure 6.21 MICHELLE PHAN Followers' Retweets
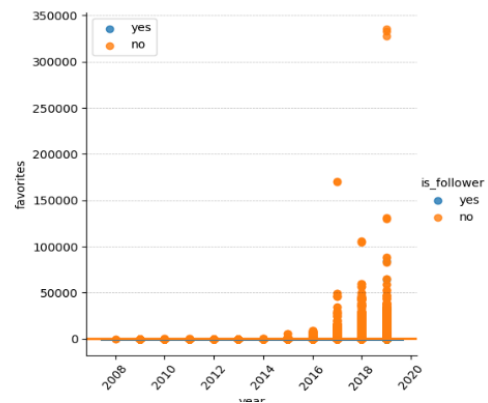
Figure 6.22 NIKKIE TUTORIALS Followers' Favourites
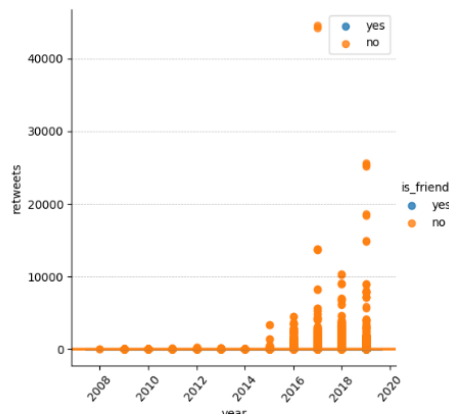
Figure 6.23 NIKKIE TUTORIALS Followers' Retweets
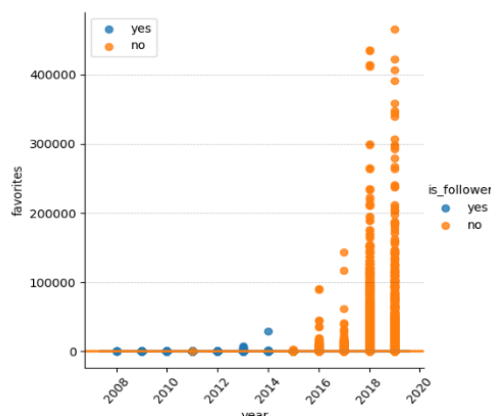
Figure 6.24 ZOELLA Followers' Favourites
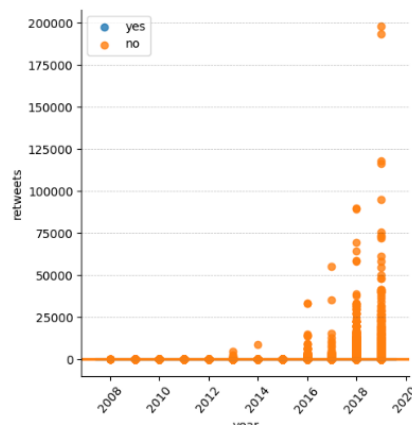
Figure 6.25 ZOELLA Followers' Retweets

6.5.3 SMI Tweets, Friends, Followers and Favourites

While the SMIs varied in their tweeting activity and the number of people they followed, their number of followers increased steadily over time. Chapter 7 describes the moments that presented noticeable spikes and drops in the follower numbers.

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Figures 6.26 to 6.27 illustrate how the number of tweets, users followed by JAMES CHARLES and users who follow JAMES CHARLES behave over time. While the number of tweets rose steadily, the number of users followed by JAMES CHARLES also increased to the middle of 2019 to then fall, before increasing steadily again. Alternatively, the number of users following JAMES CHARLES increased slowly until the end of 2017 and then grew exponentially. The middle of 2019 showed a decrease that coincided with the decreased number of users followed by JAMES CHARLES.
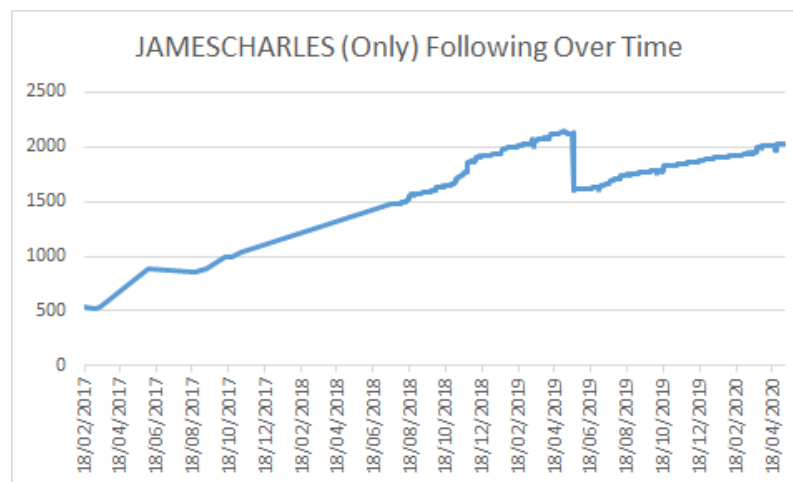
Figure 6.26 JAMES CHARLES' Following Over Time
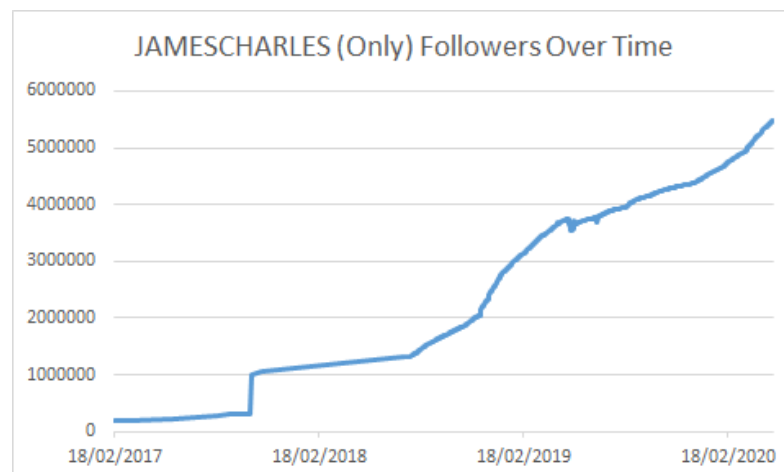
Figure 6.27 JAMES CHARLES' Followers Over Time

In general, the number of favourites for JAMES CHARLES alone followed a steady increase, whereas the favourites for his whole dataset increased from 2016 until the end of 2019. At this point, the favourites count suffered a severe drop (see Figure 6.28).
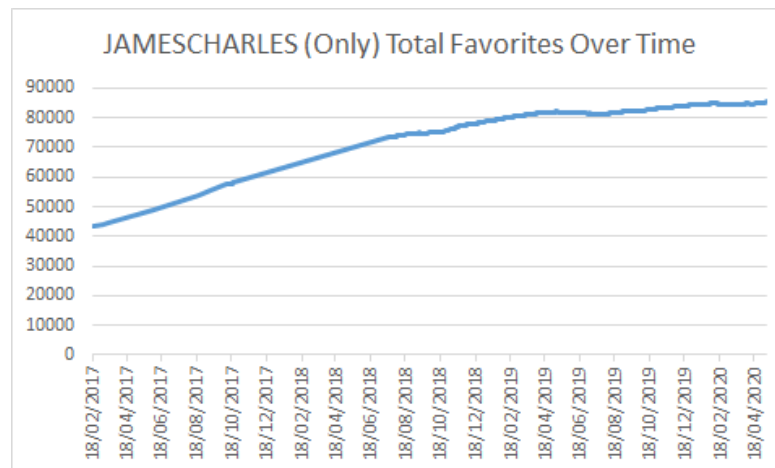
Figure 6.28 JAMES CHARLES' Favourites Over Time

Figures 6.29 to 6.31 describe how the number of tweets, users followed by JEFFREE STAR and users who follow JEFFREE STAR behave over time. These three graphs show marked differences. The number of tweets exhibit two main peaks: a smaller one in September 2010, followed by a drop and a second higher peak in September 2018, before dropping again. In September 2019, the number of tweets then stabilises until the end of the year. Conversely, the number of users followed by JEFFREE STAR increased from September 2008 until the end of 2012, followed by an exponential decrease up to the end of 2014. After this time, there is a steady increase until September 2017, followed by a steep drop up to the end of the year. There is a tendency towards a steady increase all through 2018, followed by another steep drop around September 2019, which then stabilises until the end of this year. Lastly, the number of users who follow this SMI slowly increased from the middle of 2008 until the end of 2015, only to then increase exponentially until the end of 2019.
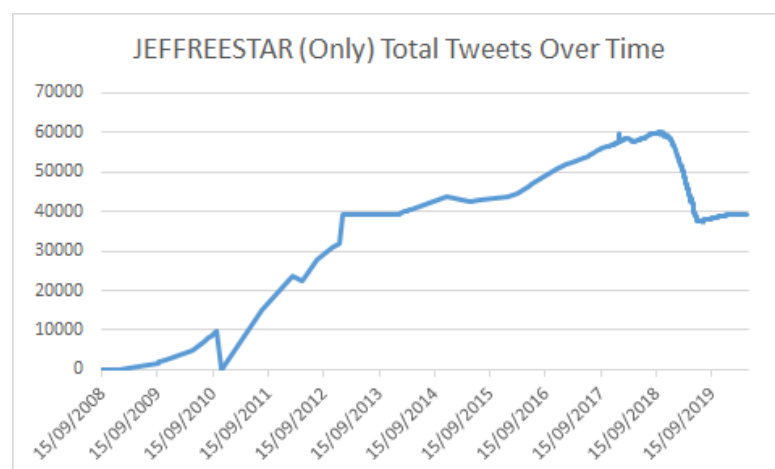
Figure 6.29 JEFFREE STAR's Tweets Over Time

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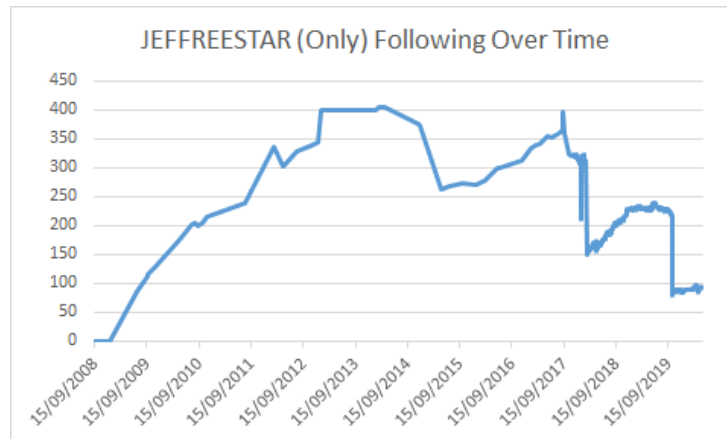
Figure 6.30 JEFFREE STAR's Following Over Time
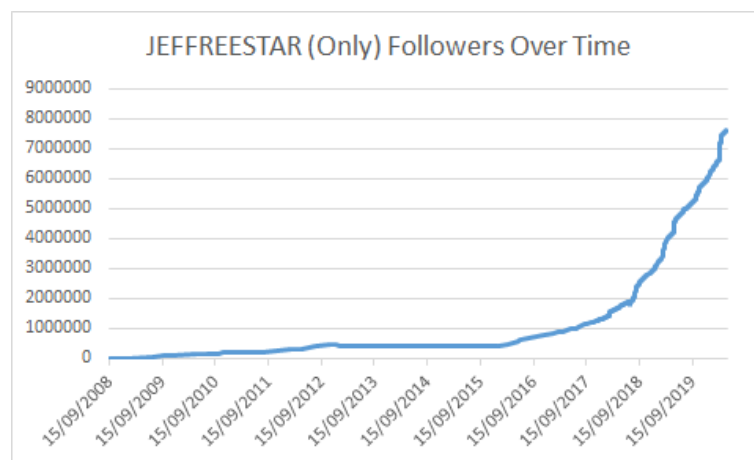
Figure 6.31 JEFFREE STAR's Followers Over Time

The number of favourites for JEFFREE STAR alone followed a steady increase, with a marked spike at the beginning of 2018; whereas the favourites for his whole dataset increased exponentially at the beginning and then at the end 2019, as shown in Figure 6.32.
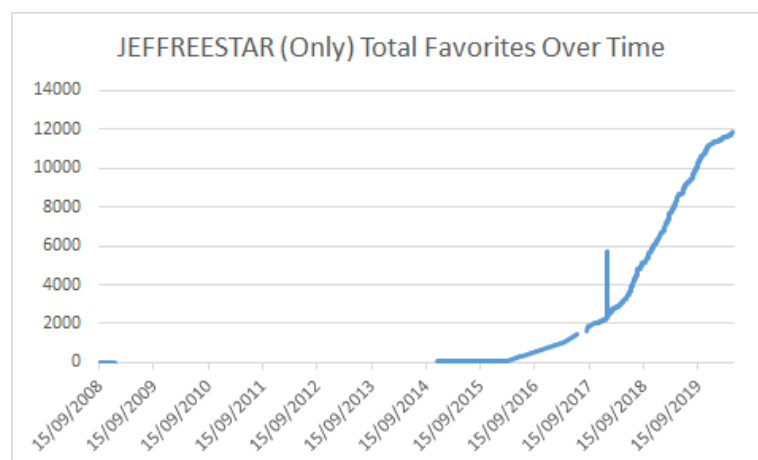
Figure 6.32 JEFFREE STAR's Favourites Over Time

Figures 6.33 to 6.35 illustrate how the number of tweets and users that MANNY MUA follows increases slowly over time. The number of users following MANNY MUA increases until August 2018, at which point the growth rate slowly increases until the end of this year.
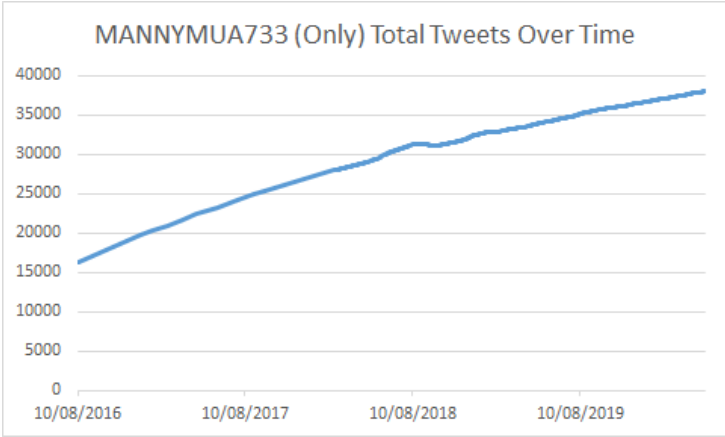
Figure 6.33 MANNY MUA's Tweets Over Time
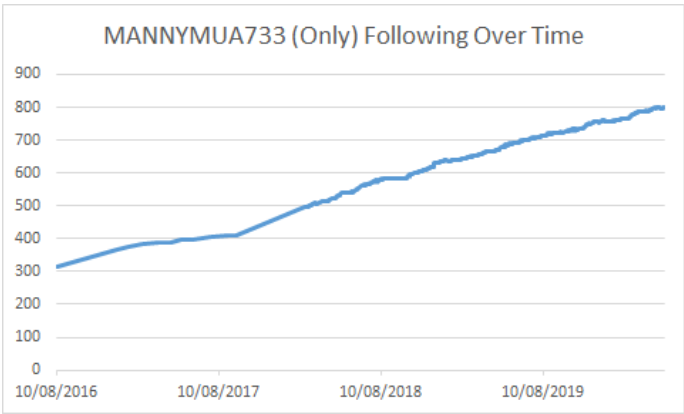
Figure 6.34 MANNY MUA's Following Over Time
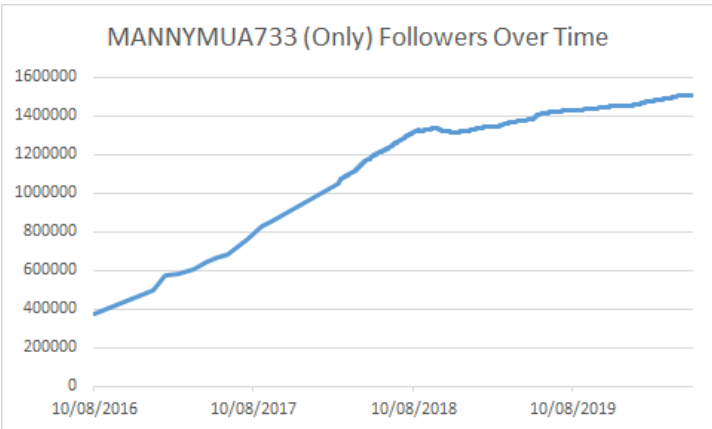
Figure 6.35 MANNY MUA's Followers Over Time

The number of favourites for MANNY MUA alone followed a steady increase, whereas the favourites for his whole dataset increased steadily at the beginning of 2017, mid-2018 and all through 2019, as shown in Figure 6.36.
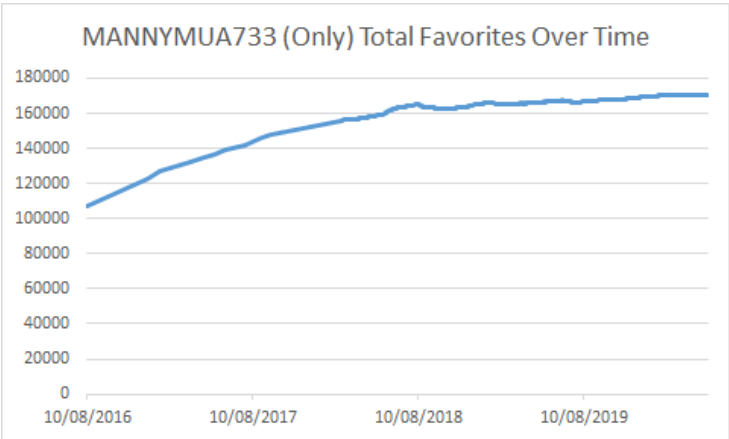
Figure 6.36 MANNY MUA's Favourites Over Time

Figures 6.37 to 6.39 describe how the number of tweets for users followed by MICHELLE PHAN and users who follow MICHELLE PHAN behave over time. The graphics showing both the tweets and users followed by MICHELLE PHAN have a discontinuity, as this SMI leaves SM in 2015, only to return in September 2019. These graphs display a steady increase in numbers from the middle of 2011, until the middle 2013, with a significantly higher number continuing after the middle of 2017. The data for MICHELLE PHAN's followers was collected after the middle 2009, where Figure 6.38 shows a steady increase that coincides with the increase of tweets and users followed until the beginning of 2018. The numbers remained stable until the end of 2019.
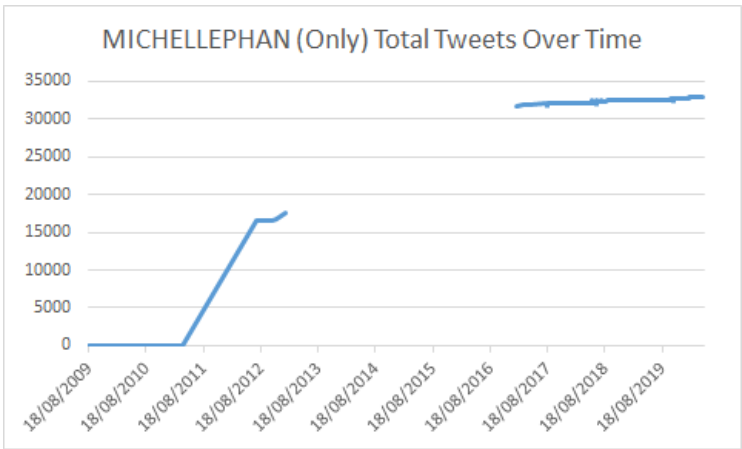
Figure 6.37 MICHELLE PHAN's Tweets Over Time
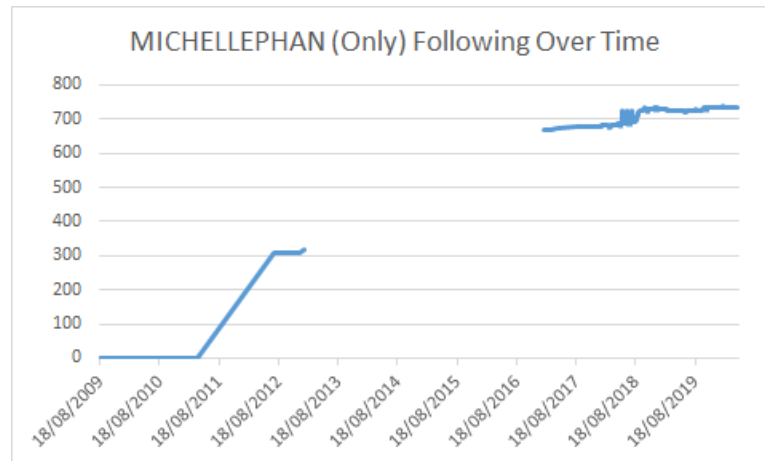
Figure 6.38 MICHELLE PHAN's Following Over Time
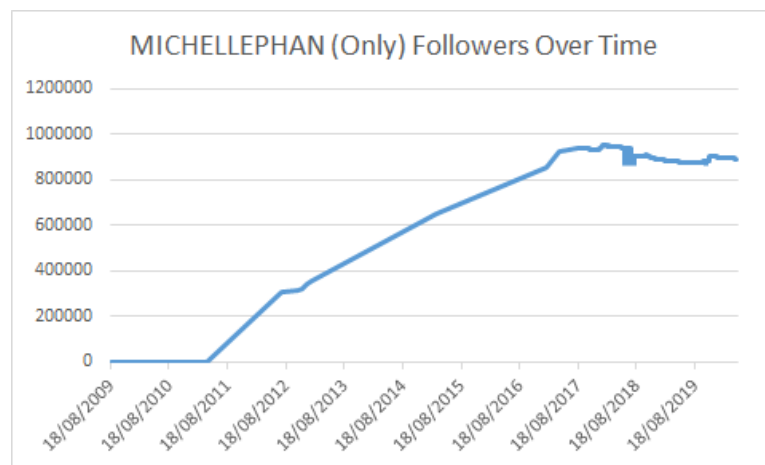
Figure 6.39 MICHELLE PHAN's Followers Over Time

There are three noticeable moments of growth in the number of favourites for MICHELLE PHAN, occurring at the end of 2017, 2018 and 2019, followed by a steep decline. Meanwhile, the favourites graph for the whole dataset maintained quite a low level, with three small peaks followed by an exponential peak at the end of 2019 shown in Figure 6.40.
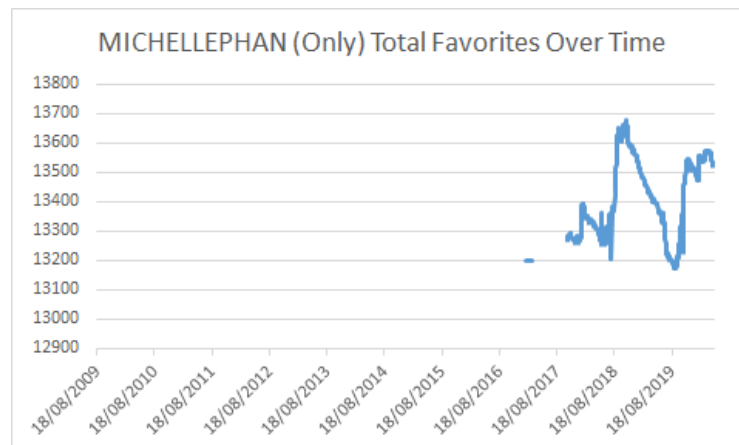
Figure 6.40 MICHELLE PHAN's Favourites Over Time

Figures 6.41 to 6.43 describe how the number of tweets, users followed by NIKKIE TUTORIALS and users who follow NIKKIE TUTORIALS behave over time. The number of tweets had a stable increase until August 2018 when their rate of growth decreases. This trend is constant until the end of 2019. Contrary to the number of tweets, the number of users followed by NIKKIE TUTORIALS exhibits noticeable increases and decreases over time. Firstly, the number of users followed by NIKKIE TUTORIALS increases exponentially until the beginning of 2012, to then decrease until August 2014. After this point, there is a steady increase followed by a decrease around October 2015, until the beginning of 2017. At this point, the number of users followed by NIKKIE TUTORIALS increases again until the middle of 2018, only to decrease once again. Secondly, the number of users following NIKKIE TUTORIALS increases slowly until the end of 2015, to them grow exponentially. The beginning of 2018 presented a decrease, followed by a steady growth until the end of 2019.
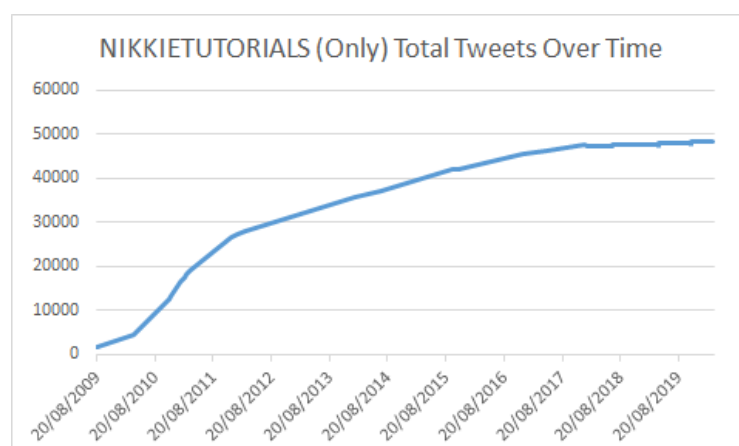
Figure 6.41 NIKKIE TUTORIALS' Tweets Over Time
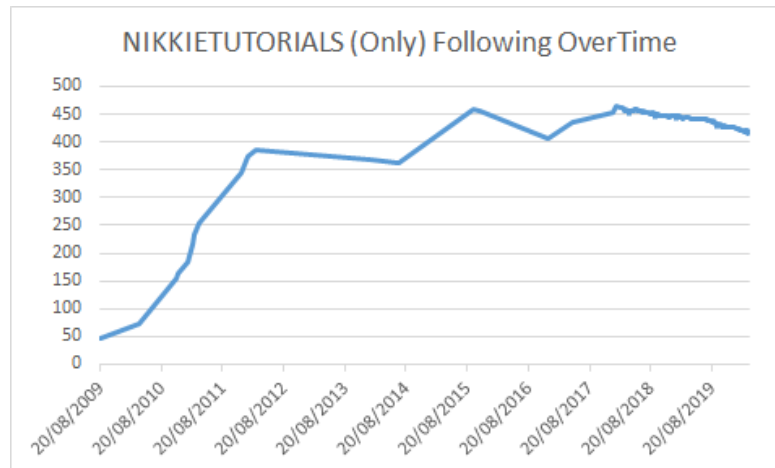
Figure 6.42 NIKKIE TUTORIALS' Following Over Time
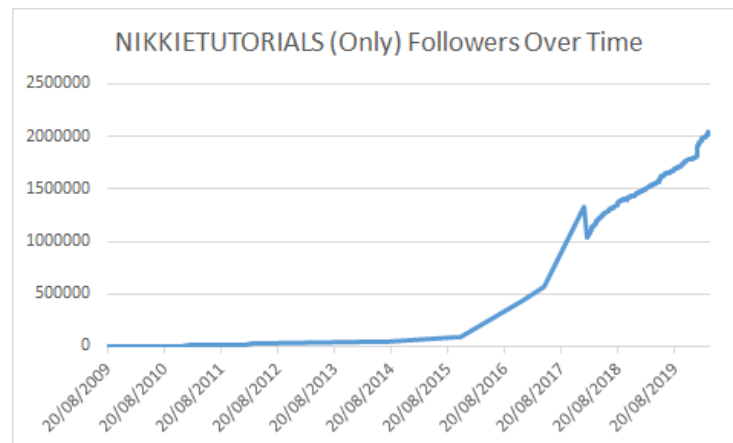
Figure 6.43 NIKKIE TUTORIALS' Followers Over Time

Figure 6.44 depicts the number of favourites for NIKKIE TUTORIALS, where the number of favourites continuously increased, whereas the favourites grew exponentially from 2016 until the end of 2019. At this time, the favourites count suffered a significant decrease.
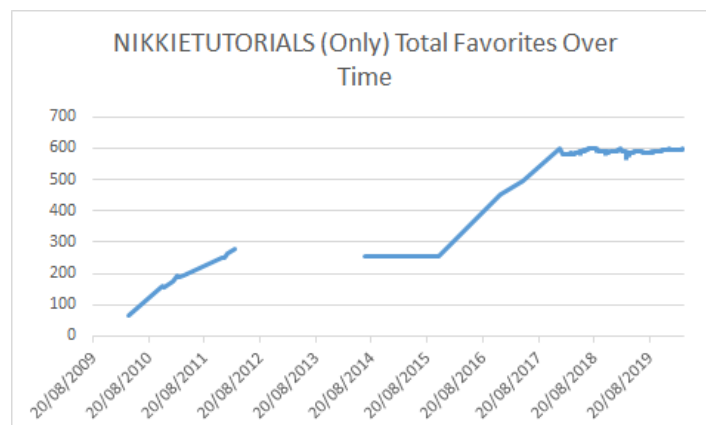
Figure 6.44 NIKKIE TUTORIALS' Favourites Over Time

Figures 6.45 to 6.47 describe how the number of tweets, users followed by ZOELLA and users who follow ZOELLA behaved over time. These three graphs exhibit a similar trend, steadily increased until the middle of 2018, followed by a steep decrease.
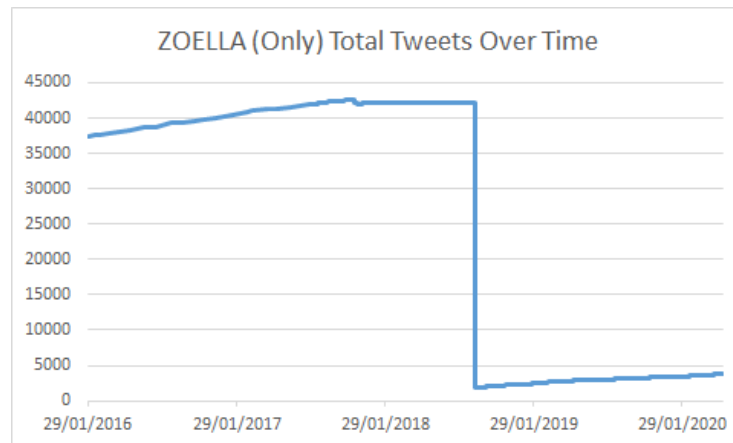
Figure 6.45 ZOELLA's Tweets Over Time
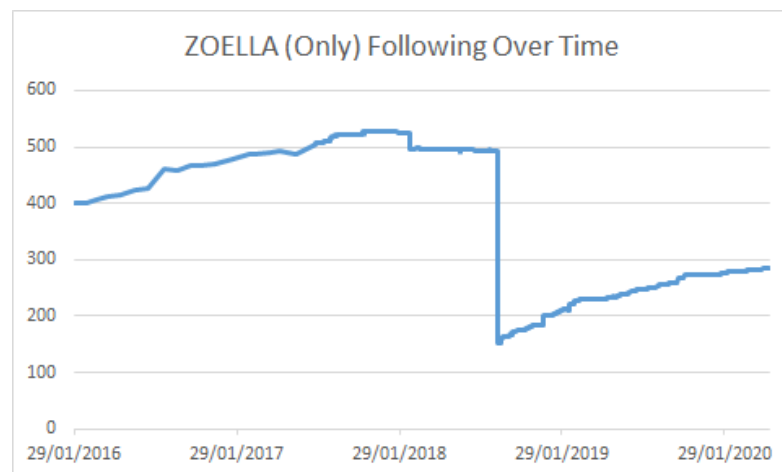
Figure 6.46 ZOELLA's Following Over Time
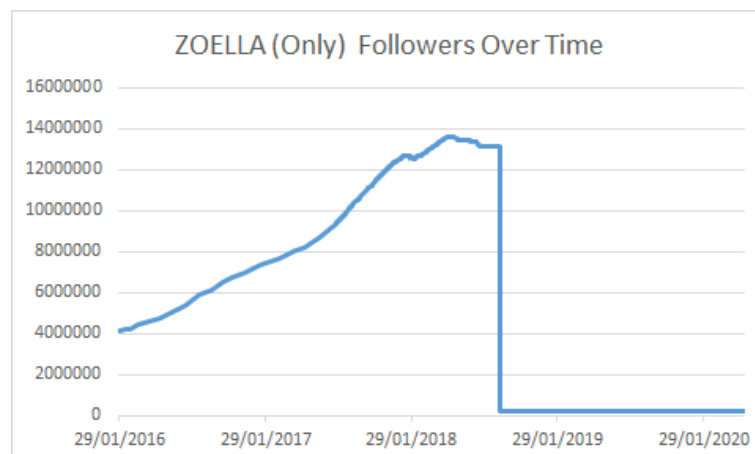
Figure 6.47 ZOELLA's Followers Over Time

The favourites for ZOELLA experienced incremental growth until the beginning of 2019 when they dropped drastically. By comparison, the favourites graph for the whole dataset maintained a general concentration of peaks until the end of 2017, followed by additional spikes that decreased with each occurrence until the end of 2019, as shown in Figure 6.48.
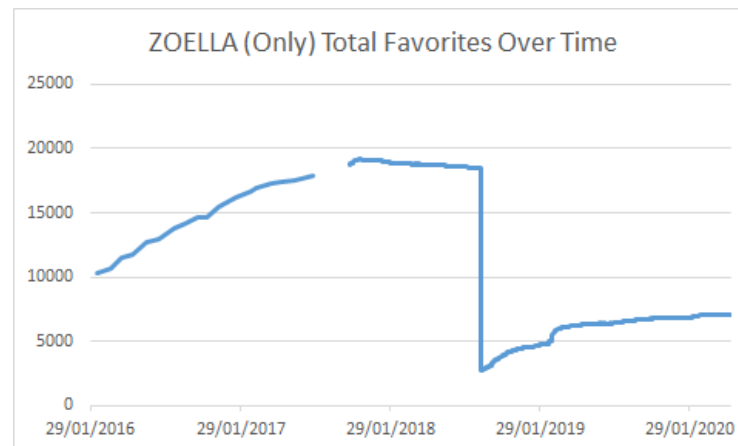
Figure 6.48 ZOELLA's Favourites Over Time

6.6   Chapter Summary

The analysis in this chapter has shown that the percentages of measures of engagement tended to be in the same range for all SMIs, meaning that if an SMI had low levels of retweets, they also exhibited low levels of favourites, hashtags, mentions and unique tweets in their dataset. MANNY MUA's audience exhibited the highest levels of engagement with 12% of users tweeting and both the most levels of favourites (40.8%) and retweets (59.19%) from all SMI's concerning the number of tweets in his dataset. Although ZOELLA was the SMI with the biggest audience in size, she was the SMI with the least number of tweets and the lowest levels of engagement from her audience. These are by far the highest numbers for favourites and retweets for the selected SMIs, which suggests that the levels of audience engagement should be analysed on a case-by-case basis.

The results of the sentiment analysis revealed that the tweet's text and their corresponding emojis, were mostly positive. This finding evidences the relationship between a tweet's text and emojis, as the polarity of the emojis matched with the polarity of the text. Furthermore, the main theme identified in all datasets was the audience's gratitude toward the SMI, which was expressed by using the word "*thanks*" or expressions of personal feelings with the word "*love*". MANNY MUA authored the most tweets about other SMIs, evidencing his intent to create

social capital with them. Despite JAMES CHARLES frequently promoting his products, there was no mention of his products within his 11th most popular tweets and none of the posts related to the topic of "*beauty*". This finding suggests that he is not efficient at creating awareness of promoted products, as it was the 12th most popular tweet by SMI GRAYSON DOLAN that first mentions JAMES CHARLES' palette:

"I got my little cousin James palette for Christmas. She's having trouble breathing rn Lolol. She's so excited. Thanks for signing it @jamescharles" – GRAYSON DOLAN

Finally, the conversations around SMIs also covered other topics that ranged from beauty, makeup and skin care to sensitive topics, such as "*animal testing awareness*" (cruelty-free), gay pride, racism and homophobia. The netnographic account presented in the next chapter describes the circumstances that prompted the use of the main terms identified with the textual analysis' results, which will help put them into context and how these stimulate consumption practices.

7. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS AND RESULTS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the qualitative analysis and interpretation of the data collected. As this thesis aims to identify the factors that underpin the rise of SMIs and explain how these personas interact, engage and influence their audiences, the following qualitative describes how social capital is created, exhibited and exchanged between SMIs and their audiences.

Social capital is associated with attributes that can be organised into three clusters: structural, relational and cognitive. Social capital theories indicate that the relational dimensions of this concept can be evaluated in terms of the level of norms, obligations, trust and identification developed in the actor's interactions (Gambetti 2020; Pret and Carter 2017; Putnam, Leonardi and Nonetti 1993). Hence, emphasis is placed on the measurement and analysis of:

- ► Influence**:** To examine how the SMI's tweets influence its audience and followers.
- ► Opinions and sentiment mining: To identify the range of emotions present in the conversations between an SMI and its audience on SM.
- ► Events: To situate the time (or location) of specific events that had a critical impact on either increasing or decreasing an SMI's influence.

Figure 7.1 depicts notorious SMI collaborations, relationships, feuds and brand associations in terms of sponsorships, product collaborations, videos and tutorials. The labels owned by the SMIs themselves have use bold font to facilitate their differentiation. The red labels indicate feuds between SMIs. The understanding of these relationships can help create a clearer image for the reader before the results of the qualitative analysis are presented.
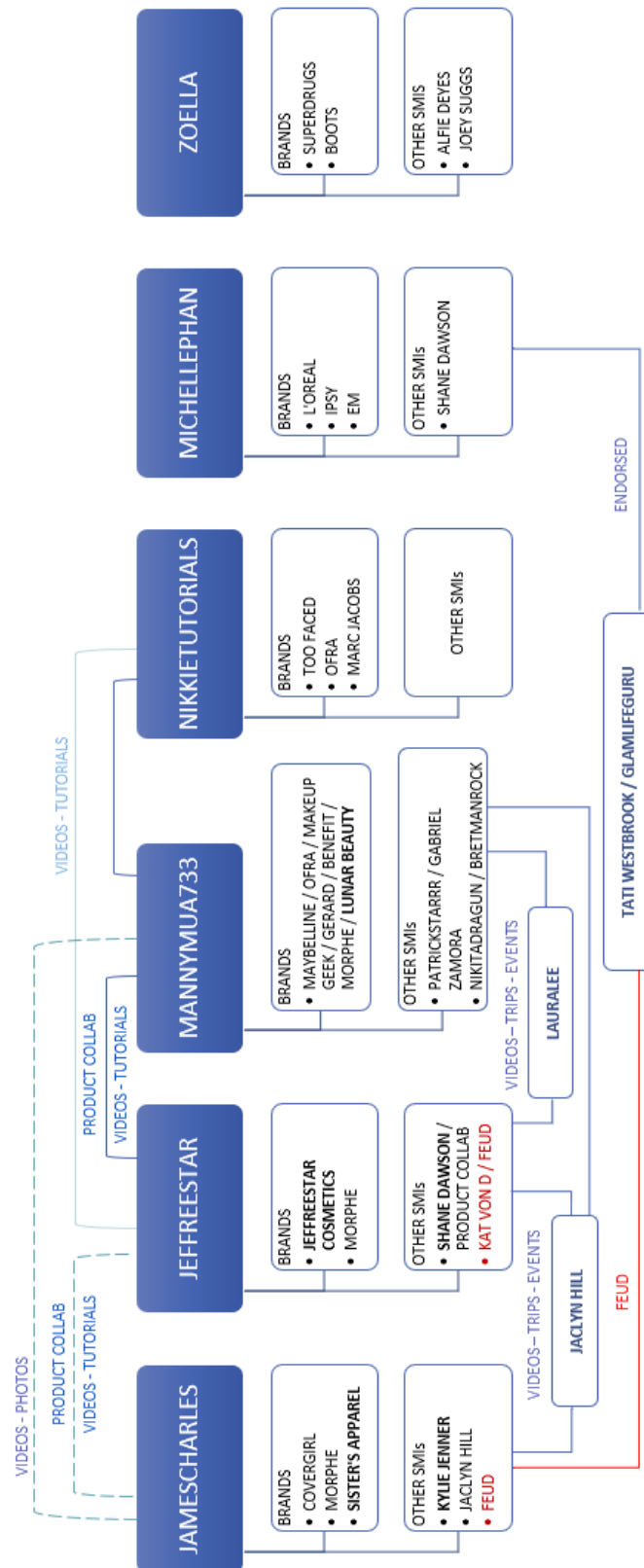
Figure 7.1 SMI−Brand Relationships

7.2   Textual Analysis Results

Qualitative research aims to understand a social reality of individuals, groups or cultures as close as possible to how participants experience or "*feel it*". This type of analysis uses an interpretative approach to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings and attributions that explain "*how*" and "*why*" (Flick 2018; Ghauri, Grønhaug and Strange 2020; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2020). The following sections summarise the insights gained from the methodologies used, overarching themes and netnographic account for each SMI.

7.2.1   Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment analysis is a method for the algorithmic categorising of users' opinions based on Natural Language Processing (NLP) and linguistic theories (Alaei, Becken and Stantic 2019; Antonakaki, Fragopoulou and Ioannidis 2021; Bakshi et al. 2016). Tthis methodology has become popular for the analysis of complex and unstructured data gathered digitally, where the result of this analysis consists of two measures "*sentiment polarity*" and "*sentiment subjectivity*".* Sentiment polarity is a number between 1 and -1, where a polarity above 0.75 denotes that the text is "very positive", while a polarity below -0.5 indicates that the text is "*very negative".* Sentiment subjectivity is a value between 0 and 1, where 0 denotes that the text is "*very objective*" and a value of 1 indicates that the text is *"very subjective".*

As explained in the previous chapter, to facilitate the analysis of these measures, a 5-point scale is used to categorise the sentiment polarity; with subjectivity levels categorised as "*subjective", "objective"* or "*neutral".* As a result, the SMI's datasets were found to have a "*somewhat positive*" sentiment polarity, while the subjectivity ranged from "*objective*" for JEFFREE STAR to *"very subjective"* for JAMES CHARLES. These results signal a direct relationship between polarity and subjectivity. A summary of the main sentiments and polarities is presented in Table 7.1.

SMI	POLARITY	SENTIMENT	SUBJECTIVITY	RESULT
JAMES CHARLES	0.24	SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	0.75	**SUBJECTIVE**
JEFFREE STAR	0.16	SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	0.64	**OBJECTIVE**
MANNY MUA	0.21	SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	0.59	**SUBJECTIVE**
MICHELLE PHAN	0.31	SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	0.58	**SUBJECTIVE**
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	0.24	SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	0.75	**SUBJECTIVE**
ZOELLA	0.21	SOMEWHAT POSITIVE	0.59	**SUBJECTIVE**
TOTAL AVERAGE	**0.25**	**SOMEWHAT POSITIVE**	**0.64**	**SUBJECTIVE**

Table 7.1 Summary of Tweet Sentiment Polarity

7.2.2 Thematic Analysis

A popular methodology used to represent the themes, topic and ideas contained in a document is "*word cloud*" analysis. Word Clouds (visual illustration of ideas) are a useful tool for representing the main ideas and sentiments behind a certain topic, where a word's frequent will determine its size in the image generated (Bonzanini 2016; Grus 2019; Upreti et al. 2021). This simple yet informative graphical representation of textual data helps to quantify it, deriving insights and communicating results based on frequent text found. They provide viewers with a synopsis of the main ideas contained in the tweets, where larger lettering highlights prominent influencers and smaller evenly spread ones describe other topics.

The only prominent words common to all SMIs were *"Twitter"* and "*pic*" (picture), however these two words were excluded from the interpretation and discussion of the results as one refers to the platform being researched and the other to an image hyperlink. Although many of these words evidence the presence of social capital, they do not follow a particular theme. In contrast, most of the datasets contained mentions of other SMI's that participated in their videos or those with whom they collaborated in creating products. The details of the main associations for each SMI are described in section 7.3. Figure 7.2 reveals that some of the most recurring words for JAMES CHARLES that indicate social capital are "*sister*", "*love*" and "*thank*". Prominent SMI Tati Westbrook (GLAM LIFE GURU), with whom JAMES CHARLES feuded, is also present in this graph.

Figure 7.2 Word Cloud for JAMES CHARLES

Figure 7.3 shows JEFFREE STAR as the SMI with the most beauty and marketing related words, such as JEFFREE STAR COSMETICS (JEFFREE STAR's makeup brand), "*palette*", "*highlighter*" and "*makeup*". Also prominent are the names MANNY MUA and SHANE DAWSON (entertainment SMI), as these SMIs have collaborated in co-creating products with JEFFREE STAR.

Figure 7.3 Word Cloud for JEFFREE STAR

Figure 7.4 shows that MANNY MUA's name is frequently repeated signalling his prominence within this audience, followed by JEFFREE STAR and the words "*haa haa*" (laughter) and "*love*". In the same way that the word "*love*" indicates social capital, "*haa haa*" signals entertainment or amusement. Therefore the entertainment factor can be considered as a dimension that helps create social capital by improving retention, promoting laughter, gaining favourites and shares. In cases where the entertainment factor is high, this type of content has a high potential to of becoming viral (Bayazıt, Durmuş and Yıldırım 2017; France, Vaghefi and Zhao 2016; Godart and Galunic 2019).
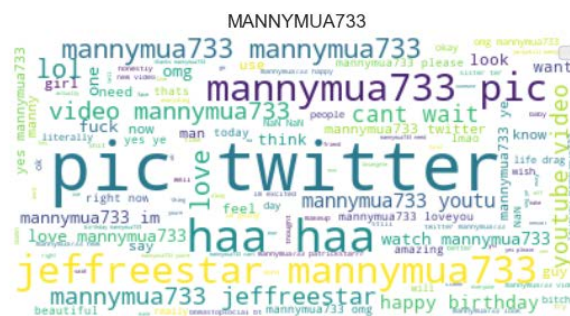
Figure 7.4 Word Cloud for MANNY MUA

MICHELLE PHAN is the SMI with the highest number of words related to social capital including "*perseverance*", "*inspiring*", "*keep going*" and "*passion*". Prominent SMI names (see Figure 7.5) are FLEUR DE FORCE, SPRINKLE OF GLITR, DULCE CAN and ZOZEEBO (one of ZOELLA's additional accounts).

Figure 7.5 Word Cloud for MICHELLE PHAN

In contrast to the other selected SMIs, NIKKIE TUTORIALS' most prominent words are YouTube, "*video*" and her name (Figure 7.6). Other prominent words are "*haa haa*" (laughter) and tutorial, which also evidence the presence of social capital.

Figure 7.6 Word Cloud for NIKKIE TUTORIALS

Figure 7.7 illustrates that ZOELLA is the SMI with the second most mentions of other SMI's names. These include the names POINTLESS BLOG (ZOELLA's boyfriend) and JOE SUGG (ZOELLA's brother). Other prominent terms are "*liked*" (which signals social capital), YouTube (the main platform used by this SMI) and "*video*", while the term "*advent calendar*" refers to a product from ZOELLA's range that was greatly criticised for its high price. Hence, the following netnography describes how this product is associated with "*negative social capital*".
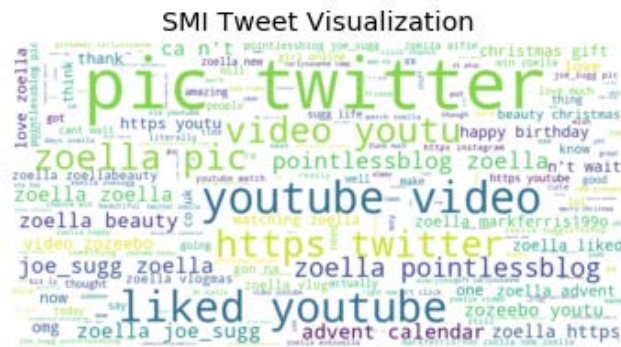
Figure 7.7 Word Cloud for ZOELLA

7.2.3 Prominent Audience Words

After filtering out the SMI's tweets, a word cloud was generated for each SMI's audience to graphically provide a synopsis of the most frequent words used in their tweets (Bonzanini 2016; Grus 2019; McKinney 2012). The word clouds for each SMI are presented in Figures 7.8 to 7.13, where the most prominent terms included the SMI's username and the words "*live*", "*love*" and "*video*". The use of "*live*" and "*love*" in conjunction with the SMI's name demonstrates the presence of social capital shared between the SMI and the audience.

It is palpable to see the prominence of SMIs in these conversations and the uneven distribution of other topics, where bigger words represent the most used ones, while the smaller words represent the less used ones. Furthermore, JAMES CHARLES' word cloud also featured the word "*sister*" (used to refer to his followers) and MICHELLE PHAN's featured the word "*taught*" (which evidences the importance of this SMI's tutorials for her audience). MANNY MUA's word cloud is the only one to include the term "*palette*" (as in makeup) and the name of another SMI (JEFFREE STAR). The inclusion of JEFFREE STAR's name indicates that MANNY MUA's audience perceives the association between these two SMIs as important.

Figure 7.8 JAMES CHARLES Audience's Word Cloud

Figure 7.9 JEFFREE STAR Audience's Word Cloud

Figure 7.10 MANNY MUA Audience's Word Cloud

Figure 7.11 MICHELLE PHAN Audience's Word Cloud

Figure 7.12 NIKKIE TUTORIALS Audience's Word Cloud

Figure 7.13 ZOELLA Audience's Word Cloud

In terms of consumption, none of the word clouds contained brand names or the word "*buy*". The word *"brand"* was prominent in JAMES CHARLES' word cloud, whereas the word "*makeup*" was featured only in JAMES CHARLES' and MANNY MUA's. Although the word "*video*" was prominent in this analysis, it refers to comments on a video posted by the SMI and, therefore, it relates to the task of creating content and not the creation of social capital.

7.3   Netnography

The following netnographic account follows the guidelines set out by Bourdieu and Passeron for the analysis of capitals, legitimations, status and reproduction of practice for ethnographic research (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Desmond and Sarah 2006; Gobo 2016). The events presented put into context the circumstances that prompted significant peaks and drops in the numbers of favourites and retweets identified in Chapter 6. This analysis helps interpret the relationship between SMIs, the audience and brands based on the circumstances under which these events took place.

It follows an interpretative approach based on textual analysis methodologies (Antonakaki, Fragopoulou and Ioannidis 2021; Karami et al. 2020; Pandey and Pandey 2019), to identify and describe patterns that explain the growth or decrease of the SMI's social capital and its consequences under different themes, such as the practice of sharing personal content, collaborating with other prominent SMIs and celebrities, follower loyalty and the presence of feuds and criticisms.

7.3.1 Sharing of Personal Content

The sharing of personal content was another strategy observed that was used by SMIs to create bonds with their audiences, where these shared their interests, passions, dislikes, feelings and problems (Borgonovi, Andrieu and Subramanian 2021; McAlexander and Koenig 2012; Meek et al. 2019). The following section presents a sample of the tweets used to identify the themes and appeals employed by the selected SMIs to connect and create resonance with their audiences.

► 2017-01-14: MANNY MUA tweets about his dad and receives over 53,300 favourites and 11,300 retweets. The popularity of this tweet demonstrates that SMIs use this personal and emotional content to create social capital and that audiences embrace and re-share the content that they deem as genuine and heartfelt from the SMI, to reciprocate and endow social capital (Figure 7.14).

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Figure 7.14 MANNY MUA Tweets About His Dad (Gutierrez 2017a)

► 2018-11-04: SMIs often demonstrate reciprocity and solidarity behaviours towards other SMIs. Figures 7.15 and 7.16 exemplify how JACLYN HILL (beauty SMI) benefitted from JAMES CHARLES' social capital, as evidenced in the 20,000 favourites accrued by these tweets, which is a considerable increase from JACLYN HILL's usual few thousand favourites.

Figure 7.15 JAMES CHARLES and JACLYN HILL Address Critics (Hill 2018)

Figure 7.16 JAMES CHARLES Congratulates JACLYN HILL (Charles 2019a)

► 2018-12-24: SMIs show their "*realness*" by sharing with their audience intimate details about their lives. Although the sharing of these may be perceived as inappropriate from a traditional standpoint, audiences can accept them and embrace them as social capital and viral messages are not necessarily "*positive*" in nature. For example, Figure 7.17 demonstrates how a contentious SMI, such as JAMES CHARLES received 203,400 favourites and 30,500 retweets from a sexually oriented tweet, despite its offensive content.

180

Figure 7.17 JAMES CHARLES' Sexual Tweet (Charles 2018b)

► 2019-07-07: JAMES CHARLES shares a personal post about his sad mood and surprisingly, this short tweet received over 120,400 favourites and 20,700 retweets, demonstrating that the sharing of personal feelings and experiences by the SMIs can elicit higher numbers of exhibitions of social signals (favourites and retweets) than content that is related to other topics. The audiences can also use these signals, comments and responses to show their support to the SMI. It was also observed that the audience also supports users who express their empathy to the SMI, giving evidence of the presence of social ties formed also between members of an SMI's audience. Figure 7.18 shows how audiences favourited a user's tweet expressing sympathy gained 9,000 favourites.

Figure 7.18 JAMES CHARLES Receives Fan Support (Charles 2019b)

► 2019-08-06: NIKKIE TUTORIALS posted about her engagement with pictures and received 323,400 favourites, 9,300 retweets and numerous congratulations including one from JAMES CHARLES, signalling the presence of strong social ties between these two SMIs (Figure 7.19). Academic literature states that social capital can be created by sharing emotional content, similarly as NIKKIE TUTORIALS shared the news of engagement with her followers and making them part of her life as it happens.

Figure 7.19 NIKKIE TUTORIALS' Engagement Tweet (de Jagger 2019)

► 2019-12-21: MICHELLE PHAN received 43,300 favourites and 8,300 retweets for a Christmas gift post (Figure 7.20) evidencing her connection to her audience. The gift has an important associated meaning, as this tweet states that MICHELLE PHAN is giving "*a part of her childhood"* by gifting her friends a Manga image (Japanese animation). Manga is a popular form of animation for generations born after 1980 (Allison 2006; Kinsella 2000), therefore it can be said that this SMI was using the audience's positive childhood associations to boost her social, symbolic and cultural capital, demonstrated in the higher than usual numbers of favourites and retweets that this post received. This finding suggests that this tweet's popularity is related to the audience's favourable attitude towards Manga, and not necessarily towards her or the field of beauty. Additionally, she is not the only SMI who used Manga references. MANNY MUA has been vocal about being a fan of Sailor Moon, even so, that his own brand name "Lunar Beauty" is based on this character (Bines 2019; Donahue 2018; Krause 2020).

Figure 7.20 MICHELLE PHAN Manga Christmas Gift (Phan 2019)

► 2020-04-12: JEFFREE STAR has six Pomeranians, which he frequently showcases in his videos and publicity, using them to create additional bonds with his followers as this

breed of dogs is not only cute, but they are associated with upper classes and opulence (Atherton and Moore 2016; Worboys, Strange and Pemberton 2018). On numerous occasions, users comment about the Pomeranians, expressing their liking of them or by sharing their own experiences with the breed. One example is his "*My 2 New Pomeranians*" video that gained over 12 million views (see Figure 7.21).

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Figure 7.21 JEFFREE STAR Pomeranian Puppies Video (Steininger 2020)

While most personal content shared can be categorised as emotional or affective, there was a noticeable number of tweets that were aggressive, offensive or too explicit as illustrated by the tweet below. In many of these instances, the audiences supported the SMI and even defended their opinions. This finding confirms that SMIs are creating social capital with their audiences, regardless of it being "*positive*" or "*negative*" as demonstrated by JEFFREE STAR's tweet below, which is part of his most popular content:

"Instead of using an alarm clock, I love waking up Nate with my mouth" – JEFFREE STAR

7.3.2 SMI Collaborations

Collaborations between SMIs are a common practice that allows them to gain more exposure and to profit from the access gained to other SMI's followers. This popular practice is known as "*collabing*" and they frequently use it to gain added exposure (and further capitals) from the other SMI or celebrity's audience. This practice also conforms to social capital bridging theories (Castillo 2019; Di Benedetto and Kim 2016; Knoke 1999) and bonding theories, as

social capital is present in relationships between similar people who commit to a group (Burt 2009; Burt 2017; Simons et al. 2021). Social capital bridging theories state that a person can benefit from the opportunity to access the resources that friends, colleagues and other contacts can present. SMIs are also benefiting from these associations in their personal life, for instance, ZOELLA's boyfriend, ALFIE DEYES, is a recognised YouTuber with over five million followers on that platform. This relationship offers the two SMIs the benefit of having a combined symbolic and social capital from both their audiences as they frequently collaborate.

An account of specific SMIs collaborations with their results and analysis are presented below.

► 2017-04-17: There was a strong friendship between JEFFREE STAR and MANNY MUA that at one time was perceived by their audiences as exemplary. These two SMIs collaborated in a range of cosmetics products and makeup palettes with great success in March 2017 (Gutierrez 2017b). A vivid example of how SMIs are using their social and symbolic capital to benefit economically was the launch JEFFREE STAR's and MANNY MUA's palette. Such collaboration was extremely successful and benefitted from appealing to two sets of audiences, creating awareness and gaining high sales volumes and profitability, which was evidenced by this palette being sold out on JEFFREE STAR's website in 28-minutes (Connell 2017; Gomez 2019). MANNY MUA shared a tweet to promote the release of his makeup palette with JEFFREE STAR, as shown in Figure 7.22.

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Figure 7.22 #JEFFREESTARXMANNYMUA733 Palette Reveal (Gutierrez 2017b)

► 2017-08-02: ZOELLA launched her *#JELLY&GELATO* range at SUPERDRUG (Parsons 2019). Notorious comedic SMI JENNA MARBLES tweeted about ZOELLA's

line with pictures of a hamster photoshoot (Figure 7.23). This humorous tweet is ZOELLA's second most favourited, receiving 75,300 favourites and 9,100 retweets.

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Figure 7.23 JENNA MARBLES' "ZOELLA" Line Hamster Photoshoot (Mourey 2017)

► 2018-07-06: JAMES CHARLES has sought to associate himself with high-profile celebrities including KIM KARDASHIAN, KYLIE JENNER and KATY PERRY (Fisher 2016). These associations helped increase JAMES CHARLES' social and symbolic capital as he uses SM to promote his interactions with celebrities, which are simultaneously disseminated by the celebrity's audiences. This association effectively increases his reach as these messages are distributed and re-broadcasted online. For example, KYLIE JENNER, whose family is recognised as one of the most influential celebrity families of the decade (Walker 2019), proposed to JAMES CHARLES that they should make a video together. This tweet alone had 136,700 favourites, 11,300 retweets and 1,700 comments (both signals of social capital), suggesting that these SMIs' audiences supported this collaboration (Jenner 2018). This specific event caused the number of favourites, retweets and comments for JAMES CHARLES to increase exponentially, providing evidence of the transfer of KYLIE JENNER's social and symbolic capital to JAMES CHARLES.

► In October 2018, JAMES CHARLES and KYLIE JENNER filmed a makeup tutorial that promoted their respective brands and where they endorsed each other (see Figure 7.24). This video gained over 43 million views, a number that surpasses the sum of JAMES CHARLES' (23 million) and KYLIE JENNER's (10 million) subscribers and helped JAMES CHARLES increase his number of followers as evidenced in Chapter 6. This video corroborates the effectiveness of the SMIs' combined social capital to gain additional views (exposure) and likes (signal of social capital) than they would have on their own.

Figure 7.24 JAMES CHARLES with KYLIE JENNER Video (Charles 2018c)

► 2018-11-02: JAMES CHARLES launched his *#MORPHEXJAMESCHARLES* makeup palette. This palette was sold out in ten minutes (Charles 2018d) and again when restocked on December 6th. When JAMES CHARLES tweeted about this success, his audience showed their solidarity by favouriting this tweet over 62,000 times (see Figure 7.25), confirming the strong influence from this SMI's as his products sold out in a short time and were shipped worldwide. Therefore this collaboration demonstrated how makeup brand MORPHE benefitted from the social capital that JAMES CHARLES' gained from his audience, which was then converted into purchases.

Figure 7.25 #MORPHEXJAMESCHARLES Palette Sold Out (Charles 2018d)

► 2018-12-14: JAMES CHARLES collaborated with KIM KARDASHIAN and her makeup artist, Mario Dedivanovic (MAKEUPBYMARIO), in a YouTube video. The presence of KIM KARDASHIAN, who is on the Times "*100 Most Influential People's List*" (*Time USA* 2015), helped this video to gain over 19 million views (Charles 2018e) and to increase JAMES CHARLES' symbolic capital. Even though the video was posted on

JAMES CHARLES' YouTube channel, two unfavourable consequences were observed. Firstly, unlike the KYLIE JENNER video, which gained great exposure, this video failed to achieve the expected 24 million views that would have resulted from combining both SMIs audiences, suggesting the audiences found incongruities in this collaboration. Hence, the social capital gained from it was much less than from the association with KYLIE JENNER. Secondly, most of the comments came from the KIM KARDASHIAN audience, who took the side of her makeup artist MAKEUP BY MARIO (Mario Dedivanovic), instead of JAMES CHARLES' suggests that the strength of KIM KARDASHIAN's social capital is higher than JAMES CHARLES'.

► 2019-01-21: Although SMIs create and share social capital amongst themselves, this does not mean that the social capital gained from their audiences will get shared as well. Even though collaborating with celebrities such as the Kardashian-Jenner sisters have helped increase the social capital of JAMES CHARLES and JEFFREE STAR, this was not the case for fellow beauty SMI JACLYN HILL. For instance, when JEFFREE STAR shared a photo with JAMES CHARLES and SMI JACLYN HILL, demonstrating the close relationship at the time between these SMIs (Figure 7.26), JEFFREE STAR obtained 78,000 favourites and JAMES CHARLES obtained 32,800 favourites but JACKLYN HILL only obtained 7,400 favourites. Although JACLYN HILL is part of this group of powerful SMIs, her following accounts only for two million followers on Twitter.

Figure 7.26 JEFFREE STAR, JAMES CHARLES and JACLYN HILL (Steininger 2019)

► 2019-09-15: MICHELLE PHAN posted a video on YouTube titled "*Hello* ☺", which marks her return to SM (Phan 2019). In response, SHANE DAWSON (notorious SMI) tweets back "*feeling blessed*" by her return. This tweet received 17,200 favourites and 784 retweets (Figure 7.27), demonstrating the transfer of social capital from SHANE DAWSON to MICHELLE PHAN, whose top tweets achieved only a few thousand favourites. This post was later reciprocated by MICHELLE PHAN, indicating that there is a need to "*give back*" the social capital endowed by another SMI (Figure 7.28).

Figure 7.27 SHANE DAWSON Celebrates MICHELLE PHAN's SM Return (Dawson 2019)

Figure 7.28 MICHELLE PHAN Responds to SHANE DAWSON (Phan 2019)

► 2019-11-16: In the same manner as other SMIs, JEFFREE STAR uses his social connections to increase his social capital, such as with SHANE DAWSON on the *#SHANEDAWSONXJEFFREESTAR* "*Conspiracy Palette*". This product had quality issues that were immediately publicised by users on SNS. Figure 7.29 exhibits how users post images of the broken or "*bad*" quality products in a tweet that received close to 5,000 favourites, conversely SHANE DAWSON's answer received 8,200 favourites. This event corresponds with an extreme drop in JEFFREE STAR's favourites and suggests that while audiences can tolerate feuds and unacceptable behaviour from an SMI; they do not tolerate poor quality products. JEFFREE STAR collaborated once more with SHANE DAWSON filming a "*docu-series*" that promoted their makeup line. The tweet that promoted this collaboration gained an impressive 243,097 favourites and 17,079 retweets evidencing again the effectiveness of the SMI's combined social capital in terms of exposure (favourites) and reach (retweets).

Figure 7.29 Broken #SHANEDAWSONXJEFFREESTAR Palette (McKown 2019)

7.3.3 Follower Loyalty

Academic research has established that influential actors can build and benefit from follower loyalty in SM (Bayazıt, Durmuş and Yıldırım 2017; Hung 2014; Johns and English 2016). As such, SNS are a powerful tool used by SMIs to create bonds with their followers, by making it easier to respond and reply to comments and messages at both the individual and group level. This environment helps create a sense of individualised connection between followers and SMIs, often leading to the creation of strong bonds and loyalty within their audience. While the following examples describe some of the ways through which the selected SMIs can increase their follower loyalty, they also show how this loyalty can be away.

► 2003 – 2014: JEFFREE STAR started gaining notoriety on Myspace as an electro-pop singer and performer in the LA nightclub scene. He made top iTunes charts for this genre in 2007 (Lecaro 2006; Lecaro 2007). JEFFREE STAR was also the most

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followed person on Myspace in 2006 (*Forbes* Magazine 2019a; Nilles 2019). In 2014, JEFFREE STAR launched his YouTube channel, which quickly gains subscribers as the users that previously followed him on Myspace began following him on this new platform, demonstrating that an SMI can mobilise their audience from one platform to another and maintain the social capital gained from these users.

► 2015: When her video "*The Power of Makeup*" became viral, NIKKIE TUTORIALS gained noticeability that allowed her to meet and collaborate in videos with celebrities as DREW BARRYMORE and KIM KARDASHIAN (*6 ABC* News 2015; *Forbes* Magazine 2017c). NIKKIE TUTORIALS' position as a makeup expert puts her in a social position of authority on this topic. Consequently, her position as an expert in the field is expressed by her audience, who refer to her as "*guru*" and "*queen of glow/glitter*" (referring to her makeup technique):

"*@NIKKIETUTORIALS makeup genius always innovating queen of highlight hilarious*" – NIKKIE TUTORIALS' Audience Member

"*@NIKKIETUTORIALS is a makeup artist and YouTuber from the Netherlands and the queen of glitter*" – NIKKIE TUTORIALS' Audience Member

NIKKIE TUTORIALS' perception of authority makes her a source of inspiration and information for her audience, who find her looks and tutorials valuable, and try recreating them and purchase the products that she has recommended. These recommendations and tips shared by NIKKIE TUTORIALS become a set of instructions (rules) for her audience to follow. For example, the audience expresses how they crave and desire the products with the SMI's name or those that the SMI uses/recommends regardless of whether these are outside the price range that they can afford, as illustrated by the following tweets:

"*@NIKKIETUTORIALS all of your new product suggestions = trouble for my bank account I want everything you use* 😘 *[kiss emoticon]*" – NIKKIE TUTORIALS' Audience Member

"*@NIKKIETUTORIALS and @GLAMLIFEGURU got me wanting to spend $74 on the @GuerlainUS Radiance face primer!! #badhabits #makeupaddiction #addict*" – NIKKIE TUTORIALS' Audience Member

The level of authority gained by the SMI is also supported by the social and symbolic capital that she has gained because of her skills and from the recognition of her talents from other important SMIs, such as beauty SMI JACLYN HILL, as per this tweet:

"Only @nikkietutorials I swear I'm always blown away by her talent she handles green" – JACLYN HILL

► 2017-08-15: JEFFREE STAR criticised KIM KARDASHIAN's makeup line (KKW BEAUTY) and her fans retaliated by posting about JEFFREE STAR's racist past (Liebson 2017; Reporter 2017). The pair had collaborated in the past, and subsequently KIM KARDASHIAN defended JEFFREE STAR on Snapchat, urging *"Everyone get off his ass"*. Instead, she receives huge criticism and apologises to her fans who perceived her as "*weak*" (Corinthios 2017; Pantazi 2017). This situation demonstrates that by defending JEFFREE STAR, KIM KARDASHIAN not only suffered from the "*negative*" social capital of JEFFREE STAR's audience but also from her audience who disapproved of her actions and those from JEFFREE STAR (see Figure 7.30):

"I really wanted to apologise to you guys and my fans for defending a situation yesterday that I really didn't know enough about… I just feel a bit naïve, and I do want to really apologise for me feeling like I had the right to say, 'get over it' in a situation that involves racism". – KIM KARDASHIAN

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Figure 7.30 Response to KIM KARDASHIAN Defending JEFFREE STAR (Ani 2017)

► 2017-08-04: ZOELLA's most retweeted tweet was about a "*giveaway*" that required users to retweet this post to enter (Figure 7.31). This tweet gained 10,300 favourites and 12,900 retweets, suggesting that the social ties that this SMI shares with her

audience and the audience's investment in her products are not as strong as the desire to win a prize. Since none of her top 10 tweets contained references to emotional connection or mentions of any brands, it can be asserted that as she shares "*weak*" social capital with her audience, that her levels of influence are low.

Figure 7.31 ZOELLA Contest Tweet (Sugg 2017)

It was also found that ZOELLA's audience deemed watching her videos as a top priority, in many cases above the purchase of her products. While this example illustrates how this SMI is not as effective in creating purchasing behaviours in her audience, it does evidence the high levels of engagement and commitment that her followers have with her content.

► 2018-02-28: MANNY MUA is widely known for his makeup tutorials, which users frequently try out and post their results in SM (see Figure 7.32).

Figure 7.32 User Tries MANNY MUA's Tutorial (Russett 2018)

MANNY MUA's following has created the name and hashtag *#MANNIACS* to differentiate themselves and express their devotion and loyalty to this SMI, where these followers habitually use this word and its respective hashtag to show their support for this SMI and to share information with other devoted followers:

"You know you're a manniac when 3 people text you about his collab with @JeffreeStar @MannyMua733" – MANNY MUA's Audience Member

MANNY MUA's recognition and large follower fanbase prompted recognised retailers to approach him to sell his cosmetic brand, LUNAR BEAUTY, showing how this SMI was able to monetised his social capital and fan loyalty (Bines 2019; Donahue 2018; Krause 2020).

► 2018-12-28: JAMES CHARLES criticised YouTuber LAUREN GODWIN for destroying her *#JAMESCHARLESxMORPHE* makeup palette. This tweet had 22,900 retweets and 163,000 favourites. This action led to considerable backlash for JAMESCHARLES who apologised to LAUREN GODWIN after she received numerous negative posts from JAMES CHARLES fans. This situation demonstrates how JAMES CHARLES' social capital can act negatively, as indicated by how his fans mobilised to "*attack*" those who they deem have crossed this SMI. In a tweet that received 68,000 favourites

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and 4,100 retweets, JAMES CHARLES then apologised and addressed upset fans, reminding them that such actions were unacceptable (Figure 7.33).

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Figure 7.33 JAMES CHARLES Apologises to Lauren Godwin (Charles 2018f)

► 2019-02-20: JAMES CHARLES' audience exhibits a high level of commitment to purchasing his products and recreating looks inspired by him. JAMES CHARLES posts about the success of sales of his MORPHE BRUSHES products (Figure 7.34) and his audience responds by posting images of their purchases and order confirmations to prove that they have indeed purchased this SMI's products, to demonstrate that they are loyal fans and to gain his approval.

Figure 7.34 JAMES CHARLES Sales and Users' Support (Charles 2019c)

► 2019-05-10: The feud between JAMES CHARLES and former friend and mentor beauty SMI GLAM LIFE GURU was of such magnitude that it has been called the biggest feud between SMIs on YouTube. This feud, nicknamed "*Dramageddon 2.0*" (Tenbarge 2020), is a powerful example of how viral SM can be. It started on April 22nd when JAMES CHARLES endorsed on Instagram rivalling vitamin brand SUGAR BEAR HAIR to that of GLAM LIFE GURU's. This feud took full swing when GLAM LIFE GURU posted a 43-minute-long video on YouTube titled *"Bye Sister ..."* (now deleted) criticising how JAMES CHARLES abused his fame and calling him disloyal and manipulative, gained over 34 million views and 2.7 million likes on YouTube in three days (Boan 2019). Because of GLAM LIFE GURU's exposing JAMES CHARLES and her not wanting to be associated with him anymore, JAMES CHARLES lost a record 3.2 million YouTube subscribers over a week. These followers included noticeable celebrities, who unfollowed JAMES CHARLES in retaliation for his behaviour and started following rival SMI GLAM LIFE GURU, who gained 5 million YouTube subscribers (Young 2019). The feud between these SMIs evidences the transfer of support from one SMI to another, which also had a devastating effect on the size of JAMES CHARLES' audience.

► Additionally, JAMES CHARLES made history as being the first person in YouTube history to lose 1 million subscribers in 24 hours (McGregor 2019). He then released an 8-minute-long response video apologising to his fans and GLAM LIFE GURU. This video received mainly negative reviews (33 million views, 470,000 likes and 2.3 million dislikes on YouTube in three days), becoming the 10th most disliked video in YouTube history and causing JAMES CHARLES to lose a further three million YouTube subscribers in less than 48 hours (Kaur 2019). It also prompted the appearance of hashtags such as *#JAMESCHARLESISCANCELLED* and *#JAMESCHARLESISOVERPARTY,* the loss of followers all over SM platforms and consumers returning, destroying and vandalising their *#JAMESCHARLESXMORPHE* palette. All these actions were documented in comments, images and videos all over SNS as a sign of disapproval of JAMES CHARLES' behaviour (Safronova 2019).

Eventually, GLAM LIFE GURU had to ask her fans to stop sending *"hate"* messages to JAMES CHARLES and both SMIs agreed to not take the issue any further as shown in Figure 7.35. This tweet highlights how GLAM LIFE GURU addresses her audience to thank them for their support, increasing the strength of her social capital as this tweet received over 153,000 favourites and 10,000 retweets. This tweet confirms once again that an audience that feels that the SMI is not being genuine will respond as the

opposing tweet gained over 20,000 favourites. Figure 7.36 shows that although JAMES CHARLES petitioned his audience and the beauty community to remain positive, this tweet received both positive and negative replies from users, despite receiving over 255,000 favourites and over 16,000 retweets evidencing that the audience's replies can have opposite polarities.

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Replies

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Figure 7.35 GLAM LIFE GURU Heartbroken Tweet (Westbrook 2019)

Figure 7.36 JAMES CHARLES "Moving On" Tweet (Charles 2019d)

► 2020-07-10: JEFFREE STAR gained an extensive number of loyal followers who are committed to him and his products, despite being involved in numerous feuds, causing public offences and controversy. While users on Twitter criticised this SMI for using the word *"nigger"* and expressing that he wanted to throw *"acid on a coloured woman's face to lighten it",* his audience consistently commented on the elevated quality of his products and their satisfaction. Figure 7.37 presents a tweet from brand MORPHE BRUSHES disassociating from this SMI because of anti-Semitic and xenophobic posts, JEFFREE STAR's audience apparently ignored the fact that he behaved in a racist way and instead, criticised the brand's decision. These responses evidence the strength of the social capital that the audience has with JEFFREE STAR and their loyalty to his products.

Figure 7.37 MORPHE Disassociates from JEFFREE STAR (Morphe Brushes 2020)

► JEFFREE STAR has repeatedly countered users on SM who exposed his Nazi-inspired promotional images and personal photos (shown in Figure 7.38) to which he responded by posting an apology video on YouTube (Corinthios 2017; Pantazi 2017; Reporter 2017). While JEFFREE STAR suffered from bad publicity and the cancellation of some business deals due to these accusations, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 identified that his audience exhibited the highest level of user engagement, most frequent buying behaviours and elevated levels of loyalty. These findings suggest that this SMI shares the strongest ties with his fan base from the selected SMIs, which allowed him to benefit constantly from the social capital generated with them.

Figure 7.38 JEFFREE STAR's Nazi Past (Exposing Liars 2020)

7.3.4 Feuds and Criticisms

SNS provide ideal environments for developing engagement and connectivity that allows users to feel part of the life of the SMI as demonstrated by the many comments, responses and criticism presented in this analysis. The presence of "*negative*" social capital can be

particularly evident when SMIs engage in negative behaviours including making homophobic or racist comments or when engaging in disputes with other SMIs. The impact of such "*negative*" social capital is seen in the findings relating to the feud between JAMES CHARLES and fellow beauty SMI GLAM LIFE GURU, which provoked three million users to unsubscribe from JAMES CHARLES' YouTube channel. This section presents details of this and other situations that yielded negative consequences for the selected SMIs.

► 2014-10: ZOELLA became the first "*Digital Ambassador"* for mental health charity Mind (Mind 2014), with a prominent part of ZOELLA's content online referring to her mental health problems. In her posts, ZOELLA speaks about her dealings with anxiety and how being an ambassador for Mind has given her a sense of distinction from being featured numerous times in the media (Moss 2016; Ruby 2016; Saul 2016) for this association. The tweets analysed suggest that her audience perceives her as a role model as per the tweet below:

"Thanks Zoe! you've always been one of the YouTube communities best role models when it comes to mental health so that means a lot" – ZOELLA's Audience Member

Other instances identified where SMI's created negative social capital relates to their behaviour in their real-life. In this case, in the same way that news about a celebrity's questionable behaviour and negative press get spread by tabloids, users on SM can easily repost this type of content without the need for any additional distribution or broadcasting infrastructure. For example, a tweet posted by a waitress' negative experience when serving ZOELLA and not being tipped gained 32,918 favourites and 4,988 retweets confirming the virality of negative content online.

► 2016-2019: JEFFREE STAR is known to have an unapologetic personality that has caused him multiple public feuds with celebrities, other SMIs and brands. He is also known for making racist comments on Myspace when he was still in a band (Barbour 2018). Because of the archival nature of the internet, it is almost impossible to completely erase data as it is stored in multiple places such as archival websites, search engine's indexes and on the SM feeds of the users who have shared this information. In 2017, videos and pictures of JEFFREE STAR's racist and Nazi past flooded the internet for the first time and led to him having to apologise by posting a YouTube video (Corinthios 2017; Pantazi 2017). It was observed that this SMI had to address numerous times the resurfacing of these materials, which coincided with the times when he has been involved in a feud (Capon 2017). These circumstances make

it more difficult for audiences to "*forgive and move on*", as shown within the following tweets from 2016 and 2019 signalling the long-lasting negative effects of the comments made by JEFFREE STAR:

2016: "Please don't contribute to Jeffree Star Cosmetics, he is a sexist and racist pig and doesn't deserve any success." – JEFFREESTAR's Audience Member

2017: "Never forget that @JeffreeStar will call black women rats, uneducated, and broke when they do not worship him" – JEFFREESTAR's Audience Member

2018: "Since Kevin Hart had to apologize AGAIN for homophobic jokes from 9 years ago and lost an opportunity. I need Jeffree Star to apologize again for his racist comments and lose any opportunity he has coming up" – JEFFREESTAR's Audience Member

2019: "Off topic because as someone in the makeup community, I need to say this. Jaclyn Hill? Trash. Jeffree Star? Trash. James Charles? Trash. Why do people still stan these white mediocre privileged (and racist) makeup influencers who want nothing more than your money?" – JEFFREESTAR's Audience Member

► 2017-02-16: JAMES CHARLES was highly criticised after tweeting an insensitive joke about getting Ebola in Africa on February 16th. As shown in Figure 7.39, user XOPAROSWILLIAMS received over 6,000 favourites and 4,000 retweets for tweeting that she would not support brands associated with JAMES CHARLES, while the COVERGIRL, cosmetics brand associated with JAMES CHARLES, only received 3,800 favourites. JAMES CHARLES later issued an apology, discredited by the following post when he stated his so-called "*true*" apology. The "*Ebola tweet*" is an example of a popular tweet receiving favourites and retweets despite its "*negative*" social capital, evidenced in the engagement of Twitter users with his posts.

Figure 7.39 Responses to JAMES CHARLES Ebola Tweet (XOPARISWILLIAMS 2018)

► 2017-04-22: JEFFREE STAR exposed in a video posted on SM the details of NIKKIE TUTORIALS' contract with TWO FACED COSMETICS (Fuller 2017; Stiegman 2017) where he accused the brand's CEO, Jeremy Johnson, of taking advantage of a young and naive NIKKIE TUTORIALS by underpaying her (Tenbarge 2019). Hence, JEFFREE STAR gains "*positive*" social capital from his and NIKKIE TUTORIAL's audience, helping him increase his number of followers because of this seemly *"altruistic"* act, while TOO FACED COSMETICS suffered the backlash of JEFFREE STAR's and NIKKIE TUTORIALS' audience when users publicly attack the brand and its owner for the deceptive contract terms. These actions suggest the creation of positive social capital for JEFFREE STAR and "*negative*" social capital for TOO FACED.

2017-09-22: ZOELLA released her £50 *"Zoella 12 Days of Christmas Advent Calendar"* to be sold in Boots stores and on this retailer's website. However, it is received with great criticism due to its high cost, with users calling it *"a rip-off"*, which forces BOOTS to half the price on November 16th (Oppenheim 2017). ZOELLA herself was accused by the public of "*scamming her audience*" as her young target audience includes mainly "*millennials*" and "*Gen Z*" tweens (de Veirman and Hudders 2020; O'Connor 2017; Sakdiyakorn, Golubovskaya and Solnet 2021). The YouTube star defended herself, saying that BOOTS had made a mistake in the pricing, a comment that a BOOTS representative then contradicted (Cliff 2017). These findings reinforce the essential role played by price in purchasing decisions, and demonstrates how audiences also are overt about what they consider to be a *"good"* or *"wrong"* practice. Even though ZOELLA is considered a "*positive role model*", the following tweet reveals how her position as an authority in this field has been questioned by the audience, who disagrees about the pricing of her products:

"Zoella is a perfect example of people deliberately using their platforms for nothing other than to give themselves a bigger pay cheque every month. 50 for a poorly designed 12-day cheap advent calendar is an insult to anyone who has ever supported her" – ZOELLA's Audience Member

Despite ZOELLLA's efforts to correct the situation, she lost over 400,000 Instagram followers and 43% of monthly views in 2018 (Adejobi 2018) and further 429,401 subscribers on YouTube in 2019 (Rasool 2019) due to the backlash received from this calendar. The same type of criticism applied to the quality of ZOELLA's products, as evidenced by this tweet, which is one of her ten most favourited ones:

"I genuinely think Zoella response was abysmal. Her main point was "it takes ages to make these products and test them". How the fuck have you been testing confetti for a year? Throwing it in the air for 52 weeks? Cookie cutters? Fluff balls? Mental. Proper bottled response" – ZOELLA's Audience Member

► 2018-08: The YouTube beauty community underwent major feuds during the period called *"Dramageddon",* where several members of the beauty community were accused of having made racist or derogatory comments. These included LAURA LEE (comedic SMI), NIKITA DRAGUN (beauty SMI), GABRIEL ZAMORA (beauty SMI), MANNY MUA and JEFFREE STAR (Dodgson 2019). GABRIEL ZAMORA posted a

picture of himself and fellow SMIs MANNY MUA, LAURA LEE and NIKITA DRAGUN showing the middle finger with the caption "*bitch is bitter because without him we're doing better*". The indication is that the comment was referring to JEFFREE STAR (Barbour 2018). On August 22nd, MANNY MUA releases a YouTube video addressing the conflict (Stiegman 2018) and ultimately ends his friendship with JEFFREE STAR, GABRIEL ZAMORA and PATRICK STAR (beauty SMI), which coincides on one hand, with a slight decrease in MANNY MUA's followers and on the other, with an increase in his favourites and retweets. The opposition between these measures indicates that the loss of followers does not necessarily indicate a loss of social capital. This finding confirms that signals of social capital should not be analysed independently without context, as MANNY MUA's netnographic account showed that despite users unfollowing him, the number of favourites and retweets increased during this period.

The feud intensified when GABRIEL ZAMORA posted a tweet alleging that JEFFREE STAR was racist. To retaliate, JEFFREE STAR's followers posted old racist posts by LAURA LEE, NIKITA DRAGUN, GABRIEL ZAMORA and MANNY MUA exposing them as being racists (Figure 7.40). Even though this feud resembled that of JAMES CHARLES and GLAM LIFE GURU, the difference was that JEFFREE STAR did not lose a significant number of followers, suggesting that the ties and social capital between JEFFREE STAR and his audience are much stronger than those of JAMES CHARLES and his audience.

Figure 7.40 LAURA LEE'S and GABRIEL ZAMORA's Racist Tweets (FKATXCX 2018)

► 2020-03-22: JEFFREE STAR, in addition to being a recognised member of the beauty community, is known for being a former musician and for his philanthropy. JEFFREE STAR uses charitable acts to increase his social capital by trying to appear generous and magnanimous to his fans. He has used this tactic on numerous occasions, for example, by donating money to his followers who are in critical financial hardship or by other donations, such as buying supplies for a school classroom. However, to be eligible for these giveaways, users must *"retweet and follow"* him and publicise his pseudo-good deeds on SM, which can be considered an explanation for why his tweets receive numerous favourites and retweets, even though the timing of his actions often coincides with times when his reputation has been damaged. These measures indicate that is trying to buy his audiences' favour, as evidenced in Figure 7.41, which gained 597,800 favourites and 967,000 retweets after JEFFREE STAR was accused of having a history of racism.

Figure 7.41 JEFFREE STAR Gives Away $30,000 (Steininger 2020)

▶ 2019-05-18: JAMES CHARLES released a 41-minute-long video titled *"No More Lies"*, refuting and presenting evidence against the allegations made, that led to him regaining one million YouTube subscribers. At the same, there was a loss of 200,000 subscribers for GLAM LIFE GURU, who was criticised for her attack on JAMES CHARLES. Once again, the loss and gain of subscribers on SNS prompted by acts of criticism or apologies reveal the presence of social capital embedded in SNS. This social capital can be qualified as positive when an SMI receives favourites, retweets and increased follower count or can be negative when users take away their support by un-favouriting, deleting retweets, unfollowing or posting negative content against an SMI.

▶ 2019-05-20: The backlash from the JAMES CHARLES vs GLAM LIFE GURU was such that JAMES CHARLES cancelled his 24-State US *"Sisters"* tour, which had already been sold out and his *"Sister's Apparel"* website was taken down temporarily as fans flocked to SNS requesting for their orders to be cancelled (Garvey 2019; Ritschel 2019). The *"Sisters"* tour was a collaboration between the SMI and MORPHE BRUSHES scheduled to run on 24 main USA cities (Quintana 2019) with ticket prices ranging from $60 to $530. As the tour had already been sold out and the money was returned to the consumers, the economic effect of this cancellation should have been in the range of millions of dollars lost. A situation that evidences the presence of negative social capital is when beauty SMI GLAM LIFEGURU exposed JAMES CHARLES as manipulative and abusive. This shift in subscribers from one SMI to another is a perfect example of how social capital can easily be mobilised in SNS in

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the form of negative engagement from the SMI's audience. Also, no other traditional means of communication allowed users to show their support (or not) and voice their opinions as effectively as SM. Figure 7.42 illustrates the gravity of this situation, which received 78,900 favourites and 11,600 retweets.

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Figure 7.42 #JAMESCHARLESXMORPHE Palette Returns (FENTYDAMI 2019)

The result obtained suggests that JAMES CHARLES' accrued capitals are not sufficient to shield him from backlash from the controversies that he faced. Because of this weakness, his position in the field is easily challenged. Below is a tweet from an audience member who openly challenges JAMES CHARLES' position as a brand ambassador for COVERGIRL by asserting that they could do a better job. This tweet was amongst JAMES CHARLES' top-rated tweets, with 117,302 favourites and 35,227 retweets:

"I'm ready to take James Charles place as the next face of CoverGirl. I'm really nice and I don't photoshop my nose contour" – JAMESCHARLES' Audience Member

The association with an SMI can harm the reputation of a brand in moments of crisis, especially if they do not reply to or disassociate themselves from a problematic SMI promptly. The following tweet by a JAMES CHARLES' audience member demonstrates this point as this user challenges brand COVERGIRL to cut ties with this SMI because of his many feuds and allegations of appalling behaviour:

"Covergirl: James Charles' tweet does not represent COVERGIRLs perspective. Us: Fire him then Covergirl" – JAMES CHARLES' Audience Member

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7.4 Chapter Summary

There is also evidence that interactions between SMIs on Twitter can lead to the presence of "*positive*" social capital, as shown by the increase in favourites, retweets and followers observed when SMIs collaborate. This finding is supported by the results of the sentiment analysis, as the tweets for all SMIs tended to be emotional and can be categorised as being "*somewhat positive*" and "*somewhat subjective*". Although the quantitative analysis revealed that signals of social capital, such as the number of favourites and retweets, have a strong proportional relationship. However, these measures were not affected by changes in the number of followers.

The findings presented in this chapter are supported by numerous examples that demonstrate that the process of creating social capital is bidirectional, as it originates from both the SMI and the audience. The findings of the netnographic account highlighted successful SMI−brand and SMI−SMI product associations and endorsements, especially when audience members see these associations as appropriate. Conversely, if an audience finds incongruities in these associations, the influence exerted on the audience is reduced, independent of the amount of social capital shared with the SMI. In extreme cases where the audiences deemed these associations as unacceptable, the brand was more susceptible to have negative consequences, as SMIs can appeal to the audience at a personal level and deny any intention of wrongdoing. Audiences also take an active role when it comes to the creation of "*new*" social capital for the SMI by frequently posting about the collaborations that they want to see materialise. This finding demonstrates that the process of creating social capital is not exclusive to the SMI and that SMIs comply with the audience's requests as a way of increasing their social capital by validating the importance of the audience's opinions.

This chapter also revealed that audiences can easily *"get mobilised"* on SM to either defend or criticise an SMI. When an SMI faces the discontent of the audience and apologises for it, the audience must perceive this apology as authentic and heartfelt, otherwise, there can be further negative consequences. This effect was typified when the case of JAMES CHARLES' apology video becoming the 10th most disliked video on YouTube and prompted the phrase *"you're cancelled"* to refer to an SMI's career being over. Furthermore, such association could cost brands a lot of money in the long-term as this was a poignant situation for JAMES CHARLES, who had his products returned, his *"Sisters Tour"* cancelled and lost millions of followers in a matter of hours, demonstrating the fluid nature of social capital online.

Finally, even though JAMES CHARLES suffered the loss of followers, which he subsequently recovered after a few months, ZOELLA has experienced a persistent loss of followers since 2017. JAMES CHARLES' decline can be explained because of his behaviour, although later his audience forgave him and re-subscribed, whereas ZOELLA's audience was unable to move past her bad pricing and product quality issues.

8. SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS (SNA) FINDINGS AND RESULTS

8.1 Introduction

Social Network Analysis (SNA) is a well-established methodology for investigating, mapping and measuring the characteristics and interactions of social structures exhibited by a social group based on network and graph theory (Bruns 2020; Han, Caldwell and Ghadge 2020; Knoke and Yang 2019). The advantage of using network and graph theory is that in these frameworks the network is conceptualised as an interconnected structure represented by nodes (individual actors, entities or organisations within the network) and edges (that is the relationships or interactions that tie, link or connect the nodes), thus facilitating the observation, analysis and measurement of the different exchanges and relationships taking place in it.

The use of SNA helps answer the research questions concerning the type of information shared in a Social Media Influencer's (SMI) network, the closeness of the relationships formed, how and to what extent messages are being disseminated and the distribution of social capital within the network. Given that Social Networking Sites (SNS) allow for connectivity of users based on multiple parameters, such as geolocation, hashtags, retweets and text (Hashemy, Yousefi and Soodi 2016; Lőrincz et al. 2019; Zugravu-Soilita et al. 2021).

As a tweet can be visualised in different ways depending on the perspective used. Therefore graphical representations of each SMI's network, clusters and communities have been produced to provide context for how social capital operates in the SMI's audience.

SNA is used at this stage to help answer the following Research Questions (RQs) by providing a structural understanding of how social capital operates and flows within an SMI's network:

- ► RQ.1: Who is an SMI and what are their characteristics?
- ► RQ.2: How and to what extent do SMIs influence their audiences?
- ► RQ.4: Under what circumstances are SMIs more influential?

From a methodological standpoint, both the quantitative and qualitative analyses only partially explain the information flows between an SMI, its audience and the connections created around them. While these types of analysis have presented valuable insights in terms of the methods used by SMIs to create and nurture relationships and exert their influence online, they do not provide a way of understanding what messages get shared the most on Twitter, whether they follow patterns of sharing and which participants exhibit the highest levels of social capital and influence. Hence, the analysis presented describes the size, connectivity and strength of an SMI's network based on their social capital and to identify information flow, where these insights were used to estimate the strength and reach of the influence exerted by the SMI. Clusters (communities) of highly engaged users and influential actors who help disseminate and amplify the SMI's influence, who can be identified by the number and strength of their interactions.

In this chapter, patterns of connection between nodes are examined and the different SMI networks compared to provide a context for how social capital is distributed (Tiwari, Lane and Alam 2019; Utz and Muscanell 2015; Valenzuela, Park and Kee 2009). In brief, the analysis performed centred on the measurement of:

- ► Network characteristics: To describe each SMI's network based on features, such as the type of network (structure), density and size.
- ► Network social capital: To examine the strength of the ties being created in an SMI's network and any communities found in their audience.
- ► Information flow: To identify the main topics found in the conversations and identify key users negotiating the dissemination of content in the network.

To classify an SMI's network social capital from weak to strong, three main measures are used. Firstly, the distance between the nodes is calculated based on their importance (network weight), secondly, assessing the number of connections between the nodes and the presence of disconnected (disjointed or loose) elements and thirdly, evaluating the number and size of the communities of practice. The selection of these measures was based on Bourdieu's and CCT theories that consider the strength of the social ties at the individual level and the characteristics of the clusters identified at the group level.

8.1.1 Methodological Considerations

SNA facilitates the examination of how the nodes relate to each other and can reveal important structural relationships that statistical regressions and models cannot (Font and McCabe 2017; Khan et al. 2017; Yoganarasimhan 2017). In the same way as statistical models, network analysis models represent an idealised version of a real world phenomenon that are sensitive to the variables and the estimation methods used (Alberghini, Cricelli and Grimaldi 2014; Aral 2011; Qiu, Tang and Whinston 2015). Each methodology produces a series of indicators of network structure, such as the proportion of existing connections, mutual ties or indicators of the presence of prominent network actors (Castells 2001). After careful examination of the different SNA methodologies, "network of terms" and *"Louvain cluster and community detection"* algorithms were used to create snapshots of the dynamics among the network elements. To decrease the time and computing power required for processing, the network relationships were treated as undirected (stripping the information about the origin and destination of a link between two nodes).

Unlike traditional SNA based on the analysis of the reach and propagation of messages being shared and re-shared over the network (Bloom 2005; Rogers, Chapman and Giotsas 2012; Todri, Adamopoulos and Andrews 2021), this research uses hashtags and mentions as main variables for evaluating user connections within the network with accuracy. In a tweet, hashtags are used to identify important topics or ideas, whereas mentions identify usernames. By focusing the analysis on these two variables, the researcher successfully reduced the extensive processing time required for processing without compromising the core message of the tweet.

As the audiences of each SMI consisted of millions of users, the researcher was unable to properly graph these networks. Thus, users were ranked based on the measure of "*network weight*" as explained in Chapter 5. This measure was used for selecting significant tweets from each dataset, based on the importance of the connections found for each user and the number of favourites and retweets that each tweet received. However, a considerable number of Twitter users do not use the correct hashtag or mention or misspelt them in a tweet. As explained in Chapter 5, the researcher wrote a python programming script that firstly, corrected the spelling and transform common collaborations, brand and usernames into their corresponding hashtag or mentions; secondly, calculate each tweet's network weight and thirdly, create a subset of most representative tweets based on their network weight. This script was used to prepare the data before conducting any analysis.

8.2 Network Visualisation

Being able to visualise a network is an important step in SNA that helps understand the data associated with a network and the implication of the results obtained from its analysis (Bayazıt, Durmuş and Yıldırım 2017; Godes and Mayzlin 2004; Ioanid, Militaru and Mihai 2015). Typically, a network can be represented by a series of dots (nodes) connected by lines (edges), where the particulars of the layout are based on predetermined mathematical models for network visualisation (Burt 2000; Fukuyama 2001; Putnam 2001). Today, numerous software packages and programming languages can be used to visualise networks. Many of these also allow for the use of libraries or modules that can attribute colours, size, text, shapes and other advanced properties to the nodes and links of the network (Godes and Mayzlin 2004; Muñiz and Schau 2007; Schau and Gilly 2003). Python's library *NetworkX* was used to create the networks presented in this analysis.

Network visualisations help researchers uncover patterns, identify groups, communities and trace how information is disseminated (Feher 2021; Leban and Voyer 2015a; Roelens, Baecke and Benoit 2016) and classify topics of discussion. A sociogram is a network visualisation method that has been widely used by sociometrists to study the structure of ties in human groups (Colladon, Guardabascio and Innarella 2019; Knoke and Yang 2019; Ngai et al. 2015). The analysis of sociograms often employs network analysis to describe patterns and interactions (Askegaard and Linnet 2011; Bajde, Nøjgaard and Sommer 2019; Venkatesh and Peñaloza 2014) to show the relationship (links or edges) between the authors (nodes) with others (Du et al. 2014; Kratzer et al. 2016; Lőrincz et al. 2019). In the present research, the different usernames were converted into nodes and the mentions of other usernames and hashtags became the links that created formed the networks around each SMI.

8.2.1 Network Attributes

To classify the SMI network, firstly the attributes being analysed need to be established. Of the multitude of methods and classifications available to examine a social network, this study focuses on network structure, node distribution and the strength of the social capital. These measures are explained below. Next, each network was classified based on these attributes and the communities identified. Typically, SNA aims to identify the following characteristics (Fu, Wu and Cho 2017; Markus 2021; Van der Lans et al. 2010):

► Network structure: this aspect refers to the shape, size and density of the network, which reflect its topology (Davies 2017; Kozinets, Patterson and Ashman 2016; Miell, Gill and Vazquez 2018).

► Node distribution: Differences in how nodes are connected can be consequential for understanding their attributes and behaviour. The more connections a node has means that it is exposed to more and diverse information. Therefore highly connected nodes can be more influential and can act as gatekeepers within the network (Anheier, Gerhards and Romo 1995; Collyer, Willis and Lewis 2017; DiMaggio and Mohr 1985).

► Strength of the social capital: The distances between nodes and their position determine the opportunities available to them. Hence, the social capital found in a network can be quantified by analysing these features (Borgonovi, Andrieu and Subramanian 2021; Huszti, Dávid and Vajda 2013; Pescosolido 1992).

8.2.1.1   Network of Terms

A "*network of terms*" approach was used to find the hidden dynamics and trends within the conversational text between each SMI and its audience. A network of terms is a graphical representation of the way words are connected in a document. This type of analysis is commonly used to depict the relationship as vectors and nodes between words or terms (Pandey and Pandey 2019; Rabbany et al. 2014; Sarica, Luo and Wood 2020).

This analysis is based on Kamada-Kawai (Kamada and Kawai 1989; Moya-Anegón et al. 2007) and Krackhardt-Kite style network layouts (Krackhardt 1990; Tsvetovat and Kouznetsov 2011), which are algorithms used for large-network visualisation. These algorithms present the advantage of being able to process large datasets compared to other popular SNA methods (Birkett et al. 2021; Brandes, Borgatti and Freeman 2016; Knoke and Yang 2019).

8.2.1.2   Cluster and Community Detection

Cluster and community detection algorithms were used in this research identify, assess and visualise the "*Communities of Practice*" in each of the SMI's datasets. The members of a community of practice are those who share a central affiliation, interest or meaning (Huszti,

Dávid and Vajda 2013) and, therefore, play an essential function in the creation and sharing of social capital (Davide et al. 2022; Huszti, Dávid and Vajda 2013; Mortara and Roberti 2017).

One of the most popular and efficient algorithms for identifying clusters and communities within a network is the Louvain algorithm. This method uses an agglomerative approach that maximises the detection of known core pathways (nodes with a high number of edges) and modularity (highly dense sets of nodes), inherent in the structure of a network (Kratzer et al. 2016; Shang, Wu and Sie 2017; Tiwari, Lane and Alam 2019). The Louvain algorithm was used here to identify the presence of communities and influential nodes in the SMIs' networks.

8.3 Network Features and Outcomes

The following sections describe the insights gained from the analysis of the network structure, social capital exhibited and information flow for each of the SMI's networks. To facilitate the analysis of each of these characteristics, a series of definitions and scales were used to compare these networks. These metrics, statistics and graphs are valuable sources of information that can help to quantify the level and extent of the relationships and social capital between an SMI and its audience.

Given that a network's social capital can be determined using the placement of the nodes, this research uses the network's typology, distribution and density to quantify these levels of social capital. The main network typologies identified were categorised as "*ego-centric*" (or local) networks, which are based on an individual agent (the "*ego*") and their direct connections (the "*alters*"), "*socio-centric*" those where the connections are distributed among several central nodes or where these are "*mixed*", for cases combine ego-centric and socio-centric features (Duffy and Hund 2015; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013; Pedroni 2015). The distribution of the nodes as "*centralised*", "*decentralised*" or "*mixed*" and the network's overall density as "*sparse*" (loosely connected nodes), "*dense*" (clustered nodes) and "*mixed*".

The strength of the social capital was then categorised as "*weak or low*", where social ties present a considerable distance between; "*strong or high*", where the social ties are close in distance; or "*mixed*", where the nodes exhibit both short and long distances between them (Kratzer et al. 2016; Lampel and Bhalla 2007; Zugravu-Soilita et al. 2021). Tables 8.1 to 8.3 summarise the typology and characteristics exhibited by each of the SMI's networks based on their typology, distribution pattern, density, social capital exhibited and the size of the network. The characteristics of these networks are explained in the following sections.

SMI	TYPE	DISTRIBUTION	DENSITY	SOCIAL CAPITAL	NETWORK SIZE	CLUSTERS	LOOSE ELEMENTS
JAMES CHARLES	EGO-CENTRIC	CENTRALISED	MIXED	MIXED	MEDIUM	1	NO
JEFFREE STAR	SOCIO-CENTRIC	DECENTRALISED	SPARSE	STRONG	SMALL	2	NO
MANNY MUA	SOCIO-CENTRIC	DECENTRALISED	SPARSE	MIXED	SMALL	2	NO
MICHELLE PHAN	SOCIO-CENTRIC	DECENTRALISED	DENSE	MIXED	LARGE	2	YES
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	EGO-CENTRIC	MIXED	SPARSE	STRONG	SMALL	1	NO
ZOELLA	EGO-CENTRIC	CENTRALISED	DENSE	MIXED	MEDIUM	1	MIXED
Average	**MIXED**	**MIXED**	**SPARSE**	**STRONG**	**SMALL**	**1.5**	**NO**

Table 8.1 Hashtag's Networks of Terms and Communities

SMI	TYPE	DISTRIBUTION	DENSITY	SOCIAL CAPITAL	NETWORK SIZE	CLUSTERS	LOOSE ELEMENTS
JAMES CHARLES	SOCIO-CENTRIC	CENTRALISED	DENSE	STRONG	LARGE	2.5	YES
JEFFREE STAR	SOCIO-CENTRIC	CENTRALISED	SPARSE	WEAK	SMALL	1.5	YES
MANNY MUA	MIXED	MIXED	SPARSE	WEAK	SMALL	2	NO
MICHELLE PHAN	SOCIO-CENTRIC	CENTRALISED	DENSE	STRONG	LARGE	2.5	YES
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	MIXED	MIXED	SPARSE	WEAK	SMALL	1	NO
ZOELLA	MIXED	MIXED	SPARSE	STRONG	MEDIUM	2	YES
Average	**SOCIO-CENTRIC**	**DECENTRALISED**	**SPARSE**	**MIXED**	**SMALL**	**1.91**	**YES**

Table 8.2 Mention's Network of Terms and Communities

	TYPE	DISTRIBUTION	DENSITY	SOCIAL CAPITAL	NETWORK SIZE	CLUSTERS	LOOSE ELEMENTS
N. OF TERMS	EGO-CENTRIC	CENTRALISED	SPARSE	WEAK	MIXED	1.58	NO
COMMUNITIES	SOCIO-CENTRIC	DECENTRALISED	SPARSE	STRONG	SMALL	1.83	MIXED
Average	**MIXED**	**MIXED**	**SPARSE**	**STRONG**	**SMALL**	**1.07**	**NO**

Table 8.3 Summary of Total Networks

8.3.1 Network Characteristics

SNA provides a series of tools for identifying and measuring important network characteristics, such as structure, size, density, cohesion; link and node properties and the roles and position of agents and groups (Bange, Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari 2020; Chernilo, Fine and Wacquant 2013; Fan and Run 2016). These characteristics determine the way interactions and relationships are carried out and how the different actors behave, interact and share information.

The results obtained from the SNA demonstrate that a Twitter network can be studied based on the tweet's mentions and hashtags and more importantly, to successfully identify the presence of clusters and communities of practice. To facilitate this process and gain valuable

insights regarding the main characteristics of the resulting networks, the results of the network of terms and community detection analysis were graph. In brief, the findings that ego-centric networks tend to be sparse, have weaker social capital, are medium in size and have less disconnected components. In comparison, socio-centric networks tend to be sparse, have stronger social capital, be small and have disjointed elements. Further analysis of the main properties of the networks and their implications for each SMI are presented below.

8.3.1.1   Network Structure

The adoption of an ego-centric or socio-centric approach depends on the focus and aims of the research. Although ego-centric networks do not represent an entire network, as these are limited to the nodes linked to the ego, their use has been popularised as it is much easier to collect this type of data than that required for a socio-centric approach (Godes and Mayzlin 2004; Muñiz and Schau 2007; Schau and Gilly 2003). However, an ego-centric approach may add value to a socio-centric method by providing triangulation or enabling a focus on specific subgroups in the network (Fukuyama 1995; Fukuyama 1997).

In this research, the large number of downloaded tweets enable a socio-centric perspective to be taken. The data collected was not restricted to one user, as it focuses on the tweets mentioning this user across the whole Twitter network. Although no prominent typology was identified, these networks presented important similarities. For example, the hashtag networks presented both ego-centric and socio-centric typologies, whereas the mentions followed a socio-centric one. When analysing the networks based on the network of terms and the community detection algorithms, except for JEFFREE STAR, the results revealed a prominence of ego-centric networks as expected. Further details of the social capital and community analysis are presented in the following sections.

Figure 8.1 depicts the JAMES CHARLES hashtag network as an example of an ego-centric network consisting of only one cluster. Several important characteristics are evident. Firstly, the names of other SMIs found within the hashtags network were also within the mentions network. These names include ETHAN DOLAN, GRAYSON DOLAN and EMMA CHAMBERLAIN. Secondly, the graph is mainly made up of hashtags that reference SMIs and audience members that are not related to the brands that sponsor JAMES CHARLES.

The exception is COVERGIRL, located at the farthest distance (least referenced hashtag) from the centre of the cluster. Thirdly, even though this is an ego-centric (centralised) network;

JAMES CHARLES is not at its centre as expected, evidencing that this community is an unbalanced one. On the one hand this network has multiple equidistant SMI names to the centre and on the other, COVERGIRL is distantly connected via the JAMESCHARLES node. The closeness of these connections indicates that the social capital found in this network is strong, which makes this a clearly defined and close community.
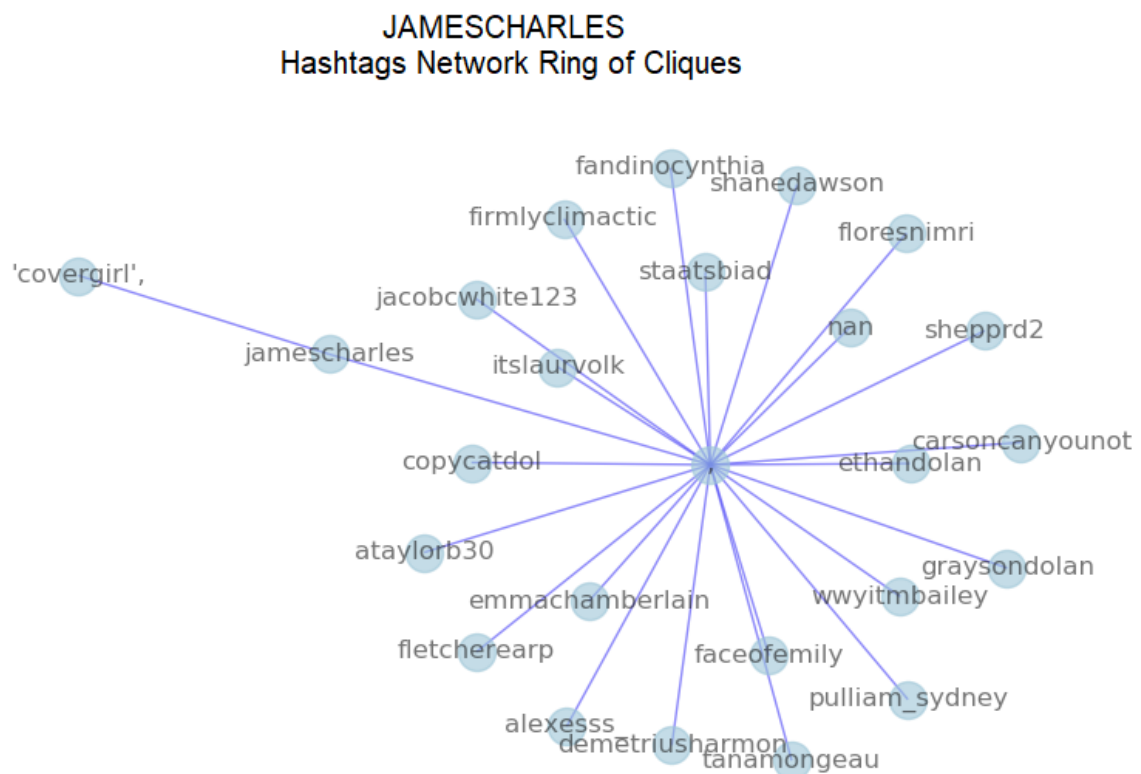
Figure 8.1 JAMES CHARLES' Hashtags Communities

Except for JAMES CHARLES and ZOELLA, all the SMI networks identified in the community detection analysis followed a socio-centric typology. JAMES CHARLES and ZOELLA presented ego-centric networks for the hashtags' community analysis and socio-centric ones for the mentions. This finding suggests that when it comes to important themes and brand collaborations, these SMIs are either unable to transfer their social capital or that these other topics and associations are not as important to the audience.

The network graph of mentions for JAMESCHARLES shown in Figure 8.2, is characterised by the presence of a socio-centric (distributed) network. Here, one main cluster A consists of celebrities and SMIs, such as singer ARIANA GRANDE, reality TV star and makeup line-owner KYLIE JENNER and beauty SMIs JEFFREE STAR and JACLYN HILL. This cluster also contains brand names ULTA BEAUTY (beauty store franchise) and JACLYN HILL COSMETICS (beauty SMI cosmetics brand). Around cluster A, is series of smaller clusters

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that contain brands and SMI names. The clusters containing brand names are labelled B, C and D, whereas those containing SMI names have been left unlabelled. The main brands in clusters B, C and D are MORPHE BRUSHES, COVERGIRL and STARBUCKS. Two of these brand names are from the beauty industry, while STARBUCKS (coffee house franchise) is a brand that has been promoted within JAMES CHARLES' tweets. Both the hashtags and the mentions network graphs show coherence between the SMIs and brand names and the presence of strong social capital within the JAMES CHARLES dataset.

The presence of loose elements can be a problem in networks created to distribute information, as these elements become unreachable. From the network of terms analysis, although most hashtags' networks did not contain disjointed groups of elements, the mentions' ones did. For example, MICHELLE PHAN's and ZOELLA's presented several dyads of isolated nodes connected by a short distance. This means that although these dyads are not part of the main network, they share strong social capital within their nodes. Conversely, the network of terms analysis for the JAMES CHARLES' and JEFFREE STAR' revealed the presence of disconnected dyads, but with weaker ties connecting them as evidenced by the distance between their nodes. This finding suggests that the hashtags (concepts and collaborations) are more focused in terms of the topics discussed and present less variation than the mentions (people and organisations). A possible explanation is that the concepts and collaborations referenced as hashtags by the audiences are more connected to the SMI than the people or organisations being talked about.

Figure 8.2 JAMES CHARLES' Mentions Communities

8.3.1.2　Network Size and Density

The network graphs obtained from the data SNA for all SMI's presented irregular shapes and in some cases overlapping nodes, which made their analysis difficult. To facilitate the analysis, the networks were categorised as small, medium and large. It was observed that most of the SMI networks were small, regardless of whether they were ego or socio-centric in shape. The SMI with the largest networks was MICHELLE PHAN, followed by JAMES CHARLES and ZOELLA, although the size of these networks was independent of the SMI's numbers of followers. Whereas the networks of terms ranged from small to large, most of the communities were small. Furthermore, the size of the ego-centric networks identified ranged across different sizes, while the socio-centric networks were primarily small.

Another important network characteristic is its density. The density of the links or edges found in a network is an indication of the connectivity of the nodes. The analysis of all networks indicated that the density of the connections of the modes was sparse. The main difference between the ego-centric and the socio-centric networks was the distance between the nodes, where in the socio-centric networks this was shorter than in ego-centric ones, which made these networks more cohesive. This observation adheres to definitions of dense and sparse networks found in academic literature, as dense networks are those where the nodes have a higher degree of connections than those, which are sparse (Kidd 2017; Ko et al. 2012; Lamberton and Stephen 2016). Hence, most of the networks of terms and communities analysed were categorised as sparse.

Figure 8.3 illustrates a sparse network identified in the community analysis of JEFFREE STAR's mentions. Only one main cluster is found in this network, which includes brands GUCCI (luxury brand) and REDBULL (energy drink), surrounded closely by dyads (duos) of SMI names, which included SHANE DAWSON (entertainment SMI), MANNY MUA and JAMES CHARLES.
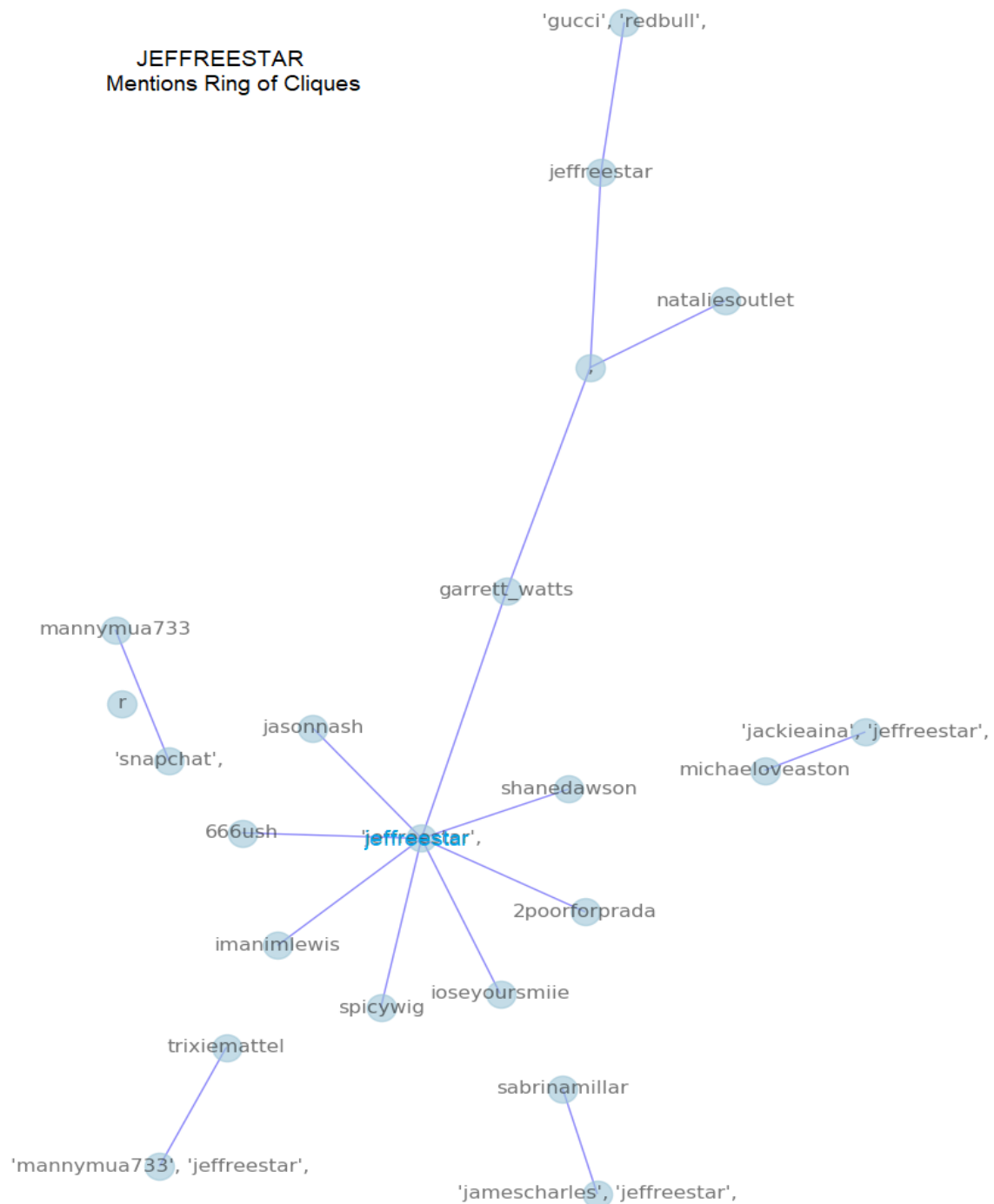
Figure 8.3 JEFFREE STAR's Mentions Communities

Both JAMES CHARLES and MICHELLE PHAN presented the densest networks, followed by ZOELLA. The graph for MICHELLE PHAN's hashtag community illustrates the closeness of the nodes within this network, hence, suggesting the presence of strong levels of shared social capital between SMIs, brands and audience members. This analysis revealed two main clusters, as shown in Figure 8.4. The terms "*love*", "*cruelty-free*", "*happy birthday*" and "*happy lunar year*" are prominent in cluster A, while cluster B mainly contains other SMI's names like MANNY MUA, JAMES CHARLES, JENNA MARBLES (comedic SMI), GLAM LIFE GURU

(beauty SMI), SHANE DAWSON, ALFIE DEYES (entertainment SMI and ZOELLA's partner) and BETHANY MOTA (comedic SMI). Furthermore, the short distance between these two clusters shows in addition to the presence of strong social capital, that these are closely related to MICHELLE PHAN.

Figure 8.4 MICHELLE PHAN's Hashtags Communities

8.3.2 Network Social Capital

The concept of social capital is associated with numerous interpersonal benefits for those who harness it. In particular, research has demonstrated that social capital can increase the power and influence of an individual (Claussen, Wacquant and Akçaoğlu 2017; Harvey et al. 2020; Tapp and Warren 2010).

While social capital is a construct that arises from the interactions between actors, the network perspective suggests that an individual's power and influence in a social setting arises from their relationships with others. However, unlike other forms of capital, social capital cannot be solely owned by an individual as it relies on the relationships with other actors to exist

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(Coleman 1988). The same issue applies to social networks, which cannot consist of just one isolated node. While theorists agree that social capital is generated by and through social networks, as social capital is inherent in the relationships between actors and institutions; they disagree about how it should be measured and analysed (Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; O'Connor 2017; Susarla, Oh and Tan 2016). These different views stem from the fact that social capital is a qualitative and intangible concept that is difficult to measure statistically (Font and McCabe 2017; Khan et al. 2017; Yoganarasimhan 2017). Therefore the characteristics of a social network help determine the reach and strength of an actor's power and influence, based on their social position, connections and the ties that bind them within a network (Agrawal and Kamakura 1995; Mathur and Rangan 1997; Ohanian 1990).

Most theories relating to the measurement of social capital refer to measures used in SNA as indicators of the levels of "*structural social capital*" (Bourdieu 1977; Godart and Galunic 2019; Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998). These include network size, density, centrality, betweenness, closeness, heterogeneity and homophily (Birkett et al. 2021; Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe 2007; Ngai et al. 2015). Thus, the flow of social capital depends on the structure of the network, which will also affect how much or how quickly, this social capital and influence are transferred (Delbaere, Michael and Phillips 2021; Main 2017; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013). To classify an SMI's network social capital from "*weak*" to "*strong*", this research used a combination of three measures. Firstly, the distance between the nodes was calculated based on their importance (network weight), secondly, the number of connections between the modes and the presence of disconnected nodes and thirdly, the number and size of the communities of practice. The selection of these measures was based on their use in Bourdieu's and CCT theories, which take account of both the individual level, from the strength of the social ties and the group level, from the characteristics of the clusters identified.

8.3.2.1   Strength of Social Capital and Ties

This section describes results concerning the strength of social ties and is based on the network of terms analysis for each SMI, where a short distance between nodes represents strong social capital and a greater one represents weak social capital.

The results revealed an equal distribution in the strength of the connections between mentions as weak and strong. It is not possible to assert that these connections had a neutral value, as the distance between nodes was either short or long and by no means consistent throughout

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the network. The noticeable difference in these distances can be attributed to the importance placed on the mentions themselves, as these represent users and organisations which can be viewed as either of interest to the SMI or as part of normal discussions. For example, close acquaintances of an SMI (such as other members of the beauty community with whom they frequently collaborate) and the brands that have contracted the SMI either as brand ambassadors or by partnering to produce a product line, are constantly being mentioned as part of the SMIs' promotional activities as it is in the SMIs best interest to publicise the content that relates to them and create strong linkages to them. Conversely, occasional conversations include various user and brand names that although relevant in the field, their presence in these conversations is not regarded as important and hence, the presence of weak links connecting these.

Alternatively, the strength of the connections between different themes and topics represented by hashtags was found to be weak as the nodes analysed were positioned at significant distance from each other. These tweets contained references that ranged from concepts, such as *#HAPPY* and *#LOVE*, to associations and products, such as *#MORHPEXJAMESCCHARLES* and *#LIFEISADRAG* palette. As expected, the emotional association of the audiences with these hashtags was lower than those for people (mentions), which suggests that these references did not resonate with the audiences. Consequently, their importance was low and the production of social capital resulting from these was limited.

There was a mixture of weak and strong mentions, however, it is not possible to say that these connections had a neutral value by cancelled themselves out, even though the distance between nodes tended to be either short or long, their length varied throughout the network. It was observed that stronger ties were shared between an SMI and either their own or a sponsoring brand, as well as with other members of the YouTube beauty community linked by a friendship, product collaboration or a quarrel. Conversely, a significant number of brands, celebrities and other important personalities with no direct links to the SMI mentioned exhibited weak links. This case was particularly true as brands not related to the field of beauty, such as Rolls-Royce and Honda (car manufactures), despite their worldwide recognition and prestige, exhibited a significant distance from the SMI.

Table 8.4 presents a summary of the strength of the social ties exhibited in each SMI's network, showing that on average the networks of terms indicated the presence of weak social capital, had a sparse distribution and were medium in size.

SMI	TYPE	DISTRIBUTION	DENSITY	SOCIAL CAPITAL	SIZE	CLUSTERS	LOOSE ELEMENTS
J. CHARLES	MIXED	MIXED	MIXED	WEAK	MEDIUM	1.5	MIXED
J. STAR	SOCIO-CENTRIC	DECENTRALISED	SPARSE	WEAK	SMALL	2	MIXED
M. MUA	MIXED	MIXED	SPARSE	WEAK	MEDIUM	1.5	NO
M. PHAN	MIXED	MIXED	DENSE	WEAK	LARGE	2	YES
N. TUTORIALS	EGO-CENTRIC	CENTRALISED	SPARSE	WEAK	SMALL	1	NO
ZOELLA	EGO-CENTRIC	CENTRALISED	MIXED	WEAK	MEDIUM	1.5	MIXED
Average	**EGO-CENTRIC**	**CENTRALISED**	**SPARSE**	**WEAK**	**MEDIUM**	**1.58**	**MIXED**

Table 8.4 Network of Terms Summary

Figure 8.5, which shows the analysis of JAMES CHARLES hashtags, is an example of an ego-centric (centralised) and sparse network with weak social ties and low overall levels of social capital. COVERGIRL is the only brand this SMI has endorsed that is directly linked to him. JAMES CHARLES was named this brand's first ever male ambassador (symbolic capital), a decision that played a significant role in changing long-established marketing practices of cosmetics being promoted exclusively by women. This case created a successful precedent that other cosmetic brands now follow. GRAYSON DOLAN and ETHAN DOLAN are situated close to the JAMES CHARLES' node, which means that there is a close relationship between these three SMIs. Conversely, nodes for the terms SHANE DAWSON, CRUELTY-FREE, HAPPY BIRTHDAY and HAPPY HALLOWEEN are further away, indicating that these present lower levels of social capital.

The term CRUELTY-FREE denotes ethical concerns regarding animal testing of beauty products, while the expressions HAPPY BIRTHDAY and HAPPY HALLOWEEN denote celebration and reciprocity. Next to the JAMES CHARLES' node is PULLIAM_SYDNEY, the audience member with the most favourites for all the tweets within the JAMES CHARLES dataset. This network is quite homogeneous and mainly consists of usernames and exhibits weak social capital as suggested by the long-distance separating its nodes.

Collaborations between SMIs is a popular practice used to increase followers, produce new content and strengthen fans' loyalty (Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard 2020; Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; Davide et al. 2022). While some of these connections reflect friendships and relationships developed by the SMIs themselves, others result from associations created by the audiences and involve other SMIs. The main associations from the analysis of terms are presented in Figure 8.6. The dashed lines in red connecting the different SMIs represent the presence of feuds between them. The dashed blue lines represent the closeness of their relationships where stronger shades of blue represent stronger relationships and weaker ones represent looser connections. The brands highlighted in red have been found to prominent in the number of mentions in different SMI's datasets.

From these graphs JAMES CHARLES, JEFFREE STAR and MANNY MUA can be seen to share several connections that apparently arise from their multiple collaborations. Interestingly, JAMES CHARLES and MICHELLE PHAN are part of the same cluster despite them not having a direct relationship with each other. This association suggests that the audiences identified a connection between these two SMIs despite them not having any direct links, which produced an "*involuntary*" exchange of their social and symbolic capital.
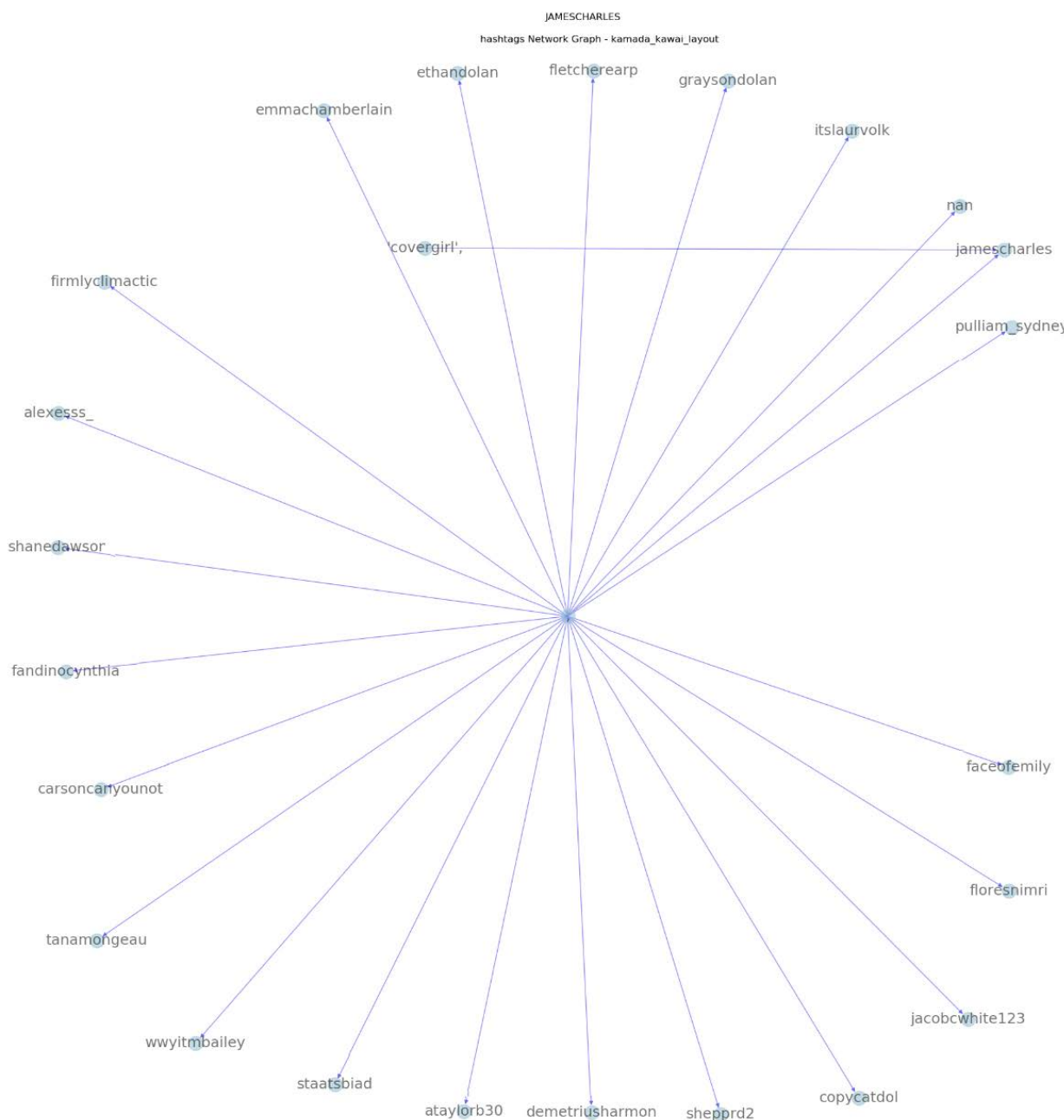
Figure 8.5 JAMES CHARLES' Hashtags Network
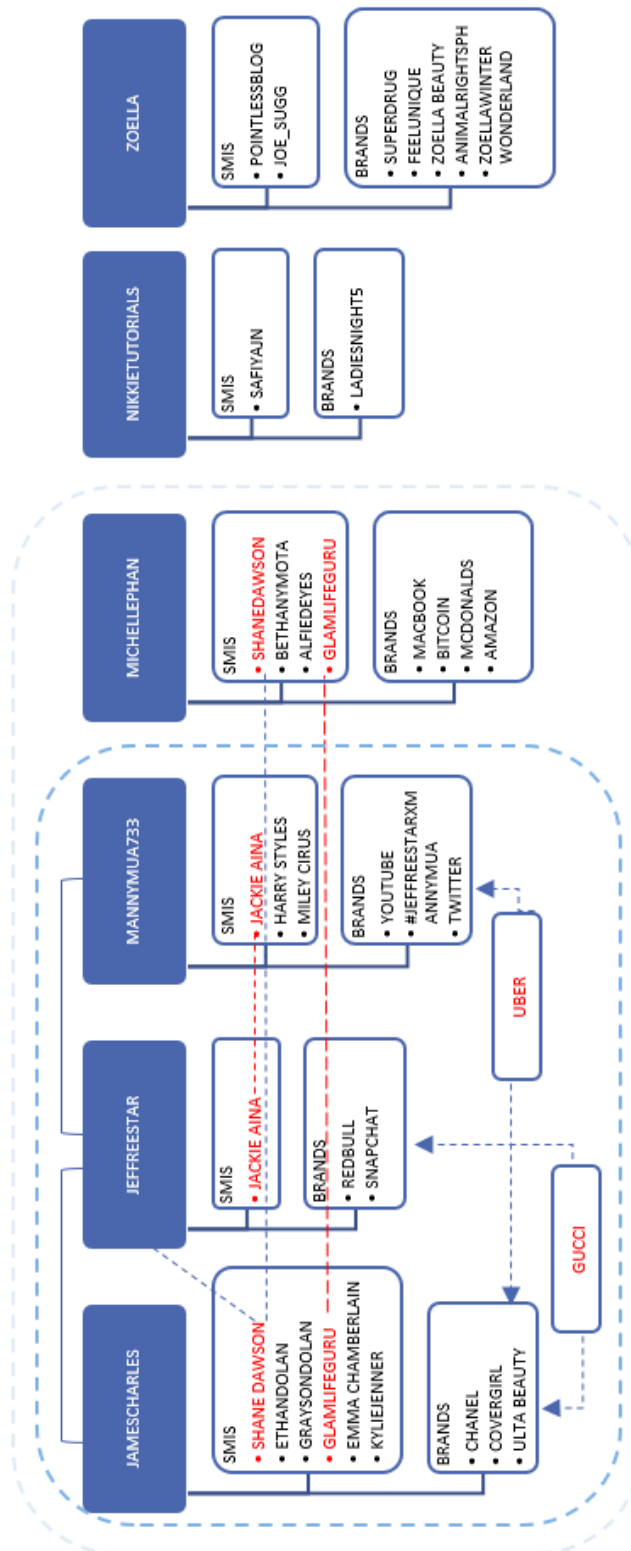
Figure 8.6 SMI−Brand Relationships Identified

8.3.2.2   Clusters and Communities of Practice

Online communities are "*specialised, non-geographically bound communities, based on a structured set of social relationships among users*" (Meek et al. 2019; Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; Villegas 2018), which have their norms, rules *habitus* and *doxa* (Drumwright and Kamal 2015; Lyke 2017; Muensit, Thongyou and Lapanunb 2019). In the case of this research, the communities are created around an SMI based on the interactions, emotional bonds and social capital shared with its audience. In these communities, audiences express their support, opinions, share information and display purchases and practices that have been incentivised by the SMI.

This section introduces the results found from analysing the clusters and communities for each SMI. Strong social capital was generally exhibited in the identified communities, as shown by their ties with each SMI. Table 8.5 summarises the main characteristics of these communities, which were mainly socio-centric in their typology. They presented sparse nodes (distant from each other), strong social capital and were limited to relatively small numbers of prominent nodes. The term and community detection analyses revealed that all networks were open, as none of the nodes created loops and were connected mainly by one link. In terms of density, these communities had mostly a sparse distribution and were small. On average, each network had between one and two clusters, which means that the network was not heavily fragmented. However, half of these networks presented disjointed dyads. The problem with this typology is that these networks have a limited number of pathways, which suggest that shared information or resources will not be equally distributed among all nodes (Bruns 2020; Cumbraos-Sánchez et al. 2019; Karami et al. 2020).

SMI	TYPE	DISTRIBUTION	DENSITY	SOCIAL CAPITAL	SIZE	CLUSTERS	LOOSE ELEMENTS
J. CHARLES	MIXED	MIXED	DENSE	STRONG	MEDIUM	2	MIXED
J. STAR	SOCIO-CENTRIC	DECENTRALISED	SPARSE	STRONG	SMALL	1.5	MIXED
M. MUA	SOCIO-CENTRIC	DECENTRALISED	SPARSE	STRONG	SMALL	2.5	NO
M. PHAN	SOCIO-CENTRIC	DECENTRALISED	DENSE	STRONG	LARGE	2.5	YES
N.TUTORIALS	SOCIO-CENTRIC	DECENTRALISED	SPARSE	STRONG	SMALL	1	NO
ZOELLA	MIXED	MIXED	DENSE	STRONG	MEDIUM	1.5	YES
Average	SOCIO-CENTRIC	DECENTRALISED	SPARSE	STRONG	SMALL	1.83	MIXED

Table 8.5 Summary of Community Detection Results

From the selected SMIs, only JAMES CHARLES and ZOELLA presented ego-centric communities as part of their hashtag analysis. From the community detection analysis conducted for JEFFREE STAR's hashtags, two main clusters can be distinguished (Figure 8.7). Cluster (A) is made up of terms that include SKIN FROST (a shade from JEFFREE STAR's makeup palette), CAN'T RELATE, PIZZA and #SHANEXJEFFREE (a hashtag related

to the makeup palette product collaboration between SHANE DAWSON and JEFFREE STAR). Cluster (B) is formed mainly by other SMI's names, such as SHANE DAWSON and beauty SMI MANNY MUA. This graph shows that most of the nodes within this cluster are within the same category and connect closely to each other, demonstrating cohesion within JEFFREE STAR's community and a strong social capital reflected in the short distance that separates its nodes.
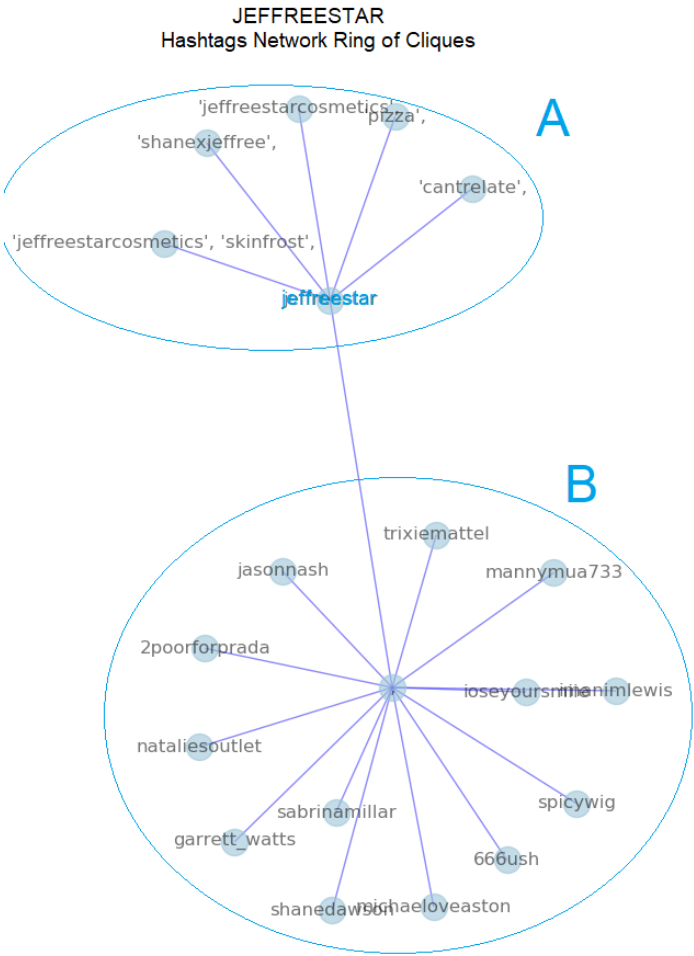
Figure 8.7 JEFFREE STAR's Hashtags Communities

Also, while the hashtag communities presented stronger connections and fewer loose elements than those for mentions, in the case of MICHELLE PHAN and ZOELLA, these presented multiple disconnected components for both their hashtags and mentions. For example, the network graph for ZOELLA's mentions (Figure 8.8) follows a socio-centric (distributed) shape, where the main cluster (cluster A) is formed around ZOELLA while a series of smaller ones form an outer shell around it. Cluster A contains a significant number of nodes that have closer (stronger) connections between them. These nodes are mainly made

up of audience member's names along with the screen name of animal protection group ANIMAL RIGHTS PH.

In this graph the smaller clusters have looser connections and contain a combination of ZOELLA related mentions and are associated with ZOZEEBO (another of ZOELLA's Twitter accounts), JOE SUGG (ZOELLA's brother) and multiple mentions of ALFIE DEYES (entertainment SMI and ZOELLA's partner) and his alternative screen name POINTLESS BLOG. The SMIs identified in this cluster have all collaborated with ZOELLA. They include comedic SMIs CASPAR LEE, MARCUS BUTLER, TYLER OAKLEY, TANYA BURR and references to INSTAGRAM and YOUTUBE (SNS frequently used by SMIs).

JAMES CHARLES and JEFFREE STAR, belong to a strong community due to the many shared connections and ties formed around their friendship and collaborations. A secondary community with weaker ties appears from the intersection of the JEFFREE STAR and MICHELLE PHAN communities. Given that these two SMIs do not have a direct link that connects them, this suggests that the audiences perceive an exchange of social and symbolic capital around these two SMIs, which draws them into the same community.

ZOELLA
Mentions Network Ring of Cliques
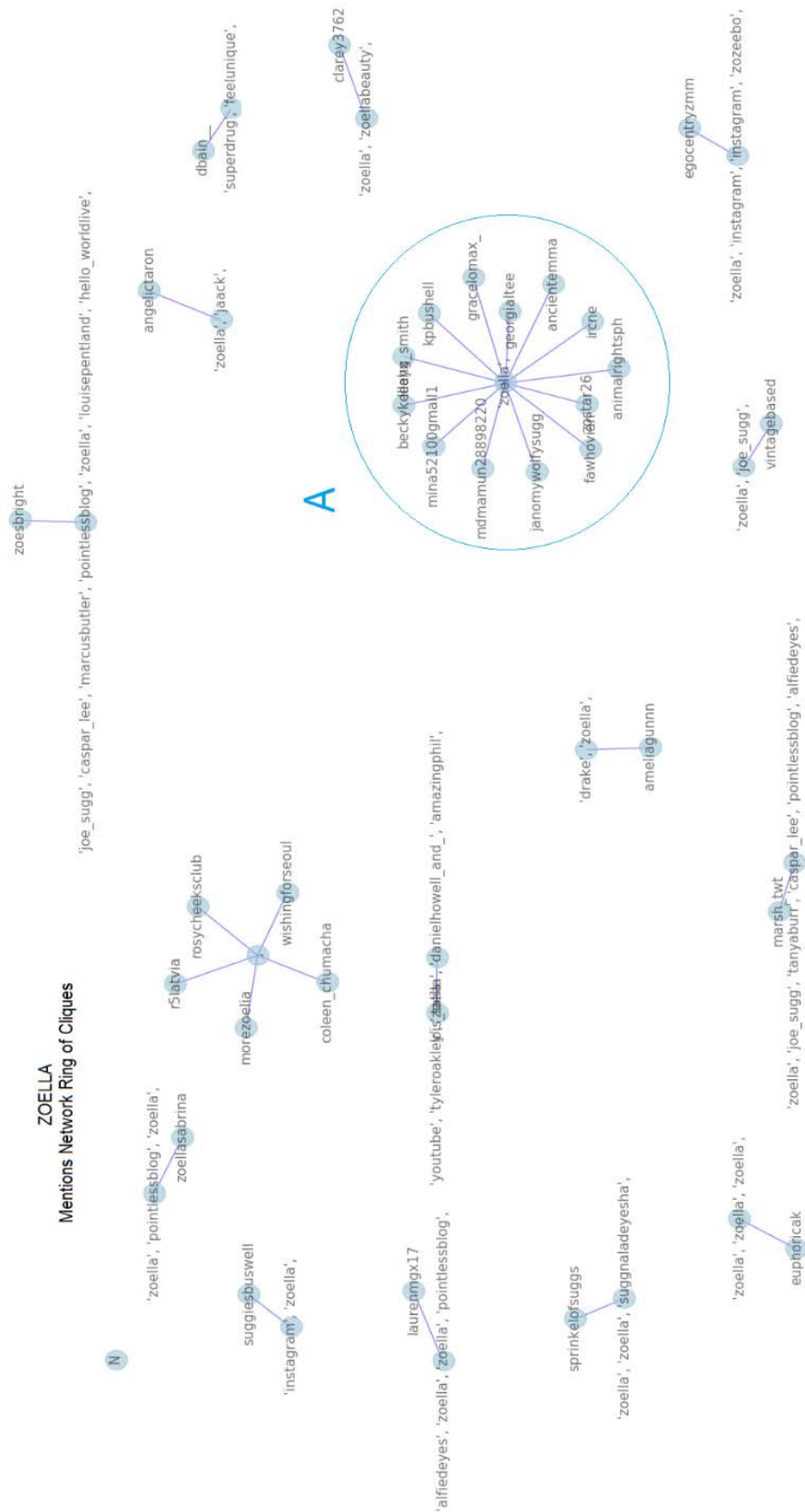
Figure 8.8 ZOELLA's Mentions Communities

8.3.3 Information Flow

SNA techniques are widely used to study the contents, dissemination patterns, reach of the interactions and relationships between the elements in a network. These techniques are to determine the flow and diffusion of information in a network, as this type of information is closely related to the flow of influence (Salman and Saives 2005; Todri, Adamopoulos and Andrews 2021; Upreti et al. 2021). For example, via the use of mentions and hashtags, SMIs and audiences can include direct references to users, concepts and brands contained in a tweet. This study proposes that these associations can be mapped in a network, revealing how these terms disseminate in the network along with their reach and if their sharing leads to the creation of groups, such as clusters or communities. As expected, the results from the analysis of the information flow revealed that the conversations taking place around beauty SMIs focussed on the topic of "*beauty*"; the sharing of information can lead audience members to create clusters and communities of practices within the SMI's network, which are mainly formed around the SMI and the brands associated with them.

SNA is extremely useful for understanding the associations found in the content shared by key network players. These findings demonstrate evidence of highly connected nodes that facilitate the flow of information as recognised in previous studies. These nodes facilitate transactions of social capital and influence in a network (Huszti, Dávid and Vajda 2013; Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; Simons et al. 2021). The results from the analysis of how the information flows in each of the SMIs' networks is presented in the following sections.

8.3.3.1   Main Topics

The results obtained reveal several brand names are recurrently mentioned. The following analysis shows that they do not always contain a positive message that brand sponsors are seeking. Only JAMES CHARLES and ZOELLA contained positive messages as part of their networks that were related to the field of beauty. Furthermore, this analysis also revealed the presence of brand names, relating mainly to fast food chains and drinks preferred by the SMI and that have no commercial ties with it. Although these are frequently mentioned, no evidence was found that indicate that their consumption increased in the SMIs audiences because of the SMI's predilection for them.

The JAMES CHARLES' dataset included mentions of brands JACLYN HILL COSMETICS, STARBUCKS (coffee house chain), CHANEL (luxury brand) and travel company UBER (see

Table 8.6). While these tweets do not promote JAMES CHARLES' products or brands, they demonstrate the presence of relationships with other SMIs and reveal how JAMES CHARLES is influencing purchases at STARBUCKS.

TERM	FAVS	RTS	TEXT
JACLYN HILL COSMETICS	22,680	514	I am so proud of @Jaclynhill for launching @jaclyncosmetics She literally inspired me to start playing with makeup & I would not be here if it were not for her. check out her line! http://jaclyncosmetics.com
STARBUCKS	65,613	5,808	I just witnessed a 40-year-old man with three kids ask the Starbucks cashier for a pinkity drinkity... James Charles impact
CHANEL UBER	37,368	1,404	I accidentally left a pair of $700 Chanel sunglasses that my amazing manager got me as a 3 million subscribers gift in an Uber today and I'm sad…

Table 8.6 Additional Topics for JAMES CHARLES

The tweets that contain references to luxury brand GUCCI and energy drink REDBULL have a significant number of favourites and retweets within the JEFFREE STAR dataset. Table 8.7 shows that GUCCI, besides referencing the luxury brand, is also being associated with the brand REDBULL within situations where the SMI is "*luxury shopping*".

TERM	FAVS	RTS	TEXT
GUCCI	34,476	3,882	Jeffree as Voldemort in a Gucci jacket... I'm DECEASED!!! @jeffreestar @glamandgore pic.twitter.com/t1qc0kLMOd
GUCCI REDBULL	56,202	1,011	I'm at @gucci right now shopping for winter clothes and I'm on my 2nd @redbull Hi Sunday, how are ya?

Table 8.7 Additional Topics for JEFFREE STAR

The top tweet for brand name UBER has a significant number of favourites and retweets within the MANNY MUA dataset but is unrelated to the brand itself (see Table 8.8).

TERM	FAVS	RTS	TEXT
UBER	15,894	406	Oh. My. Fuck. Uber driver - you just got a haircut huh? Me - haha yeah, I did (awkward giggle of course) Him - it's so hot out Me - yeah it is Him - we should go for a swim Me - .... hahaha...

Table 8.8 Additional Topics for MANNY MUA

The terms TARGET (American superstore), MACBOOK (Apple computer), AMAZON (online marketplace), MCDONALDS (fast food chain) and BITCOIN (cryptocurrency) have prominent importance for MICHELLE PHAN, as these tweets have a significant number of favourites and retweets. Table 8.9 shows that the content is unrelated to this SMI or the field of beauty.

TERM	FAVS	RTS	TEXT
TARGET	20,640	1164	I needed those mini pumpkins!!! @MichellePhan and I discovered everything we needed + more @target! Full episode here! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeYIl7S6l2s #targettalent pic.twitter.com/0X1K6JnQEH
MACBOOK	149,848	38,868	No more basic folders #MacBookPro16 pic.twitter.com/n3ZJSzfacC
BITCOIN	3,315	238	The devil works hard, but my bitcoin works harder. pic.twitter.com/kbZp7DhNqp
MCDONALDS AMAZON	4,103	1,497	McDonald's ordering kiosks, Amazon Go's cashier-less convenience store. An inevitable remedy to the $15 minimum wage. Eventually, most dispensable "jobs will be replaced by automation and machine learning technology.

Table 8.9 Additional Topics for MICHELLE PHAN

The top tweet that contains the brand name FEEL UNIQUE (online beauty retailer) has a significant number of favourites and retweets within the ZOELLA dataset. Table 8.10 shows that contrary to results from other SMIs, this tweet is specifically related to ZOELLA's beauty range #*JELLY&GELATO*.

TERM	FAVS	RTS	TEXT
FEELUNIQUE	5,625	426	Jelly and Gelato is LIVE! Find it online at @superdrug and @feelunique - and internationally from tomorrow! pic.twitter.com/b59zHfyMSq

Table 8.10 Additional Topics for ZOELLA

8.3.3.2   Identification of Influential Nodes

The analysis of the interactions, connections, position and reach of a node can help to determine the flow of influence and can help identify key nodes (central actors) within a given network (Duffy and Hund 2015). These nodes have different stages of influence depending on the situation and location (Chae and Ko 2016; Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Shen, Kuo and Ly 2017). The following section presents the SMIs whose strategic position (role) makes them "*influential*" network nodes.

This analysis shows that the tweets that reference these influential nodes are not necessarily positive. The top tweets that contained these negative comments had a significant number of favourites and retweets as presented in Table 8.11. This table illustrates that these tweets were not always positive, only MICHELLE PHAN and ZOELLA presented positive tweets.

SMI	TERM	FAVS	RTS	TEXT
JAMES CHARLES	ARIANA GRANDE	88K	7K	The end of thank u, next had me screaming oh my god @ArianaGrande really snapped.
	JACLYN HILL	49K	14.5K	IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: Manny MUA - cancelled Laura Lee - cancelled Gabriel Zamora - redeemable Jaclyn Hill - sketchy James Charles - sister shook Jeffree Star - happy and successful pic.twitter.com/2ZxW6T5VPK
	EMMA CHAMBERLAIN ETHAN DOLAN GRAYSON DOLAN	152K	20K	Why is this actually us @emmachamberlain @jamescharles @GraysonDolan pic.twitter.com/nwDSYYJrqm
JEFFREE STAR	JACKIE AINA	18K	8K	Jeffree Star tried to call this beautiful Black Queen, Jackie Aina, a rat. TRIED IT. Out here looking like Greta the Gremlin spit you out... pic.twitter.com/ld9HgI68rv
	JACKIE AINA	13K	5K	Does he realise that he just proved her right by essentially calling her broke? @jackieaina @JeffreeStar pic.twitter.com/nObDtvkHVB
MANNY MUA	JACKIE AINA	5K	393	This is called DIVERSITY and AUTHENTICITY in the beauty community. Don't @me about anything else. @ThomasBeautyy @jackieaina @MannyMua.
	HARRY STYLES	9K	1.2K	I think... Harry Styles is so fine.
MICHELLE PHAN	MANNY MUA	4.5K	531	I laughed way too fucking hard at this @MannyMua733 pic.twitter.com/EbPr9gEeFx
	JEFFREE STAR	4K	117	Congrats Jeffree! I remember your Myspace days. Observing your growth and work ethic has been incredibly inspiring. Cheers to this huge milestone and many more!
	BETHANY MOTA	3K	608	With @swooz1e supporting @bethanymota on #DWTS!! Go #youtubebethany #teaminternet http://instagram.com/p/tROqsxgGDy/

NIKKIE TUTORIALS	SAFIYA JN	2.4K	272	Watch @simplybenlogica and I guess the ending also I spy @safiyajn @nikkietuorials https://youtu.be/rr5emyqbziw.
ZOELLA	ALFIE DEYES	33K	5K	I work in a restaurant in Brighton, was one of Zoella and Alfie's favourites. Every time I served them; my manager would give them their meal for free. they never tipped. they are rude ass entitled tory millionaires.
	JOE SUGG	17K	1K	Working on something BIG with @Zoella and @Joe_Sugg!! Get ready.
	CASPAR LEE MARCUS BUTLER ALFIE DEYES TANYA BURR	8K	1.6K	Zoella beauty? Ending Joe Sugg? In love Jim and Tanya? Broken up Niomi and Marcus? Gone Joe and Byron? Moved out Joe and Caspar? Moved out Pointlessblog? Alfie Deyes Childhood? Ending Hotel? Trivago.

Table 8.11 Other Influential Users

Some of the influential users found within the JAMES CHARLES dataset included ARIANA GRANDE (singer), JACLYN HILL (beauty SMI), EMMMA CHAMBERLAIN (entertainment SMI), ETHAN DOLAN and GRAYSON DOLAN (SMI twin duo). One of the most prominent nodes in JEFFREE STAR's network was beauty SMI JACKIEAINA, as these tweets critiqued JEFFREE STAR's racist comments on the colour of her skin. The top tweets from the MANNY MUA dataset that accrued a significant number of favourites and retweets also included JACKIE AINA and singer HARRY STYLES. The names MANNY MUA, JEFFREE STAR and BETHANY MOTA had a significant presence in the MICHELLE PHAN dataset. Lastly, ALFIE DEYES, JOE SUGG, CASPAR LEE, MARCUS BUTLER, TYLER OAKLEY and TANYA BURR are SMIs that have not been present in previous ZOELLA analyses that have now emerged. Many of these names were not revealed by the textual analysis in Chapter 6 or the netnographic account found in Chapter 7.

JEFFREE STAR had the most references within the datasets of other SMIs. His name was prominent in both the network terms and community analysis, indicating his strong presence in these other networks. For all SMIs except JEFFREE STAR and JAMES CHARLES, while other SMIs and celebrity names were present, only a few brands were named. These references did not necessarily relate to collaborations between them, for example, ARIANA GRANDE is frequently named in the JAMES CHARLES dataset, but only because his audience was making fun of him for liking this singer.

Alternatively, JEFFREE STAR's dataset references REDBULL while MANNY MUA's references UBER not because they endorse these brands, but because they use them regularly. Furthermore, the most noticeable brands named across the different SMIs were platforms, such as YOUTUBE, TWITTER, INSTAGRAM and SNAPCHAT, which are dedicated to the formation of communities. The other brands mentioned were either the SMI's brand, important brands that they have worked with; or makeup outlets like ULTA BEAUTY, AMAZON, FEEL UNIQUE and SUPERDRUG (British pharmacy and beauty retailer). There were no references of other brands that had engaged an SMI for promotional activities. The

absence of words related to either the field of beauty (like "*makeup*" and "*buy*") as well as words that denoted reciprocity (like "*thanks*") is also noticeable. This situation was true for both the network of terms and community detection analysis.

8.4   Chapter Summary

This research identified several communities of practice across the SMI datasets. The presence of these communities is of great importance in this research, as academics have demonstrated that the social capital found in communities of practice leads to behavioural change (Azoulay 2003; Chan, Kennyk and Misra 1990; Felix and Borges 2014). Therefore this finding potentially links the social capital that originates with an individual (the SMI), to behavioural changes occurring within their audience. However, the SNA demonstrated that mentions and hashtags can be used to study an SMI's network and identify communities of practice and influential nodes. The analysis of these networks and clusters led to the identification of key players or prominent entities, not identified via traditional quantitative or qualitative analysis. Furthermore, the results revealed that both networks for hashtags and mentions comprised a combination of SMI and brand names, with the caution that these network's social capital found can differ from positive, as this research presented multiple examples where strong "*negative*" social capital was exhibited in the SMI's networks and communities, for example, when these are created around the feud between two SMIs.

The results also revealed that mentions of brand names outside the field of beauty or that were not directly being sponsored by the SMI's, such as the case of fast food chains, did not result in demonstration of changes in the habits, perceptions or purchases in the SMI's audience despite being frequently mentioned in the SMI's and audience's tweets.

This research also found that the number of communities is independent of the SMI's number of followers, the network's size, its density and the strength of the social capital. It was also observed that the hashtag networks did not contain disjointed components, while the mentions network did. The loose elements can be explained as a direct result of how hashtags and mentions relate to each other and not as a product of the social capital present within the network, where the topics and ideas being discussed (hashtags) are linked in a community if they are a member of it, whereas users and organisations (mentions) can be independent.

Contrary to academic relational theories of social capital (Cheng and Shiu 2020; Fiori, Antonucci and Cortina 2006; Jackson, Rogers and Zenou 2017), JEFFREE STAR and

MICHELLE PHAN are both nodes of a strong community, despite not having any associations besides being prominent beauty SMIs, while JEFFREE STAR and MANNY MUA were close friends at the time and collaborated to produce videos and makeup products.

In summary, the analysis has shown firstly, that the size of the networks and communities is independent of the SMI's number of followers and the number of clusters in an SMI's network is independent of the network's size, density and strength of the social capital. Secondly, ego-centric networks tend to be medium-sized, sparse and exhibit weak social capital while socio-centric networks tend to be small, slightly denser and exhibit strong social capital. Thirdly, ego-centric networks tend to have fewer disjointed nodes, while socio-centric networks tend to marginally have more disconnected elements. However, the presence of these is independent of the amount of social capital present within the network. Lastly, the researcher found that while SNA facilitates the analysis of social networks, visual inspection of the graphs from the analysis of large and complex networks requires several iterations to find the best-suited algorithm and parameters for the analysis. Often the researcher had to recreate the graphs as the size and clustering of the nodes did not allow the careful interpretation of the results, especially as the network contained numerous nodes.

9. DISCUSSION

9.1 Introduction

This chapter interprets the insights gained from the Twitter data analysis to conceptualise SMI−audience relationships and their influence on consumption behaviours and habits. It discusses and answers the research questions (RQs) and compares the findings with existing theory and literature. A Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) framework was optimal for developing knowledge under the theories of "*capitals, field and habitus*" of Pierre Bourdieu, which centre on the practices, hierarchies, clusters and symbolisms associated with the consumer and their environment (Luna-Cortés 2017; Muensit, Thongyou and Lapanunb 2019; Pai and Tsai 2016).

This study has focused on certain aspects of Bourdieu's social theories, namely; consumption, legitimisation and reproduction practices adopted by an audience because of an SMI's influence and accrued social, symbolic and cultural capital (Lareau 2015; Pernicka et al. 2021; Roling and Vieira 2014). Furthermore, CCT is used to analyse the relationships between actors as the main priority and individual views as secondary under a marketing scholastic view (Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; O'Connor 2017; Susarla, Oh and Tan 2016). Applying this understanding, the discussion considers actors individually, without considering the social context, unlike traditional social theory that prioritises the analysis of social groups (Langner, Hennigs and Wiedmann 2013; Otero, Volker and Rozer 2021; Sunikka-Blank, Galvin and Behar 2017). This chapter's sections discuss how the insights gained from the data analysis fill the gap in knowledge identified in Chapter 2, by focusing on how social capital was shared between an SMI and its audience. Hence, this knowledge helps answer the RQs proposed in Chapter 3:

- ► RQ.1: Who is an SMI and what are their characteristics?
- ► RQ.2: How and to what extent do SMIs influence their audiences?
- ► RQ.3: In what ways do SMIs create trust, authority and legitimacy?
- ► RQ.4: Under what circumstances are SMIs more influential?
- ► RQ.5: How can SMIs be effectively managed by brand owners?

The concepts of capitals, *habitus,* practices and consumption are created, nurtured and exhibited by SMIs and their respective social media (SM) audiences are discussed, as is their influence on buying preferences, customer loyalty and consumption habits. How SMIs

exchange the different forms of accrued capitals to solidify their positions as opinion leaders and gatekeepers is also explored. Lastly, the chapter addresses the methods used by SMIs to promote products and lead their audiences to consumption practices that become reproduced and institutionalised.

9.2   Creation and Exchange of Capitals

Bourdieu proposes that through a process of inculcation, personal investment and assimilation within the concept of *habitus,* an agent can create relationships in the field (Ahmad 2014; Claussen, Wacquant and Akçaoğlu 2017; Pernicka et al. 2021). Therefore how these capitals are acquired and applied will determine the reach and influence of an SMI, will help legitimise the SMI's actions and help reproduce the SMI's consumption habits within their audience.

The following discussion uses the theories described in the "*Ideological Toolkit*" presented in Table 2.6 of Chapter 2 to make sense of how the capitals are created, exhibited and exchanged between an SMI and its audience. This discussion will describe how the capitals flow, the types of communities formed around an SMI and the factors leading to strong social ties between them in terms of how these online relationships create social structures that lead to influence and consumption.

9.2.1 Relationships and Social Capital

This research confirms that SMIs use social capital to gain more followers, increase their reach and strengthen the influence of their messages in SM. As described in Chapter 2, SMIs create and nurture bonds with their audiences (Borgonovi, Andrieu and Subramanian 2021; Delbaere, Michael and Phillips 2021; Tóth et al. 2022). These messages are then used to promote products and brands as part of their activities in SM in accordance with marketing theories (Davies 2017; Galli and Müller-Stewens 2012; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020).

Theories about social capital indicate that the number of connections or "*friends*" found in SNS is an indicator of social capital levels. The results from this research indicate that this measure alone is not enough to quantify the amount of social capital shared between SMIs and their audiences. Additional measures of online social capital, such as the number of favourites and retweets, demonstrate a medium to low level of engagement, with 25.61% of tweets having favourites. In comparison, retweets had a low level of engagement, with only 6.73% of tweets

having been retweeted, evidencing that the level of social capital can vary greatly from one SMI to another, as does the way it is expressed. For example, JEFFREE STAR had the most references within the other SMIs' datasets, which indicates a strong presence in the tweets of his followers, with his audience exhibiting elevated levels of loyalty and purchases. Conversely, ZOELLA's audience was more interested in her videos and products, rather than any of her collaborations or sponsored third party brands.

The following sections will address which and how the different constructs of social capital are used by SMIs to create affective bonds and grow their audience.

9.2.1.1   Social Support and Reciprocity

Chapter 2 presented prominent social theories, indicating that one way to increase social capital is by providing access to social support (Oh, Chung and Labianca 2004; Pescosolido 1992; Soda, Mannucci and Burt 2021). For example, SMIs offer practical advice to empathise with their audiences and create emotional attachments, or when an SMI's friends and followers post about how supportive the SMI is, thus helping increase their positive perception and social capital. It is common for SMIs to use this practice to create agreement among their audience, to strengthen and grow their social capital. Consequently, audiences share these pieces of advice with their peers and comment about their positive feelings towards the SMI. For instance, SMIs share life tips and practical advice, demonstrating emotional concern for their audience. Several hashtags used demonstrated increased levels of emotional support from an SMI, such as *#INSPIRING*, *#PERSEVERANCE* and *#KEEPGOING*. Audiences use these hashtags to emphasise the level of support, engagement and social capital that they share with an SMI. The findings show that users have taken the extra time to add these hashtags, instead of just putting these words directly into the tweet. These actions are in line with social capital theories, suggesting that an agent, such as an SMI, can increase their social capital by providing support to others (Claussen, Wacquant and Akçaoğlu 2017; Farh, Hackett and Liang 2007; Giffin 1967).

Another common demonstration of social support between SMIs and audiences not previously described in the literature was the act of "*stanning*" (standing by) an SMI, regardless of how problematic or harmful that person might be. This action denotes a sense of commitment and support that goes beyond traditional behaviours exhibited by "*fans*" (Cambridge Dictionary 2020; Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2020; Urban Dictionary 2020). Consequently, audiences who frequently "*stan*" for an SMI exhibit higher than usual levels of attachment and social ties

with that SMI (Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; Delbaere, Michael and Phillips 2021; Huszti, Dávid and Vajda 2013). While positive examples of this behaviour include an SMI recognising and exhibiting support for fellow beauty influencers, the opposite can also be true, as shown by examples involving JEFFREE STAR (see sections 7.3.4 and 9.2.1.3).

As described in reciprocity scholarship (Pai and Arnott 2013; Pai and Tsai 2016; Wasko and Faraj 2005), both SMIs and audience members exhibit practices and observe rules when it comes to reciprocity. These parties constantly engage in demonstrations of reciprocity to gain or "*repay*" past endorsements, exhibitions of support or congratulations. Teaching others a skill or ability is one of the many ways used by people to create and grow their social capital, an activity that has been at the centre of SMI's videos. Thus, when an SMI acknowledges good makeup techniques from audience members, it helps validate what they have learned from that SMI. In return, audiences thank and compliment the SMI, which incrementally adds to their symbolic capital and solidifies their position in the field. This is demonstrated by the large number of tweets found to support the SMIs, which evidence their recognition, notoriety and distinction (Cunliffe and Karunanayake 2013; Davies 2017; Duffy and Hund 2015).

Audiences also use SM to display photos and videos of the products that they have purchased because of the interactions with the SMI. In return, SMIs acknowledge these purchases as a sign of reciprocity, an act that also helps increase their social capital by recognising those users and expressing their wishes that they enjoy their products. These types of behaviours were consistent with those reported in previous research that focused on reciprocal practices and requests online (Harvey et al. 2020; Krämer 2017; Pernicka et al. 2021). Another way in which SMIs exhibit reciprocity is using mentions. SMIs create circles of friends with whom they collaborate and who they frequently mention in their tweets. The positive effects gained from reciprocal behaviours are variable and depend on the circumstances surrounding these acts. Chapter 7 presented numerous cases where the transfer of social capital was not effective from one SMI to another and in extreme cases, these associations decreased an SMI's social capital. Such was the case when JAMES CHARLES endorsed vitamin brand SUGAR BEAR HAIR, which caused him to feud with fellow SMI Tati Westbrook (GLAM LIFE GURU). The effect this dispute caused a significant decrease in social capital is evidenced by the loss of over 3 million subscribers, the cancelling of his USA tour, products being returned, withdrawal of endorsements and the posting of criticisms and attacks against him.

9.2.1.2   Emotional and Whimsical Appeals

Previous research has identified that certain words, such as "*thank you"*, "*teaching*" and "*love*", are indicators of the presence of social capital, as indicated in marketing theories about emotional attachment (Bilro, Loureiro and Guerreiro 2019; Hahn and Lee 2014; Simons et al. 2021). These words were also frequently used in the content of the tweets analysed, where it was also observed that one of the main strategies used by SMIs to create bonds of intimacy with their audiences is by reminding their audience that they care and love them, or by sharing personal posts. For example, the word "*love*" is used to create positive feelings and attachment within their audiences, as SMIs frequently express their "*love*" for their audiences to nurture and strengthen the ties and social capital shared. It was also observed that because of the frequent use of these terms by the SMI, these words were also recurrently repeated by the audiences, suggestion the bonds evoked are strong and that these that helped create a devoted following.

Lastly, SMIs frequently feature their pets in their tweets and videos intending to create cute and funny content. These actions conform to theories of "*whimsical appeals*" as a way of creating an emotional attachment (Hudson et al. 2016; Khan et al. 2017; Libai et al. 2010).

9.2.1.3   Belonging and Sense of Community

The research demonstrated that SMIs are effective at creating a sense of belonging and community, as demonstrated in Chapters 7 and 8. SMIs and their audiences frequently express that they feel part of the SMI's community. Two main types of communities are evident, one for the SMIs and their followers and another for the most prominent SMIs in each field. This group of "*beauty gurus*" is known as the "*YouTube beauty community*", due to their large numbers of subscribers, constant creation of content and millions of views on this platform. These results evidence that the community's behaviour conform to academic theories about online brand communities as specialised, non-geographically bound groups, based on a structured set of social relationships, who in this case follow an SMI, among users (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001). The main difference when comparing an SMI community to other community types is that they centre on three main aspects: the SMI, their closest influential relationships and the brands that they either own or with which they have collaborated.

One strategy used by SMIs to create a sense of community with their audiences is using "*audience pet names*" to refer to their followers, as shown in Table 9.1. The results from this

research demonstrated that the sense of belonging was strong in the communities where the SMI used a "*pet name*" for the audience and even stronger when these "*pet names*" were used by the audience.

SMI	AUDIENCE PET NAME	IS THIS USED BY THE AUDIENCE?
JAMES CHARLES	SHISTER, SHISTAR, SISTER	YES
JEFFREE STAR	SISTER	YES
MANNY MUA	MANNIACS, SISTER	YES
MICHELLE PHAN	BUNNIES	NO
NIKKIE TUTORIALS	SISTER	YES
ZOELLA		

Table 9.1 Pet Name Use Between SMIs and Their Audiences

The inclusion of these "*pet names*" as part of the content shared can help increase the SMI's social capital by promoting emotional attachments, greater cohesion, loyalty and trust with audience members (Brownlie and Shaw 2018; Gonzalez, Camarero and Cabezudo 2021; Malär et al. 2011). All of these constructs support the presence of social capital and promote the presentation of strong feelings, such as love (Çetin et al. 2021; Kudeshia, Sikdar and Mittal 2016; Lampel and Bhalla 2007).

In this context and demonstrating the presence of social capital, the word sister is widely used as an indicator of strong social ties and bonding between an SMI and its audience. This term was used by the audience to invoke a strong sense of closeness, belonging and solidarity between users who do not share any social ties (besides following a certain SMI) and who do not even know each other in the physical world. While the word "*sisters*" has been used within communities that range from religious activities to staff roles in the medical field, JAMES CHARLES has popularised its use to refer to his followers, suggesting he sees them as part of his own family (Charles 2017). He has also coined the terms "*shister*" or "*shistar*" for this purpose (*Urban Dictionary* 2018). MANNY MUA also had a special name for his followers: "*manniacs*" or "*mannyacs*", while MICHELLE PHAN uses the term "*bunnies*". These terms are used by the SMIs to remind their audience of the "*love*" they feel towards them and to help create stronger emotional attachment and further social capital. Conversely, NIKKIE TUTORIALS has effectively created a community by nurturing her audience despite not using a "*pet names*" for her followers.

Communities formed around SMI−SMI interactions presented more cohesion and stronger bonds when these SMIs shared the same field of expertise, similarly to professional associations that create communities based on a shared occupation (Delbaere, Michael and Phillips 2021; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013; Meek et al. 2019). A common expression of the feeling of being part of these "*communities of experts*" is when an SMI recognise one of its

fellows' milestones, awards or significant events. These acts of acknowledgement create an important form of validation and recognition for the benefitted SMI, which also has positive consequences in the view of their audiences, who then favourite or retweet these acknowledgements.

9.2.1.4   Negative Social Capital, Engagement and Cancel Culture

A downside identified for the SMIs is that as public figures their actions are always under scrutiny from the public. The actions from an SMI that contradict the ethics or beliefs of their audience also generate "*negative social capital*" and can lead to the audience questioning their loyalty to the SMIs. One demonstration of negative social capital is when audiences engage in publicising negative content related to an SMI as a form of retaliation. This was particularly evident in situations where discriminatory, homophobic or racist comments were made by the male influencers (JAMES CHARLES, JEFFREE STAR and MANNY MUA). Such comments created considerable rejection in the audience, who condemned these remarks, and consequently the loss of favour from an SMI's audience members also had negative consequences for their associated brands. Similar reactions were observed for any brand that engaged in irresponsible or unethical practices, where the collective effect of the "*negative social capital*" generated in an SMI's audience can carry harmful consequences as it is "*negative engagement*".

A vivid example of this situation is when JEFFREE STAR exposed the unfair payment conditions of NIKKIE TUTORIALS' contract with brand TOO FACED; this opinion was supported by NIKKIE TUTORIALS as she commented on having made a "*bad deal*" as she felt "*let down*" by the brand and on how the quality of the products was lowered while still being attached to her name. The reaction from the audience was a call for consumers to boycott the brand:

> "*Girl @nikkietutorials I feel bad that @toofaced did not pay you what you were worth #boycotttoofaced I'm happy @shanedawson and @jeffreestar exposes this once again I'm sorry @toofaced did you wrong*" – NIKKIE TUTORIALS' Audience Member

This study found that the creation of negative social capital is not limited to condemning social views or practices, but also includes actions that are particular to the field of vlogging. For example, the act of "*stealing*" content ideas from another SMI generates negativity in the audience. Another action that is tied to negative practices and that can have serious consequences for an SMI is faking an apology, as a practice is widely condemned by

audiences. This research has demonstrated the many situations in which an SMI has had to apologise, which have evidenced that when an audience does not believe that an apology is genuine, they will voice their opinions on SM, unfollow the SMI and take actions to *"destroy"* any positive social capital created as evidenced in the scandals that involved JAMES CHARLES' abuse of power described in Chapter 7. These show the burdens and consequences of the "*cancel culture*" for SMIs and brands alike, as a phenomenon that could be described as a call for "*online lynching*" (Clark 2020; Ng 2020; Veil and Waymer 2021).

It was also observed that the absence of negative content does not assure that the social capital created is positive as demonstrated in the results obtained for MICHELLE PHAN. The tweets found in this SMI's dataset focused on bitcoin advice in addition to beauty and makeup. Although valuable information about how to trade cryptocurrencies was contained with them and how users relied on this SMI's expertise in this field was emphasised, these tweets lacked emotional content which could have helped form strong social bonds and increased her social capital with her audience. Furthermore, not all tagging of other SMIs is positive and not all "*negative*" social capital operates in the same way, as demonstrated by JEFFREE STAR's numerous feuds, racist comments and evidence of a Nazi past, his audience continuously supported and defended him. A possible reason for this support could be that compared with other SMIs, this audience exhibited the most satisfaction from an SMI's product line in terms of quality and pricing, which may allow users to disassociate him as a person, known for his flamboyant lifestyle and opinionated behaviour, from his makeup brand, JEFFREE STAR COSMETICS. Another example relates to JEFFREE STAR and JAMES CHARLES, as these SMIs gaining popularity from creating negative collaborative content related to the "*products that they disliked the most*", to expose unfairness as they see it and to comment on low quality or bad practices.

9.2.2 Cultural and Symbolic Capital

Academic literature has examined the importance of social capital as a form of economic and cultural capital (resources and assets that society considers valuable) that promote exchanges and social mobility, confer social status and ultimately, power and influence (Adler and Kwon 2002; Meek et al. 2019; Otero, Volker and Rozer 2021). However, a knowledge gap was identified in terms of how social capital is exchanged on SNS to create cultural and symbolic capital that allows a user to derive value and recognition from its relationships with others, as well as influencing their opinions and habits.

This research has presented novel evidence of these exchanges to address this knowledge gap, by carrying out a detailed netnography and longitudinal analysis. In the "*Bourdieusian*" classification, SMIs are part of the elite class as they recognise themselves as being endowed with importance, which is then reflected by their numbers of followers and brand associations. Cultural and symbolic capital are highly related because cultural capital is one of the main sources of status and position within the social field. SMIs benefit from having these two types of capital identified, through increased credibility and expertise in the eyes of their audiences (Cooper, Hamman and Weber 2020; Kareklas, Muehling and Weber 2015; Pornpitakpan 2004). The structures and hierarchies that structure the social groups in the physical world are also in digital environments, as evidenced by the clear differentiation between an SMI and their followers. The results revealed that most of the SMIs were referred to as "*artist*" and "*master*", indicating the presence of significant cultural capital. Furthermore, prominent SMIs displayed prominent levels of symbolic capital, as reflected in audiences calling them "*queen*", "*guru*" and "*goddess*". Being recognised by other influential members can further validate a person's symbolic capital.

One outcome is that managers who notice the popularity and distinction gained by SMIs, see their fame and prestige as potentially beneficial to their brands. By gaining brand endorsement contracts, the SMI can then become further legitimised as an authority in their respective field. Consequently, this recognition elevates their social status and position, marks them out as distinct and part of an exclusive, influential class, as described in Bourdieu's theories. An example is JEFFREE STAR, the SMI who achieved the most mentions of his name, brands and beauty-related terms from the other SMIs. This recognition suggests high levels of social, symbolic and cultural capital.

9.2.2.1   Distinction and Recognition

Academic and business literature has demonstrated that SMIs can create changes in the perceptions, tastes and consumption habits of their audiences, which are prompted by the distinction and authority acquired by the SMI (Janssen, Schouten and Croes 2022; Khan et al. 2017; Poor, Duhachek and Krishnan 2013). This finding shows the many ways in which an SMI can increase their distinction. Some of these methods were commonly used by the selected SMIs, often yielding positive results. For example, the SMIs incorporated some of the PR strategies used by celebrities, athletes and politicians to increase their noticeability and create favourable perceptions, such as being involved in charitable initiatives (Akpinar and Berger 2017; Kelly, Morgan and Coule 2014; Templeton 2021).

Another common practice for SMIs is to exhibit appreciation and recognition for their peers, especially towards the members of the beauty community who have gained the most YouTube views. Such behaviours are part of the SMIs' self-promotion activities, with the motivation strongly tied to status-seeking behaviours, altruism and reciprocity (Contestabile 2018; Sunikka-Blank, Galvin and Behar 2017; Zugravu-Soilita et al. 2021). These behaviours are often reciprocated, indicating the accrued symbolic capital of the SMI being recognised or praised, particularly when the compliment comes from a celebrity or another influential SMI. However, not all SMIs benefit from their philanthropic efforts or such actions.

The findings of this study suggest that, even more than "*traditional*" celebrities, SMIs are subject to constant public critique and scrutiny as their follower loyalty is highly tied to the audience's perception of them. It can also be said that it is more difficult for an SMI to restrict the information shared about them to solely that which supports the image that they want to portray publicly, a fact emphasised by the audience's ability to share content about then on SM with hardly any restrictions. Furthermore, as SMIs constantly share their lives online, and because of their popularity, it can be difficult for the audiences to set boundaries on what is public or private information and to the discern when does a judgement become a personal attack on the SMI:

"It's our job as social media influencers to share our lives with our followers and we really do love doing it but what we choose to share is our business and privacy needs to be respected… I don't understand how that is such a hard concept for people to grasp" – JAMESCHARLES

9.2.2.2   Collaborations and Brand Associations

SMIs collaborate with other SMIs and celebrities to increase their audience base, create interest from each other's audience and increase their status and recognition, which in turn has the effect of increasing their social and symbolic capital. Furthermore, these collaborations can originate from both the SMI's and the audience's initiative. This research has shown that it is a common practice for an SMI's audience to post about the collaborations they want the SMI to take on.

The main benefit from these collaborations for the SMIs is the creation of social capital from firstly, the association itself; secondly by showing the audience that their opinions are valued and thirdly by creating symbolic capital, as these associations have already been "*validated*"

by the audiences. Consequently, given that these associations have been approved by the parties involved, the opinions of the audiences who suggested them are also legitimised.

Another common practice is to create content by collaborating with other SMIs and mentioning the brands endorsed. SMIs use their associations with other SMIs to promote their message. By tagging the other SMIs, a message can easily be picked up by that SMI's respective audience. Hence, demonstrating that SMIs use the social capital gained from interpersonal collaborations to push the content promoted in their tweets.

Symbolic and social capital are intrinsically linked because symbolic capital originates in the recognition and authority of an agent in the field. This is endowed by the other agents and their collective agreement. A vivid example of how SMIs use their social and symbolic capital to benefit economically can be seen when SMIs launch collaborative makeup palettes. Such collaboration benefits two sets of audiences and increases the possibility of obtaining higher sales volumes and, therefore, economic gains. Hence, the practice of "*collaborating*" becomes a mechanism to grow personal capitals, increase awareness, expand their reach and ultimately, to further the economic return from an investment.

As shown in Chapter 7, an advantage to brands that are associated with SMIs is that if they promote a product in the SMI's field of expertise they are more likely to have a successful marketing campaign as demonstrated by the case of JAMES CHARLES and STARBUCKS and JEFFREE STAR and REDBULL. In some cases, the effectiveness of the strategy has been so effective that products have been sold out in a short time. Product manufacturers must be able to cope with demand, as frequent product shortages can result in a negative experience for buyers and its postings on SM.

9.3   Influence, Taste and Information Flow

For Bourdieu, social structures arise from the power exchanges and continuous tensions between agents that take place within a hierarchically stratified field. Therefore agents looking to move upwards in these structures are constantly exercising "*symbolic violence*", that is competing to gain prestige, increase their authority or grow the level of community involvement that they have accumulated (Abeer and Quiñonez 2015; Harvey et al. 2020; Schmitz, Witte and Gengnagel 2017).

Central to this research is the concept of *"recognition",* which Bourdieu defines as a manifestation of symbolic violence from the dominant to the subjugated, by creating feelings of indebtedness in the latter. The characteristics of the bonds created from such recognition compare to those present in people in love, including all the strengths and affective consequences, as the subjugated agent "*falls*" for the charm, charisma and prestige of the dominant party (Bourdieu 1998). The following sections will discuss relevant examples presented in this research, where audiences use words that denote recognition, authority, prestige and power to establish the social position of an SMI in the field. Once an SMI has achieved noticeability, it is common practice for brands to reach out and create partnerships or endorsement deals with them.

9.3.1 Taste and Information Flow

The practice of exercising aesthetic judgement helps an SMI validate their position as a *"gatekeeper"* in the beauty field and referring to Bourdieu's theories of the field, increase the accrued symbolic and cultural capital (Chernilo, Fine and Wacquant 2013; Collyer, Willis and Lewis 2017; Morello 2019). The findings show that beauty SMIs influence the taste, preferences, choices and consumption practices of their audiences. They do this via tutorials, endorsements, recommendations and online demonstrations. This observation indicates that symbolic and social capital are intrinsically linked, as symbolic capital originates in the recognition and authority of an agent in the field, which is endowed by the other agents and their collective agreement. Consequently, SMIs can be conceptualised as individuals who leverage their cultural capital by continuously exercising their function of judgement and taste and their symbolic capital by demonstrating their knowledge and expertise in the field (Sunikka-Blank, Galvin and Behar 2017; Warde 2014; Zugravu-Soilita et al. 2021).

Previous research has demonstrated that fashion and beauty SMIs differentiate themselves from others and gain recognition by practising and demonstrating their tastes and aesthetic judgement (Abidin 2016; Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Leban et al. 2020). The findings obtained in this research show the weight and influence of peer recommendations and online social actions, such as following, liking or sharing brand-related content, are regarded as coming from a trustworthy source (Janssen, Schouten and Croes 2022; Kudeshia, Sikdar and Mittal 2016; Naylor, Lamberton and West 2012). These digital interactions and purchasing practices can generate tribe-like behaviours where communal consumption practices, especially those made by brand "*insiders*", are greatly valued by the community members who are more likely to make purchases when influenced by peers, rather than by the brand itself

(Akpinar and Berger 2017; Aral and Walker 2011; Nerini, Matera and Stefanile 2014). There was evidence the product recommendations and tips shared by SMIs were regarded as a set of instructions or rules for their audiences to follow. Therefore SMIs who have the trust of their audiences and who share their opinions, make recommendations and provide product reviews, can influence the behaviours of their audiences.

More importantly, the capitals and distinction are accompanied by a third factor that is "*aesthetic capital*". This concept is an important link between the capitals gained by the SMI, the reproduction of consumption practices and the incorporation of new habits in the audiences (Anderson et al. 2010). Hence, the possession of "*aesthetic capital*" supports the position of the SMI as a "*gatekeeper*" in the beauty field, who is endowed with large numbers of connections and exerts control of the information flows and resources in the network (Abeer and Quiñonez 2015; Axsen, Orlebar and Skippon 2013; Leung, Gu and Palmatier 2022). Even though the selected SMIs are perceived as influential users in the field of beauty, due to their product knowledge, technical expertise and for their elaborate makeup creations, ZOELLA's audience disapproves of her being labelled a "*beauty*" SMI despite having several makeup lines. A possible explanation for this is that she was one of the earliest influencers who became famous from constantly sharing her tastes and presenting her most recent homeware and clothing "*hauls*" (purchases), making her focus *"lifestyle"* and *"shopping"* (O'Connor 2017). Tweets such as the one below, which is ranked within the top 20 most favourited tweets for ZOELLA, express this disapproval and shows that this SMI is not fully accepted as a "*tastemaker*" or "*gatekeeper*" in this field:

> *"Right not being funny but Zoella being nominated for a makeup award really annoys me, the amount of artists I follow on Instagram that create actual art on their eyes when there's people getting awards for some brown in the crease and shimmer on the lid ://"* – ZOELLA's Audience Member

9.3.2 Personal Influence and Social Power

For Bourdieu, stability of the social structures relies on constant domination from the higher classes using forms of innovating into new products, trends and areas, carving paths for the lower classes to follow to maintain their status, leadership and ultimately, control (Henry and Caldwell 2008; Ibrahim 2013; Pernicka et al. 2021).

One of the ways that online social capital can be observed is in its effect on brand selection (Amiraslani et al. 2021; Hashemy, Yousefi and Soodi 2016; Zugravu-Soilita et al. 2021). However, in the selected SMIs, the source of their power and influence is a combination of their social, symbolic and cultural capital. SMIs have been shown to leverage their influence and power through the ability to create relationships and respond to their audience; by sharing information and skills based on their expertise; by influencing them with their opinions and judgements based on their authority, which ultimately changes beliefs about the audiences' preferences and purchases (Colliander and Erlandsson 2015; Meek et al. 2019; Otero, Volker and Rozer 2021).

The importance of SMIs is such that consumers will base their decision to buy a product on a review by an SMI. The trust placed by audiences in JEFFREE STAR's reviews and expertise is so influential that followers will check if a product is "*JEFFREE STAR approved*" before making a purchase. In the following tweet, JEFFREE STAR and JAMES CHARLES collaborate in a video swapping and reviewing makeup palettes. However, as these two SMIs were reviewing products that carried their names, it became an advertisement for these, despite being framed as an "*independent and unbiased opinion*" geared towards maintaining the audience's best interest:

> "*RT to be the next video sister shoutout!! PALETTE SWAP ft. @JeffreeStar is now LIVE on my channel! Will the James Charles x Morphe Palette be Jeffree Star Approved? Will the Alien Palette be James Charles approved? Let's spill some tea*" – JAMESCHARLES

As "*gatekeepers*" and "*tastemakers*", SMIs control access to knowledge and power in the field, which determines the practices that are to be legitimised and reproduced (Collyer, Willis and Lewis 2017). Hence it is when an SMI reaches a state of "*iconic*" symbolic recognition that true class distinction and prime gains can be collected. Having this position can benefit SMIs in two main ways; firstly, it helps increase their symbolic capital and distinction by conferring social status and solidifying their position in the field and secondly, this recognition helps increase the SMI's influence and power to create consumption habits in their audience that are reproduced and popularised. This accrued recognition allows an SMI to gain economic capital from brands, in the form of endorsements or collaborations, that simultaneously challenges how traditional structures (such as established beauty brands) advertise and market their products to consumers (Cole 2011; Engholm and Hansen-Hansen 2014; Malsch and Gendron 2013).

This influence materialises in the form of consumption that results from the SMI recommending products to their audience, who then purchase these products and share on SM how they have followed the SMI's advice. In such cases, a genuine exchange of reciprocity and support between the SMI and the audiences was observed in situations where the audience perceived that these reviews were authentic and not a product of the SMI being paid by a brand to "*fake*" its opinions. Conversely, trust alone is not enough to change the behaviours of the audience as the frequency of comments referring to SMI "*product approval* suggests the presence of a hierarchy in terms of the audience's rating an SMI's trust, importance and expertise. Under a "*Bourdieusian*" view, the position of an SMI in this hierarchy determines which SMI's behaviours and views become "rules" for the audience to follow and implies that the views of an SMI at a higher position can override any verdicts about a product from an SMI found at a lower level. Figure 9.1 shows a user responding to MANNY MUA's request for feedback by saying: *"We all know the results if it's "JEFFREE STAR approved".* This comment suggests the presence of different levels of SMI trust and more importantly, indicates that the opinion of JEFFREE STAR is perceived as more valuable than MANNY MUA's.

Figure 9.1 MANNY MUA Palette Review – JEFFREE STAR Approved (Gutierrez 2018)

Thus, the results of this study challenge academic theories that propose that network size and diversity increase with social status (Birkett et al. 2021; Han, Caldwell and Ghadge 2020; Sarica, Luo and Wood 2020). To illustrate this point, MICHELLE PHAN's audience size of 0.9 million followers, is surpassed by that of other SMIs despite her having probably the highest social status from the selected SMI due to her longevity on YouTube, her many achievements and her net worth of $500 million (*Forbes* Magazine 2019a; Hanson 2019; Parker 2019). In

contrast, SMI who can be considered to have a much lower traditional "*social status*" due to having have been involved in countless feuds and scandals, such as JEFFREE STAR and JAMES CHARLES, present higher numbers of following. Conversely, despite JEFFREE STAR's recognition as the most popular person on Myspace and having 6.1 million followers, his net worth is around $70 million, which is much lower than MICHELLE PHAN's. As the same logic can be applied to JAMES CHARLES, who has 4.5 million followers and a net worth of $12 million, it is possible to say that an SMI's network size is not directly proportional to their social status or economic capital.

9.4   Behavioural Changes

Reproduction practices are known to be an important part of the process of creating "*new habits*" in the agents, which are replicated over and over again (Cole 2011; Engholm and Hansen-Hansen 2014; Vaara and Faÿ 2012). In line with previous research on virtual brand communities, an SMI's audience exhibits distinct levels of engagement. The most involved users demonstrated high levels of broadcasting activities and frequently expressed their support for their respective SMI and made frequent use of the SMI's "*audience pet names*". These users, who are dedicated fans who have invested time and effort in producing content, can be classed as what Kozinets defines as "*devotees*" (Kozinets 1999; Kozinets 2002) and Hine as "*evangelists*" (Hine 2000). As presented in Chapter 6, the analysis of the most engaged users revealed that only a fraction of users exhibit behaviours characteristics of "*devotees*" or "*evangelists*", such as tweeting and commenting from within the audience, however, when particular situations called for the audience to demonstrate their support (or disapproval) for an SMI that they followed, the numbers of engaged users increased beyond the normal levels of engaged audiences.

The quantitative analysis is a valuable source of information that quantifies the levels and extent of the relationship between each SMI and their audience. The findings indicate that the number of favourites and retweets should not be the sole indicator of the level of engagement, instead it should be accompanied by the total number of tweets related to the sponsored content the SMI has inspired. While favourites and retweets share a proportional relationship, brand-sponsored tweets exhibited a significantly lower value for these measures. Furthermore, it was not possible to identify any generalities that could be used to calculate the difference between favourites and retweets in ordinary and brand-sponsored tweets. The following section will cover how each SMI and their audience share their own set of *habitus*, practices and rules and how these are exhibited online.

9.4.1 Social Signals

Favourites and retweets are the most common measurable social signals found on a tweet. While academic theories refer to high numbers of favourites, retweets and comments of a tweet as a measure of the audience's level of engagement (Bowden and Mirzaei 2021; Contestabile 2018; Sood, Quintal and Phau 2022), the findings show that the most shared tweets were not beauty related as expected, instead, these referenced feuds, comical content or were personal in nature. The next category of tweets that received high numbers of favourites and retweets were contests and competitions, as users were required to favourite, retweet or follow the promoted brand to enter the draw. The use of this strategy raises questions about how much of the tweet engagement was gained from the SMI's influence and how much was from users who just wanted an opportunity to gain a prize. In terms of the tweets that mentioned products, the tweets that contained mentions of the SMI's own label received the most propagation, while the ones that mentioned other brands being sponsored by the SMI only gained a fraction of the exposure.

The results described in Chapter 6 revealed a clear linear correlation between favourites and retweets, where the number of favourites was always higher than the retweets, indicating that users are more likely to demonstrate their appreciation by favouriting a tweet, rather than retweeting. The lower number of retweets suggests that users are more discerning about the content they retweet, as the act of retweeting, understood as rebroadcasting, embeds the original tweet in the user's Twitter feed to highlight, support or criticising their content. A possible explanation is that users are aware of these messages become public to the world and associated with their digital identity and, therefore, the rebroadcasted tweets have been considered relevant enough to be shared across the network (Kedzior, Allen and Schroeder 2016; Kidd 2017; Kornum et al. 2015). Both the number of favourites and retweets are also much higher than the number of comments, which demonstrates that the levels of engagement are lower when the audience is required to make an active response, such as by typing a comment, instead of a simple click to favourite or retweet.

9.4.2 Habitus, Practices and Doxa

Habitus is a system of acquired dispositions that govern the principles of a person's actions, goals and constraints. Pierre Bourdieu considers this to be the "*sense of one's place... a sense of the other's place*". More importantly this concept denotes much more than just

"*habits*", as it guides a person's perceptions of social structures, beliefs and behaviours in the social world (Daenekindt and Roose 2011; Gulledge, Roscoe and Townley 2015; MacArthur et al. 2017). The importance of the concept of *habitus* in this research is that it helps identify the mechanisms that shape the actions of beliefs that both SMIs and audiences have of each other.

On SNS, both SMIs and audiences share their habits and routines, which can be perceived as either positive or negative. SMIs display their day-to-day habits to appeal to their audiences by sharing "*authentic*" and "*intimate*" aspects of their lives. In return, audience members post about their changing habits and routines after adopting these practices. This research shows that most audience comments regarding these changes in habits and practices referred to makeup styles, application techniques, brand opinions and purchasing practices.

An important part of an SMI's activities is forming routines with their audiences and keeping them engaged. A common practice for SMIs is to ask their audience for feedback, to demonstrate emotional investment in the shape of concern for the opinions of their audience. Examples of such requests include asking about the kind of content preferred, seeking their opinions about certain topics or asking with whom they would want to see the SMI collaborating. Conversely, routines are also established at the audience level, where for example, watching videos of their favourite SMI on YouTube becomes a habit.

Doxa are the rules governing a particular field rooted in its socio-cultural history, which are internalised by every agent and exhibited in the "*appropriateness*" of collectively agreed behaviours (Drumwright and Kamal 2015; Lyke 2017; Vaara and Faÿ 2012). This concept is particularly important to this research, as the *doxa* shapes the consumption practices, aesthetic tastes and emotional attachments that originate in the SMIs' audiences. More importantly, each field is governed by a unique *doxa*, so that while general societal rules govern the agents, the practices that result from the exchange of capitals and the agent's inherent *habitus* vary on a case-by-case basis.

The analysis of the tweets revealed that there is a noticeable and specific "*doxa"* inherent in the relationship between SMIs and their audience. Within the data, are numerous examples of SMIs setting up routines (whether made explicit or indirect) as part of messages to their audience. It was observed that these rules and practices shared between an SMI and their audience can range across topics from everyday clothing to rules to live by, demonstrating the existence of a *habitus* and *doxa* that is shared in the community formed around the SMI. Engaged audience members emulate certain roles in SNS, which include policing or making

sure that the SMI is treated with the respect that they deem appropriate. They do this by attacking or defending against negative tweets directed towards their respective SMIs. This behaviour demonstrates that self-moderating activities are carried out mainly by devoted members of these online communities. These evangelistic followers seek to protect their SMI and ensure that the rules of the community are followed, as evidenced in the netnographic account and aligned with the academic literature (Hughes, Swaminathan and Brooks 2019; Parrott, Danbury and Kanthavanich 2015; Yeh and Choi 2011).

"One of the pioneers that paved the way for this to happen has spoken. Please show so some respect to the MUA Goddess" – MICHELLEPHAN's Audience Member

Conversely, rule setting was found to be a reciprocal exchange, as audiences in return expect SMIs to follow rules, such as posting content on a set schedule or answering to the comments and questions posted online.

9.4.3 Consumption

The following sections discuss how the capitals, *habitus* and practices are displayed in SNS by SMIs and their effects on consumption practices that are then reproduced within their audiences. In general, SMIs are found to be effective in promoting consumption practices by "*pushing*" their audiences to buy, whether it be via the opinions they share in a product review, by collaborating with a brand, or by levering the diffusion of a brand-sponsored message (Ioanid, Militaru and Mihai 2015). The findings corroborate that not all of the SMI's messages share the same level of persuasion and influence as described in academic theories (King, Racherla and Bush 2014), providing further evidence to supporting that the presence of a strong subculture of consumption is one of the main factors affecting the buying behaviours of an SMI's audience (Bajde, Nøjgaard and Sommer 2019; Cova and Ezan 2010; Laroche et al. 2012). The tweets analysed evidence that beauty SMIs influence the tastes, choices and consumption practices of their audiences through tutorials, endorsements, recommendations and online demonstrations.

More importantly, this research has found that the most successful ways in which SMIs are influencing the audience's consumption habits are either by developing products in association with a brand or by developing products that boast the SMI's name. These products enjoy increased levels of sharing, quick acquisition, loyalty and advocacy than products promoted by an SMI developed by a third party brand. One example of that can help

illustrate the strength of the bonds created between JAMES CHARLES and his audience, is how this SMI and his followers use the term "*Sister*". This word is repetitively used by JAMES CHARLES to refer to his audience and by his followers to express the closeness of the connection that they feel with this SMI and with other members of his community. The use of this word also shows a strong presence of social capital and symbolic meaning, as suggested by JAMES CHARLES' choice to name one of the makeup palettes and brush sets developed with brand MORPHE BRUSHES "*The Sister Collection*" (pictured in Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2 #MORPHEXJAMESCHARLES "Sister" Collection (Shop and Box 2019)

SNS users take photos of themselves to display the purchases they have made because of an SMI's suggestions or of products that carry the SMI's names. These users seem proud of their consumption practices and want to show the SMI and the world how significant these purchases are for them. Through this behaviour, audience members are evidencing the social capital and connection that they feel with the SMI and their effectiveness in terms of promoting purchasing behaviours. These consumption practices, particularly those related to the SMI's products, evidence how social capital materialises in the connection that the audiences feel with the SMI when they have purchased their products. Hence, it is possible to assert that these expressions from the audience members are a direct result of the social capital shared between users and the SMI. In addition, the social capital that SMIs have with their audiences enable them to move to other fields of expertise related to the beauty category. For example, MICHELLE PHAN promotes her cosmetic products and is also a writer. Her book has been recognised as a "*must have*" guide for people interested in learning about beauty and makeup.

Another important factor in the success of products developed by or in collaboration with an SMI, can be traced back to their "*privileged*" position in the field. An SMI's role is essential to the information flow and exchange of knowledge within their network, which allows them to accumulate greater knowledge and experience of beauty products. As a result, SMIs are in a better position to transform this knowledge into innovative products (Salman and Saives

2005). For users who are devoted to the SMI, the release of a new product becomes a norm to be followed as they develop a "*need*" to purchase. This finding aligns with academic literature relating to how consumers look for "*social proof*" and "*justification*" to validate indulgent consumption and reduce conflict (Poor, Duhachek and Krishnan 2013; Sunikka-Blank, Galvin and Behar 2017; Warde 2014).

The results from this research help affirm the role of SMIs as effective opinion leaders whose influence can shape perceptions about a brand and lead to increased sales. This is achieved by identifying and assessing multiple examples that help support claims related to the effectiveness of SMI−brand associations (Dall'Asen 2017; Gomez 2019; Makeup Geek 2019). Many of these collaborations have sold out in a short time, for example, *#MORPHEXJAMESCHARLES,* the most popular hashtag for JAMES CHARLES, is used in the tweet below, in which a user makes clear that they decided to purchase a product from MORPHE BRUSHES for the sole reason that JAMES CHARLES collaborated with this brand:

"Just ordered the new @jamescharles palette! I am usually not a big fan of Morphe, but I want to sister support James! I can't wait to unleash my inner artist! So proud of you!!!!" – JAMESCHARLES' Audience Member

The SMIs are self-taught, therefore their authority does not come from their educational knowledge, instead, it comes from their experiences, sometimes gained through trial and error. This is a fact they highlight to their audiences, where for example, JEFFREE STAR's audience appreciates his "*good taste*" in selecting the colours chosen for the makeup palettes that bear his name. This exercise in "*aesthetic judgement*" increases his profile as a "*tastemake*r" and helps increase his sales and grow his customer satisfaction. The results obtained suggest that when a brand is associated with an SMI who is recognised as an authority for its "*taste*" choices and who also exhibits strong social, symbolic and cultural capital with its audience, this association can be a powerful source of sales. This finding is supported by the numerous tweets from the JAMES CHARLES dataset that have brand names associated with them, evidencing that the capitals shared with an SMI also permeate the associated brand. In many instances, these tweets thank brand MORPHE BRUSHES for collaborating with this SMI and express how these users' opinions of this brand have positively changed because of this collaboration.

However, another very important observation made was that when a brand does not recognise the priorities of the SMI's audiences in terms of products being "*cruelty-free*", "*vegan*", "*eco-friendly*" and so on, they can experience negative reactions from the audiences,

who in this case would make the influence of the SMI null in terms of generating purchases. Furthermore, this research revealed that in these cases, audiences blame the brand and not the SMI, unless the product is being marketed by the SMI's own label and, therefore, the audience may exhibit more leniency in their responses. This case is exemplified by this user comment from JAMES CHARLES' audience member:

"Thank God I never bought anything from @morphebrushes and because of this never will I only go for #crueltyfree brands if they stop this then maybe I will but until then them or any other non #crueltyfree brands will never get a single ounce of anything from me" – JAMES CHARLES' Audience Member

9.5 Chapter Summary

The previous discussion arose from critically comparing academic theories with the results obtained from this research to conceptualise the interactions between SMIs and their audiences taking place on Twitter. While previous studies of Twitter have mainly been quantitative, these do not answer "*why*" or "*how*" social capital and influence are created between an SMI and its audience. To address this knowledge gap, this research identified that the creation of the capitals is a two-way process involving the SMIs and their audiences and where engaged audiences not only consume and share their experiences about the products promoted by the SMI, but are also active in directing the SMI to new associations. In addition to the creation of social and symbolic capital, if the opinions of the audiences are validated and legitimised SMI, the resulting bonds between them are stronger and more durable, as shown in the support exhibited by JEFFREE STAR's audience regardless of his apparent racist views.

While the quantitative analysis showed a strong positive relationship between favourites and retweets in an almost perfect linear regression, the interactions of the SMIs on Twitter reveal the presence of "*positive*" social capital, as shown by the increased number of likes, retweets and followers observed when SMIs collaborated, tweeted positively or pushed for their audiences to take certain actions. This research has highlighted that the most viral tweets are those which are comical, personal in nature or feud related. These later ones relate to "*negative*" social capital evidenced when SMIs engaged in behaviours such as feuding or posting derogative, discriminative or insensitive comments. Unfortunately, many of these actions are backed by loyal audience members who "*stan*" behind an SMI no matter what.

The results presented in Chapter 6 reveal that most of the audience's tweets and retweets were authored by a few highly engaged users, where six users created 40.8% of all the content shared in each dataset. Also, the findings of this research show that audience members frequently refer to the SMI as "*guru*", "*queen*" and "*goddess*", to validate the high position and express the distinctiveness placed on an SMI. It was observed that devoted followers use these words to display their appreciation, support and engagement with the SMI. These users also frequently use SMIs' "*audience pet names*" to celebrate events, share information or show their endorsement. The use of these words has an ulterior motive, which is to create an enhanced emotional response to the SMI's messages, aiming to gain responses from their surrounding community.

Previous research has demonstrated that consumers who purchase products sponsored by SMIs do so for several reasons. Firstly, the promoted content resonates with them. Secondly, these users have a pre-existing relationship with the SMI and, therefore, they trust the opinion of the SMI enough to buy these "*recommended*" products; and thirdly, the recommendations of products and tips shared by an SMI become a set of instructions or rules for their most engaged users to follow (Agnihotri et al. 2016; Pret and Carter 2017; Wang et al. 2021). Therefore SMIs who enjoy having the trust of their audiences can influence the behaviours of the audiences by sharing their opinion, making recommendations and reviews. This influence materialises in the form of consumption that results from the SMI recommending products to their audience, who then purchase these products and share on SM how they have followed the advice given by the SMI. However, when it comes to products, it is the SMIs' brands that received the most growth, while the tweets that mentioned third party brands performed marginally. The other category of tweets that received noteworthy levels of favourites and retweets, related to contests and "*giveaways*", ones that require users to follow the SMI or associated brand.

Finally, reproduction practices are an important part of the process of creating "*new habits*" in the agents, which also are replicated over and over again (Cole 2011; Engholm and Hansen-Hansen 2014; Vaara and Faÿ 2012). As discussed in Chapter 2, SMIs and their audiences develop routines and display behaviours that reveal the strength of the relationships formed online. The results from the data analysis coincide with these theories, as relevant terms, such as "*how*", "*like*" and "*makeup*", were frequently used by the SMIs and their audiences. Terms such as "*queen*", were used to qualify the social position of an SMI and denote recognition, authority and prestige. This also demonstrates the presence of strong symbolic capital. Some of the other practices identified in the textual analysis include the frequent demonstration of appreciation and reciprocity. Another important practice involved audiences watching the

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SMIs' videos when they were posted. This practice has a higher priority than buying something that an SMI is promoting. However, this research also has presented evidence that suggests that the effect of the SMI's recommendation may not be as effective when the brands in question are not related to their field of expertise or when these are not being actively promoted by the SMI.

10. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

10.1 Introduction

The adoption and use of SNS have influenced the way brands communicate with consumers, who at the same time use SM to voice their opinions, promote consumption or showcase a specific lifestyle (Habibi, Laroche and Richard 2016; Jahn and Kunz 2012; Woisetschläger, Hartleb and Blut 2008). As presented in Chapter 2, this research sought to remedy the lack of systematic evidence and modelling of the relationship of social capital with trust, influence and behaviour by focusing on the interactions between the figure of the social media influencer (SMI) and their audiences on Twitter, under a marketing context. Under this understanding, this chapter discusses "*how*" and "*to what extent*" the knowledge gained from robustly examining over nine million tweets dating back to 2008, fulfil this research's aims and answer the proposed research questions (RQs) presented in Chapter 3. These questions were the following:

- ► RQ.1: Who is an SMI and what are their characteristics?
- ► RQ.2: How and to what extent do SMIs influence their audiences?
- ► RQ.3: In what ways do SMIs create trust, authority and legitimacy?
- ► RQ.4: Under what circumstances are SMIs more influential?
- ► RQ.5: How can SMIs be effectively managed by brand owners?

This chapter outlines the main findings of this research and compares them with relevant theories and previous studies. To answer these questions, the analysis of the observations made followed Bourdieu's views of the social world. Bourdieu's views can be understood as a game in which its governing logic has set out each role, which is subsequently enacted by each player (Bourdieu 1984). The immense value of Bourdieu's theories in the field of marketing makes them an ideal setting for the understanding of consumption (Bajde, Nøjgaard and Sommer 2019; Florin, Lubatkin and Schulze 2003; Prieto and Wang 2010).

As this research explored social interactions in SM, the resulting understanding is coloured by the different fields of knowledge and frameworks used to interpret them. Primarily, this study makes use of Consumer Culture Theory as the theoretical framework in which the social action of the SMI's and their audiences are explored under a sociological view (Askegaard and Linnet 2011; Bajde, Nøjgaard and Sommer 2019; Price 2018). Hence, the use of a "*Bourdieusian*" framework presented several advantages, such as providing the flexibility to

gain insights from numerous research instruments and methodologies from other disciplines such as information technology, mass media and sociology. This framework also considers all types of suitable data to be valuable, emphasising the importance of exercising critical judgement and setting a rigorous methodological data collection process (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Hayes 2020; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020). Another advantage of using this approach to sociological inquiry was it generated deep understanding that sits at the intersection of the different fields of knowledge, rather than abstracting from a single viewpoint (Bourdieu 1998; Schmitz, Witte and Gengnagel 2017; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020).

Hence, this chapter firstly presents an overview of the main insights gained from undertaking this research and critically discusses how the results of this study compared to existing scholarship. Secondly, it discusses the conclusions reached after a process of reflection that considered the creation of "*new*" academic knowledge resulting from the most important findings from this research and proposes a series of recommendations for marketers to use when selecting and working with SMIs. Thirdly, this chapter introduces a debate of the criticisms of an SMI's influence, followed by a description of the methodological advances made to complete this research. Finally, it discusses the limitations of this study and proposes future research directions.

10.2 Research Questions and Main Findings

In terms of the first research question, which looked at the characteristics of an SMI, the findings of this study correspond with the theories about opinion leaders and the characteristics exhibited by these individuals, as described in Chapter 2. For the investigation of the second research question, the findings of Chapter 7 explored at the features of the influence exerted by an SMI on their audience where a direct relationship between the amount of social capital possessed by an SMI and their influence was observed. The third question was primarily examined in Chapters 7 and 8, where the qualitative and social network analysis confirms the presence of symbolic capital in the forms of associations with other influential and brands. The fourth research question, which is related to the circumstances under which an SMI is most influential, vary depending on a case-by-case basis. However, SMI's whose audiences exhibited higher levels of engagement also presented higher levels of social capital and numbers of actions taken because of the SMI's influence. The fifth question is discussed in Chapter 9, where the implications of SMI−brand relationships are examined.

This research demonstrated how SMI's use their combined social, symbolic and cultural capital to gain followers, favourites, retweets and views in the order of millions. The results obtained from the analysis of the SMIs' effectiveness in promoting products other than those directly associated with their names revealed inconclusive results. This was demonstrated by the fact that only a fraction of their following was actively influenced to purchase third party brands when compared to the high volumes of sales and constant need for restocking the products that carried SMI−brand names or those that presented joint names of prominent SMIs. This research also evidenced different strategies that brands can use to gain benefits from their association with SMIs, which are comparable to those gained from celebrity endorsers.

In brief, this project's proposed RQs can be answered as:

RQ.1: Who is an SMI and what are their characteristics?

Today, the role of opinion leaders and SMIs is of vital importance to marketers, as these fulfil the need of guidance in consumers given the many choices available in today's market (Aral 2011; Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; Ki and Kim 2019).

As such, this research established that the figure of the SMI is one that not only has a significant number of followers, but also can create conversations, recognition and practices in thier network. As SMIs are perceived by consumers as a peer whose opinion is deemed valuable, their review of products is seemed embedded under a *"personal"* dimension that is perceived as genuine, and not bound to paid sponsorship as in the case of brand endorsers, advertisements or fashion publications. Thus an SMI must be perceived as authentic in the way that they present themselves, and genuine when they provide support for their followers and peers. SMIs utilise a wide range of strategies to create bonds with their audiences, whether it be via associations with other SMIs, celebrities, brands, iconic childhood figures or cartoon characters and pets. The use of these help SMIs strengthen the social capital with their audiences, who can connect at an emotional level based on cuteness or amusement.

The results revealed that it is a common practice for SMIs the use different types of appeal to strengthen the affective bonds with the audience, solidify their social position in the field, gain recognition and distinction, and lastly to increase their power and influence over their followers. For instance, SMIs collaborate with other SMIs and celebrities to expand their follower base, they create "*cute*" content to appeal to emotions while the creation of "*entertaining*" and "*shock-value*" content aimed to create virality and diffusion in the network,

even more than "*educational*" content. These practices are in line with marketing theories regarding *"whimsical cuteness"* that centre around cuteness as a way of appealing to consumers and that can create "*cuteness induced indulgent consumption*" (Keinan, Kivetz and Netzer 2016; Lieber-Milo 2021; Upreti et al. 2021).

RQ.2: How and to what extent do SMIs influence their audiences?

SMIs can influence the perception of their audiences, incite them to try new products and even mitigate the effect from negative brand experiences. The audience in return promote their positive experiences with the SMI and sponsored brands, especially when it comes to those followers who are most devoted. As discussed in Chapter 9, SMIs post their opinions, whether good or bad, about brands and products. In doing so, they shape the opinions and beliefs about these in their respective audiences.

The acceptance and demand of "*product reviews*" by the audience were strong for all SMIs, as followers "*consume*" content, try out looks and buy products that bear the SMI's name. However, audiences who exhibited high levels of social capital and frequent buying behaviours were more engaged in purchasing and exhibiting their use of the SMI promoted products than their counterpart. Conversely, the extent of the influence exerted by an SMI can diminish when consumers encounter poor quality in a product or unexpected high pricing. Under these circumstances, it was found that audiences, just as they have demonstrated their support for an SMI, quickly respond to negative experiences by publicising their discontent on SM.

Also, it was observed that popular tweets can take different forms, ranging from text to emojis, images and videos. This suggests that the format or media used in a tweet is independent of how influential its content is. Therefore the value of the messages shared on SNS lies in their meaning and not the "*shape*" used to present these. However, it is also possible to assert that not all the content that SMIs publicise is "*gold*", nor is it well received by the public, as the results obtained demonstrate a split in the sentiments related to content posted by SMIs. Finally, as discussed in Chapter 9, the fact that this research was set online did not pose any contradictions to the non-digital theories used as the theoretical framework for this research.

RQ.3: In what ways do SMIs create trust, authority and legitimacy?

SMIs are creating trust by increasing their social capital, via growing friendships, sharing personal content and "*being real*" in front of their audiences. SMIs are creating authority via

their symbolic capital, exercising the practice of creating tutorials, demonstrating their abilities online and displaying their knowledge about the topic at hand. SMI's create legitimacy via their symbolic capital by associating themselves with people who are much more recognised than they are (for example celebrities), by receiving industry awards and recognitions and lastly, by associating themselves with known brand names (de Veirman and Hudders 2020; Mathur and Rangan 1997; Mathys, Burmester and Clement 2016).

SMIs can also create social and symbolic capitals when they collaborate with another SMI or celebrity, as suggested by their audience, to create content, such as video tutorials, reviews and even products. Furthermore, audiences take an active role in directing the SMI to create collaborations with other SMI's or celebrities. By acting on these suggestions, the SMI grows their social capital in a way that has already been "*approved*" by the audiences. This popular practice has many benefits for the SMI, but most importantly, it evidences the importance of the audience's opinion which is legitimises when these collaborations materialise.

One of the most common ways to appeal is to create collaborative content with humour, as in general this type of content is shared rapidly online. Just as celebrity endorsers have done in the past, SMI's use their combined social, symbolic and cultural capital to gain followers, favourites, retweets and views in thousands or millions. SMIs use various appeals to create bonds with their audiences at different levels. Lastly, SMIs frequently feature in their content their pets. Mainly these tweets are either of a "*cute*" or "*humorous*" nature. The appeal of pets can help form deeper emotional bonds and increase the social capital shared between the SMI and its audience.

RQ.4: Under what circumstances are SMIs more influential?

For an SMI to maintain their level of influence, they must work on nurturing their audience, creating strong bonds and creating a strong sense of community within their network. Hence, SMIs are constantly working to engage their audience, looking for new partnerships, attending recognised events and working with other recognised SMIs to create new content and products (Delbaere, Michael and Phillips 2021; Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Leban et al. 2020).

Although the strength and type of influence of an SMI vary from one to another, the findings suggest that SMIs are most influential when the emotional connection and social capital shared are high. A popular technique used is the sharing of personal content and demonstrations of how "*vulnerable*" they can be, which is used to strengthen the empathy and

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identification of the audience by creating a relatable image and presenting themselves as "*ordinary people with regular problems*", just like their followers to enhance the authenticity of their persona. However, SMI's also display their lifestyle as decadent, filled with luxury and economic power, which elicits aspirational feelings in the audience and increase their symbolic capital. In extreme cases, they even destroy designer goods to prove their affluence. Consequently, engaged audience members who feel part of the community and heard by the SMI will have higher levels of social capital than those that lack these attributes.

This research has identified that users who share high levels of social capital and personal influence feel motivated to post content relating to their experiences with the SMI.". However, the results evidenced that the SMI's influence on their audience to take actions is low, as only a small fraction of the audience exhibited noticeable engagement. Furthermore, theories about the social capital state that the number of connections or "*friends*" in SNS are an indicator of the level of social capital (Simons et al. 2021; Utz and Muscanell 2015; Wasko and Faraj 2005). It was also observed that while the mention of a third party can help an SMI gain or decrease the capitals accumulated based on how appropriate the audience deems this association, engaged users and prominent (influential) users, such as celebrities, were not part of an SMI's following. Consequently, marketing practices that take the measure of the number of followers of an SMI as a signal for their relevancy (Delbaere, Michael and Phillips 2021; Feher 2021; Lampel and Bhalla 2007) should be revised.

RQ.5: How can SMIs be effectively managed by brand owners?

While there is no one-set of rules that applies to all brands, it is possible to assert firstly that when choosing an SMI, brands must look beyond likes and numbers of followers. SMIs, their followers and non-followers are constantly engaging in conversations and as demonstrated in this research, just as users can express their love and support, they can also express their disapproval and anger. As such, brand owners should monitor the types of the conversations that emerge around an SMI, the quality and strength of the social capital created with the audience, the characteristics of the network and communities created around them and the previous conduct of the SMI.

Secondly, a brand should look for SMIs based on the type of marketing campaign that they desire to undertake, as some SMIs are more effective in creating exposure, while others are better at changing opinions or promoting sales. It is highly improbable for a brand to find an SMI that provides a single solution for all their marketing dilemmas. Thirdly, brands need to be aware of other products that the SMI is promoting, whether it is because of a set contract or

because of their personal preferences or everyday use. For example, JEFFREE STAR has created in his conversations an association with luxury brand GUCCI and energy drinks REDBULL or for JAMES CHARLES, associating luxury brand CHANEL with UBER. These situations should be avoided as such associations could produce undesirable results.

Lastly, brands should consider stipulating a "*code of conduct*" in any contract signed with an SMI. The main reason for this recommendation is that most SMIs are young and can act foolishly, thus tarnishing the reputation of the brands that endorse them. This research revealed some of the most prominent feuds, scandals and "*dramas*" and the consequential rapid shift of the SMI's numbers of followers and their loyalty. Unfortunately, although brands should not suffer the consequences of an SMI's discriminatory or bigoted comments and behaviour, these types of accusations are frequent and, in most cases, carry long-lasting negative effects for the SMI. Furthermore, it was evidenced that these repercussions are not limited to the SMI, as any noticeable brand or organisation associated with them suffered from users quickly targeting, boycotting and campaigning against them.

Conversely, while the number of influenced followers that purchased third party brands was much lower than expected, these exhibited significantly higher levels of engagement and commitment to the SMI, which translated into repeated purchases and positive exhibitions of product use publicised in SM. Furthermore, just like consumers expect quality in the products endorsed by an SMI, the findings of this research strongly suggest that SMIs prefer working with brands that are transparent and ethical in their practices, are fair in the treatment of animals and that deliver on the claims made.

10.2.1   Model Testing

This research sought to identify unexplored knowledge concerning the SMI's influence, set in a mass-digital environment, on the consumption behaviour of their followers. A CCT (Consumer Culture Theory) framework was chosen to help answer the proposed RQs, as it provided a robust theoretical scholarship for investigating marketplace cultures, practices, relationships and socio-historical patterns of consumption (Askegaard and Linnet 2011; Bajde, Nøjgaard and Sommer 2019; Venkatesh and Peñaloza 2014).

The relational model proposed in Chapter 2 (Figure 10.1) was confirmed using a robust and multifaceted data analysis strategy framed under Bourdieu's rigorous approach to sociological inquiry (Shin 2013; Sklaveniti and Steyaert 2020; Woermann 2018). This research presented

substantive evidence that demonstrated how SMI's use their emotional bonds, recognition and expertise to influence the audience's consumption habits and institute practices that become popularised and replicated. It also demonstrated how the audience's *habitus* plays a key role in the acceptance or rejection of these practices and behaviours regardless of the strength of the social capital created between the SMI and the audience.
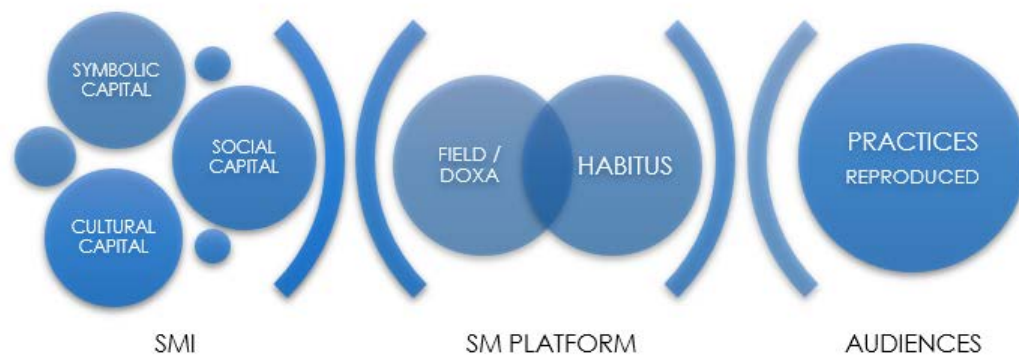
Figure 10.1 Confirmed Relational Model

The model's accuracy was asserted by firstly identifying a strong linear correlation between favourites and retweets, as signals of social capital. While previous studies have demonstrated the importance of "*liking*" or "*favouriting*" on SM, these had not addressed whether users had a preference between these two behaviours (Auxier and Anderson 2021; Belk 2018; Kudeshia, Sikdar and Mittal 2016). The results obtained demonstrated that in all cases, the number of favourites was greater or equal to the number of retweets. Several reasons explain this preference, one being that users exercise more caution when retweeting than favouriting, as this newly "*shared*" content becomes part of their own. Another reason is that at the time of writing, Twitter lacked a way for users to associate other types of reactions to a tweet. Therefore despite users feeling compelled to retweet, the absence of tools, such as YouTube's "*dislike*" button constrained the content's categorisation if different from "*favourite*". Ultimately, the previous reasons lead to the recommendation that retweets are a better-suited measure for evaluating the importance and spread of the SMI's messages, despite users being more prone to show their endorsement by "*liking*" content rather than "*re-sharing*".

Secondly, the textual analysis revealed that while the name of the SMI analysed was the most prominent word for each dataset, there was a high number of references to feelings, such as love, admiration, community, thankfulness and behaviours like consumption, reviewing and daily routines. The textual analysis also revealed the prominence of celebrities, other SMIs and brand names, which evidences the presence of emotions, distinction, bonds and the

resulting practices, in the field of beauty. The frequency of these terms helped assess the strength of the capitals in an SMI and the resulting practices and *habitus* in the audience.

Thirdly, the emoji analysis verified that the most frequently used ones were positive and related to laughter, hearts and "*smileys*". This finding evidences the creation of emotional connections between the SMI and their audience around the expression of love or infatuation, entertainment value and the knowledge gained from tutorials and product reviews. These emojis were not part of the content's main statistical distribution, suggesting that the extensiveness of the range of human sentiments represented by these instances, resulting in a thinly spread out distribution.

Fourthly, the SNA analysis revealed significant differences between the SMIs' networks. The ego-centric networks lacked the presence of influential nodes, such as celebrities, other SMIs and recognised brands. This finding suggests that ego-centric networks can be categorised as "*closed off*", as these exhibited stronger ties and social capital. However, their audiences were less influenced by the SMI and the information flow was focused and constricted, as users were less likely to participate in its diffusion. Conversely, the SMIs who had associations with high-profile celebrities or other prominent SMIs presented socio-centric networks, which included communities developed around them. Despite exhibiting weaker ties (social capital), these networks can be categorised as "*open*" given the presence of increased levels of SMI influence, the wider range of topics covered, the mention of brands and the widespread reach and flow of information. These observations coincide with differences found in the flow of information and the strength of ties in ego-centric and socio-centric configurations described in previous research (Han, Caldwell and Ghadge 2020; Huszti, Dávid and Vajda 2013; Knoke and Yang 2019).

10.3 Knowledge Contribution

While there are many axes along which SMIs may be studied, the present research focuses mainly on the likelihood of creating specific behavioural changes by merit of the social ties created with their audience and their effectiveness in promoting consumption practices.

As has been the case in numerous past studies, the knowledge gained from the present research spans across different academic fields. As this discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the main academic fields that structure this research are marketing, sociology and social network analysis. The importance of having undertaken interdisciplinary research is that the researcher

was able to achieve meaningful knowledge contributions that considered both the consumer and the social view of the SMI and their audiences on Twitter. The use of sociological theory and methodology in this researched proved to be essential in the scientific study of behaviours in social groups, as these were used to study the changes in relationships, attitudes and beliefs taking place around an SMI. Likewise, marketing theories were used to inform how these relationships operated in a consumer marketplace. These included self-congruity, customer engagement, source credibility, opinion leadership and trust theories, to help shape a holistic view of the customer's perspective.

The relevance of the theories presented in Figure 10.2 in an online environment was asserted with the validation of the conceptual model proposed to explain the social relationships between SMIs and their audiences on Twitter. More importantly, the results obtained established firstly, that the efficacy of the SMI's influence in promoting changes in consumption and habits depends on the levels of capitals shared with their audience. Secondly, that the extent of the adoption or rejection of these changes is moderated by the audience's *habitus* and *doxa.*

SOCIOLOGY
- FIELD, CLASS
- HABITUS, REPRODUCTION
- SOCIAL TIES, CAPITALS
- DISTICTION, POWER

MARKETING
- ENVIROMENT, STATUS
- HABITS, CONSUMPTION
- SHARING, SOCIAL POSITION
- LEADERSHIP, INFLUENCE

Figure 10.2 Areas of Scholarship Employed

However, current academic research has yet to the exchange of the diverse types of capitals taking place in SNS between SMIs and their audiences and what is the moderating effect of the audience's *habitus* in terms of accepting or rejecting consumptive behaviours promoted by the SMI. The present research fills this knowledge gap and provides business knowledge for marketing professionals to apply in terms of how to manage SMIs. This knowledge also seeks to cover limitations from previous research developed around how brands should best employ SMIs to help them reach their marketing goals, as these studies have not directly identified their effectiveness in changing opinions and shaping perceptions (Bayazıt, Durmuş and Yıldırım 2017; Godes and Mayzlin 2004; Ioanid, Militaru and Mihai 2015).

This research has demonstrated how the social capital created by an SMI affects the audience's *habitus* and *doxa*, as exhibited in their levels of engagement, loyalty, brand (or product) perceptions, adoption of practices and consumption behaviours that are legitimised and reproduced. Therefore the evidence provided in this research helps confirm the relational model proposed in Chapter 2, and provides valuable insight into the role of SMIs, how their influence over their audience is developed and how brands can benefit from associating with an SMI. A detailed description of these discoveries is presented in the following sections of this chapter.

10.3.1   SMI−Audience Relationships and Influence

Given that users on SNS are still people, even though their interactions are embedded in a digital environment, the gist of human nature is still coded, as in previous generations, despite the numerous technological advances enjoyed today (Laroche et al. 2012; Pedersen, Grønvad and Hvidtfeldt 2020; Simons et al. 2021). This is the reason why this study focuses on *"human beings and their behaviour"* taking place in digital spaces and not the other way around.

As recognised in previous research, SMIs are effective in growing their social capital by:

- ► Developing social contacts through growing friendships and associations, developing trusting relationships (Çetin et al. 2021; Meek et al. 2019; Sekhon et al. 2014).
- ► Participating through involvement in groups, membership of networks (Fan and Run 2016; Harris and Orth 2020; Simons et al. 2021).
- ► Bridging social capital through social interactions with people from different backgrounds; sharing information and skills; and changes in beliefs about one's choice of products, purchases and that of others (Behtoui 2016; Fu, Wu and Cho 2017; Pil and Leana 2009).
- ► Creating relationships and power by expressing opinions and through their ability to connect, respond and influence their audience (Ng 2020; Saiidi 2016; Shang, Wu and Sie 2017).

Hence, it is possible to assert that an insight gained as a result of undertaking this study, is the understanding that if SMIs lack any of the three main types of capitals proposed by Bourdieu (social, symbolic and cultural), they could face a position where their respective

audiences can question their authority and expertise, leading to their legitimacy being undermined. This concept can be applied in future research to other types of influencers, such as micro and nano influencers (Campbell and Farrell 2020; Main 2017; Wisenberg Brin 2018). The results from this research signpost the different ways in which SMI's are effectively creating social ties, shaping opinions and creating behavioural changes in their audiences. In brief, SMIs were found to be most effective in terms of their influence on their audiences when exhibiting and exercising:

- ► Distinction and recognition.
- ► Opinion leadership and information flow.
- ► Audience engagement and emotional bonds.
- ► Symbolic associations and consumption practices.

In addition, the present research also expands academic knowledge by incorporating a worldwide approach that contained over 40 countries as part of the audience's geolocations. The inclusion of such large number of data points from so many countries makes this research not only robust, but also supports the validity of the knowledge created in terms of generalisation. The inclusion of data emanating from numerous countries also supplements the understanding of the SMI as global persona whose influence is exerted across geolocations and customer segmentation. Hence, this research has contributed to creating a deeper understanding of the subject at hand and addresses the limitations of prior studies that mainly focused on certain countries, such as the US, UK and China (Hudson et al. 2016; Kim, Duffy and Thorson 2021; Vrontis et al. 2021).

10.3.1.1   The Capitals

The main contribution of this research is that it illustrated the main tactics used by SMIs to draws social, symbolic and cultural capital from their audiences. This research revealed that SMIs are effective in promoting consumption practices by "*pushing*" their audiences to buy, whether it be via the opinions they share in a product review or by collaborating with a brand. In addition, the capitals are used in conjunction with the SMI's influence to shape the opinions of the audience and create practices of product use that are constantly posted by the SMI's followers.

This research illustrated how the combined effect of an SMI can use their interactions and the capitals accrued to influence their audience by shaping opinions, promoting purchases,

legitimising practices and establishing consumption behaviour. As proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, an agent can create relationships with others who share the same field through a process of inculcation, personal investment and assimilation within the concept of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1986; Gambetti 2020; Pernicka et al. 2021). Furthermore, the findings from the present research demonstrate that the method used to acquire these capitals and their application determines the reach, influence and overall effectiveness of the SMI on promoting opinion changes and the "*reproduction*" of consumption habits within their audience.

Therefore, this research has extended the scope of academic theories that assert that social capital, like any other type of currency, can be exchanged for economic capital; in this case in the shape of brand support, and at the same time the investment that the SMI makes in the audiences is gained back as symbolic capital. Hence, it is when the SMI gains status and authority that true distinction as an opinion leader is achieved, and prime gains can be collected from the SMI's influence, trust and loyalty from their audience. Therefore SMIs look at audiences as resources and pursue their accumulation, which in return - after being nurtured and creating strong social ties and loyalty gained from the investment - promote the growth of the different types of capital, as these help to further strengthen the position and influence of the SMIs in their field.

10.3.1.1.1   Relationships and Social Capital

This study confirmed that SMIs do use social capital to gain more followers, increase their reach and strengthen the influence of their messages in SM. These messages are then used to promote products and brands as part of their activities in SM. On common practice is to create content collaborating with other SMIs and mentioning the brands endorsed:

> "*@CASSANDRAJOBETH @EMCOSMETICS @MICHELLEPHAN def need to get my hands on the lip balms too such beautiful colors*" – MICHELLEPHAN's Audience Member

Although it can be difficult to determine the motives, actions and norms under which a social group operates (Feher 2021; Scott et al. 2017; Templeton 2021), the SMI's social capital was categorised as positive and negative, to evaluate the influence exerted on their audience's consumption habits. Some of the practices identified in the textual analysis which support the identification of social capital shared between an SMI and their audience include the frequent demonstration of appreciation (by using words like "*love*") and reciprocity (with the use of words such as "*thanks*") in accordance to academic theories (Bourdieu 1973; Bourdieu 2001; Vaara and Faÿ 2012).

While SMIs who have large numbers of followers and social ties are more likely to have access to a large stock of social capital, the size of their network alone should not be viewed as a measure of it. This research revealed that other factors, such as user engagement, retweets, favourites, network typology and the sparsity of nodes, also play a significant role in quantifying social capita, which should not be ignored.

Another important signal of the presence of social capital is reciprocity (Harris and Orth 2020; Pai and Arnott 2013; Wasko and Faraj 2005), which is used by SMIs and their audiences as part of the exchange of this capital. It is demonstrated in positive posts about a person, endorsing their content, exhibiting the purchase of SMI products and thanking back when any of these actions take place. SMIs also create social capital when they "*open up*" to their followers and discuss personal situations and posting about candid moments in their life. Feelings of empathy are created in the audience, who reciprocates this action by creating emotional bonds. In the same way as any personal relationship, an SMI apologises after an incident hoping to gain back the favour of its audience.

Audience approval is crucial for SMIs as evidenced by the SMI's constant engagement in opinion seeking behaviour, in such cases the SMI would constantly ask its audience what they think about the content posted, what should the SMI do next and with whom should they collaborate. This finding can be considered a derivate of the social capital and trust built between an SMI and their audience. However, unlike previous academic studies that look into trust as a way for a user to create social capital and build relationships that originate from the SMI towards their audiences (Amiraslani et al. 2021; Daghar, Alinaghian and Turner 2020; Eiteneyer, Bendig and Brettel 2019), the present research reveals how an SMI can also gain additional social capital and trust from their audience not by exercising their authority and expertise, but by exploiting their own "*humanity*" and "*ordinariness*" online.

This finding presents an important point of differentiation between celebrities and SMIs that should be considered by brands, as not only is the SMI's knowledge, authority and expertise "*self-made*", but also, the path that they have followed to become famous has been paved by their direct interaction with their followers, the exploitation of their personality, charisma and their sharing of their everyday life, which lead to the creation of social capital. The results demonstrated that SMI activities vary greatly from those of traditional celebrities such as actors, singers or athletes, as SMI's focus on the creation of tutorials, product reviews, sharing of their day-to-day life and creation of entertainment content on an independent basis. These circumstances make SMIs a unique case in terms of their use as part of a marketing

campaign and while it can be said that there are similarities shared between these and celebrities, such as possession symbolic and cultural capital, the role of these two types of personas should not be confused.

10.3.1.1.2 Negative Social Capital

Negative social capital, as in when the audience deems that the SMI is acting in a wrong way, can be exhibited in several ways, such as by users unfollowing the SMI or returning their products as a form of punishment. This behaviour arises when actions, such as tweeting about feuds with other SMIs or seemingly racists, homophobic or insensitive comments are shared. However, an important observation is that the results obtained suggest that audiences can forgive (with "*more or less*" ease) discriminatory opinions expressed by the SMI depending on the amount of social capital shared.

This research has established that the social capital shared in SNS is erratic and fluid. The fact that JAMES CHARLES lost one million YouTube subscribers in just 24 hours and over 3.2 million over a single week is evidence of the audiences' fluid and sometimes punitive nature. In contrast, it took JAMES CHARLES 11 years (starting in 2008) to gain this many followers via more "*positive*" ways of social capital. Based on the results of the different types of analysis in this research, it is concluded that "*negative*" social capital or social capital associated with negative events can travel faster and spread more than "*positive*" ones.

SMIs can additionally create social capital through "*meet and greet*" events and going on tour as traditional celebrities do. However, as shown, these types of activities can create negative social capital if the SMI is late or behaves in a way that is not expected by the audience. This fact, in addition to the previously mentioned punitive actions that audiences can exert on SMIs by unfollowing them, gives evidence of the audience's rules of acceptability (*doxa*) and how capitals are gained or lost, as described in Bourdieu's theories of capital exchange (Amiraslani et al. 2021; Eiteneyer, Bendig and Brettel 2019; Ferragina and Arrigoni 2017).

10.3.1.2 Distinction and Recognition

SM has allowed for ordinary people to gain access to reach mass audiences, an access that was before limited to high-profile personalities. As examined in Chapter 2, the presence of fashion bloggers being at the front row of these distinctive fashion runways provoked criticisms, as several editors from fashion magazine giant *Vogue* expressed their opposition

on the basis that influencers are self-made celebrities, who lack expertise or merit to make them otherwise worthy of holding such seats (Duffy and Hund 2015; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013). While there is ample academic literature concerning the role that celebrities have in the marketing landscape and how their influence can be harnesses by brands as part of their advertising strategy, this knowledge is limited when it comes to SMIs, as well as knowledge on how they bond with their audiences, operate and how best to incorporate them as part of a firm's marketing strategy.

It is important to highlight that there was no evidence found in this research to suggest that age, lack of formal education or industry endowment were a barrier to the number of followers and extent of the SMI's influence. On the contrary, it suggests that audiences may feel more affinity with influencers who are around their own age (as evidenced in the images on themselves shared with the SMI) and because the SMI's position and knowledge is *"self-made",* their opinions tend to be considered as unbiased and "*not tainted*" by traditional media or marketing roles.

This finding presents an important point of differentiation between celebrities and SMIs that should be considered by brands, as not only is the SMI's knowledge, authority and expertise "*self-made*", but also the path that they have followed to become famous has been paved by their direct interaction with their followers, the exploitation of their personality, charisma and their sharing of their everyday life, which lead to the creation of social capital. The results demonstrated that SMI activities vary greatly from those of traditional celebrities such as actors, singers or athletes, as SMI's focus on the creation of tutorials, product reviews, sharing of their day-to-day life and creation of entertainment content on an independent basis. These circumstances make SMIs a unique case in terms of their use as part of a marketing campaign and while it can be said that there are similarities shared between these and celebrities, such as possession symbolic and cultural capital, the role of these two types of personas should not be confused.

10.3.1.3   Personal Influence and Social Power

From the "*Bourdieusian*" perspective, authority is nothing other than "*credit*" with a set of agents (connections) whose value is proportionate to the credit they command themselves (Bourdieu and Nice 1980; Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; Yoganarasimhan 2017). Based on this definition, the present research identified that SMIs mainly grow their following by associating themselves with other prominent SMIs more than by brand associations.

Although SMI−brand and SMI−SMI product associations can be effective, audiences who find incongruences in these may not be as influenced despite the amount of social capital shared by the parties in question. Hence, even though the influence of an SMI is increased the social capital they have accrued with their audience, the presence of inconsistencies can decrease the amount of social capital exchanged. Hence supporting the knowledge that the transfer of social capital between SMI's audiences is not a straightforward process. Just because prominent SMIs collaborate, this does not mean that this effort will be successful if audiences find incongruences in the association.

Furthermore, the main difference found in each SMI's exertion of their influence was in terms of the effects obtained from it. The results from this research evidenced that some SMIs are better at changing opinions or creating engagement, while others are more efficient at promoting action and purchases. Consequently, the amount and type of social capital transferred from one SMI to another one or a brand can differ greatly in the eyes of the audience. It was also observed that the transfer of the SMI's social capital from the SMI to other important topics and brand collaborations was low, indicating that these topics and associations were not deemed of importance by the audience. The only cases when these proved to have an effective transfer of social capital were those that involved the SMI in question. These findings help corroborate the relational model tested in this research, as this exchange will depend on the recipients' capitals as well as the agent's *habitus* and *doxa* in that field.

10.3.1.3.1   Opinion Leadership

The analysis of the frequency of behaviours, such as tweeting, retweeting and favouriting provided insight into the audience's engagement levels. Assuming that the process of favouriting and retweeting is identical (requiring only one click), the results from this analysis demonstrated that the volume of tweets, favourites and retweets was determined by distinctive events rather than by the SMI's number of followers. In addition to the low levels of engagement exhibited by the audiences, the tweets that had been favourited or retweeted the most belonged to authors who were not part of the SMIs' followers.

The quantitative analysis revealed firstly that the values for favourites and retweets ranged from zero to millions, with a central tendency of zero, and that the number of favourites was significantly higher than the retweets. These results suggest that the difference in the number of favourites versus retweets can be used as an indicator of the audience's level of resonance with the content posted. For example, a tweet where the number of favourites is close to the

number of retweets indicates that the audiences agree with the content of the tweet and deem the sharing of it as an important action. Conversely, a tweet that has a high number of favourites, but a low number of retweets, indicates that even though the audiences like the content of the tweet, they do not see its sharing as important, appropriate or necessary.

Secondly, most of the favourites and retweets were authored by the SMIs or by users who were not part of their following. This finding denotes that engaged users may not necessarily be part of an SMI's following. Thirdly, while favourites and retweets are signals of the presence of social capital, these behaviours may not always be related to positive content. For example, users on Twitter may favour negative tweets, feeling that they reflect their position or opinions about criticisms, disagreements or accusations. Therefore the data analysed should be discussed in terms of the moment in time and context where it happened.

Thirdly, it was possible to conclude from the sentiment analysis that content of the tweets had a positive polarity. However, while such contextualisation facilitates the analysis of tweets, the results revealed that these cannot be categorised as being completely positive or negative, nor are they completely positive or subjective in the sentiment analysis. This finding suggests the lack of consensus from the audience in terms of the role of the SMI as a positive (or negative) opinion leader, as well as indicating that the trust in SMI is fluid and, therefore, cannot be established that the audiences perceive them as credible sources of information. This analysis also indicated that the text was primarily subjective, therefore, it is not possible to corroborate that they have a high value as impartial opinion-makers, but rather, that the audience's perception of them as reliable reviewers and experts in their field is based on the skills demonstrated in their tutorials and on the strength of the emotional ties, fan loyalty and sense of community shared with them.

This research has revealed that the age of the SMI is not a factor that influences the view of the audiences in terms of their authority or expertise; on the contrary, it can be a source of inspiration and identification in the audiences, who see great merit and admiration in "*young*" SMIs attaining recognition and fame because of their online activities and skills in their field. This research also has identified that the age of the SMI is not a factor in either the extent of their influence or the number of scandals that they are being involved in.

10.3.1.3.2   Engagement and Information Flow

Organisations in general, are changing the way they operate to embrace "*networked society*" and create common value (Davies 2017; Kozinets, Patterson and Ashman 2016; Miell, Gill

and Vazquez 2018). In the old paradigm, the world followed an order where passive agents (recipients) existed in a controlled environment, such as mass production, mass media and mass marketing. Here, models of predictability established structures in organisations and society. The new paradigm breaks away from traditional structures to centre on influential individuals and their relationship with their massive audiences (Font and McCabe 2017; Khan et al. 2017; Yoganarasimhan 2017).

This research identified that an effective way to promote favouring, information sharing and flow occurs when an SMI uses "*giveaways*" and prizes to motivate their audience. Nonetheless, the measurement of an SMI's social capital under such situations becomes unreliable, as external incentives can prompt a temporary and false increase in the values of important social signals used for the measurement of this capital, such as favourites, shares and saves. When a brand wishing to disseminate branded messages hires an SMI based on their SM engagement metrics (including those of contests), they may find that this strategy is not as effective unless it included a "*giveaway*" of their own. Alternatively, brands may need to look for SMIs with large audiences to achieve their message-diffusion goals without the need for incentives.

In terms of the information shared in the tweets, the results obtained revealed that the inclusion of references to others in a tweet via text, mentions or hashtags can be considered signals of social capital. It was also observed that the mentions and hashtags related to celebrities and other SMIs were independent of whether there was an established following−follower relationship between them. Hence, the association of SMI names in a tweet is solely based on the content of the tweet. This generalisation incorporates audience members who have referenced a particular SMI in their tweets without being followers demonstrating that the number of tweets featuring a particular SMI does not depend on their number of followers.

This research revealed that an engaged audience is more likely to comment, share and reply to content related to the SMI and take actions, such as purchasing products promoted by the SMI and making public their consumption experiences online. This audience also directs the SMI towards new associations which they deem adequate. When these associations are materialised, the SMI's social and symbolic capital increases strengthening the bonds with the audiences by validating and legitimising the importance of their opinions. Therefore brands should also examine the SMI's most popular content, and any third parties present in these, to help assert the quality of the social and symbolic capital shared with their audience. For example, if a brand interested in an SMI evaluates that its views and values are compatible

with their own, but whose most popular tweets contain references to individuals whose behaviour contradicts the values of the brand, the audiences is likely to view the SMI−brand association as unfavourable. Furthermore, if the SMI exhibits a pattern of "*inappropriate*" associations suggested by the audiences, these types of collaborations are unlikely to cease given the undeniable insight they provide into the audience's core values and beliefs. Consequently, it is suggested that brands should consider the SMI's past, present and foreseeable future actions when viewing associations, particularly given the multiple cases in which brands have suffered negative effects because of an SMI's negative behaviour.

Finally, a very important knowledge contribution of this research relates to how easily audiences on SM can *"be mobilised"* and either defend or criticise an SMI. This type of audience behaviour can be considered a "*dark side*" of costumer engagement, as discussed in Chapter 7, bringing extreme negative consequences to an SMI and brands associated with them. Consequently, when an SMI has faced the discontent of the audience and apologises for it, the audience must be able to perceive this apology as genuine before they can *"forgive and forget*". Failure to achieve such genuineness can create even further backlash and devastating economic consequences for both the SMI and any associated brands or sponsors. Brands must be particularly careful when dealing with a discontented audience that is already sceptical and damming of "*fake apologies*" from SMIs.

SMIs can suffer in addition to the loss of reputation, substantial loss of followers due to the negative effect of these. Thus any controversies, scandals, feuds or problematic behaviour that involves the SMI and that causes changes in the perception in the eyes of the audience can decrease the levels of capitals shared and, in extreme cases, can be withdrawn by the audience who granted them. Although this research has focused on the influence exerted by an SMI on its audience, the power that arises from the SMI's social capital is being mobilised in many ways on SM. Although general guidelines can be applied to the analysis of SMIs, each one should be viewed as a unique case when undertaking an in-depth review.

10.3.2   Consumption, Practices and Reproduction

In particular, this research answered the call for studies that identify how likely a user is to reproduce a behaviour as a result of the SMI's influence, such as making a purchase and the role of that consumer's *habitus* in accepting or opposing this influence (Claussen, Wacquant and Akçaoğlu 2017; Freberg et al. 2011; Gaddis 2013). This research demonstrated that an SMI's influence is effective in creating reproduction in terms of creating practices and

incentivising purchases in their audiences and the audience's *habitus* plays a key role in embracing and promoting reproduction of purchase behaviours, particularly if the name of the SMI is associated with a brand or if it is its own label.

This research has shown that SMIs can accrue social, symbolic and cultural capital by sharing experiences, advice and personal content; in an exchange that is moderated by their audience's *habitus* and *doxa*. The practices shared between an SMI and their audience creates a cycle of consumption that starts with the SMI reviewing beauty products or sharing a makeup tutorial that comments on the cosmetics used, their application and the SMI's opinion of them. Subsequently, the audience requests that the SMI review more products, which the SMI acts upon where consequently, SMI not only displays tastes and preferences, but also helps to create a community of consumption within the audience. Simultaneously, these actions reinforce in the audience feeling good about their purchases in a cycle that is completed by the SMI and its audience posting about their buying experiences and thus reinforcing the sense of belonging to the SMI's manufactured community. Moreover, the SMI's product recommendations and reviews become legitimised by the audience, for whom these become these guidelines that are reproduced for as long as these capitals are maintained. The identification of this cycle constitutes conclusive evidence to supports this finding.

The following discussion presents the ways in which SMIs are promoting products, changing consumptive practices and exerting their influence on their audiences while taking into account the specifics of:

- ‣ SMI−Audience characteristics: Demographics, influential topics, SNS and geographical location.
- ‣ Conversations: Importance of topics, themes found in these conversations and participating SMIs or other important stakeholders.
- ‣ The strength and reach of the SMI's influence: In terms of its effectiveness and possible negative outcomes.

Therefore, as a starting point, the constructs used in this research to investigate the SMI−Audience relationships in SM under sociological and marketing theory presented in Chapter 2 are depicted in Figure 10.3:
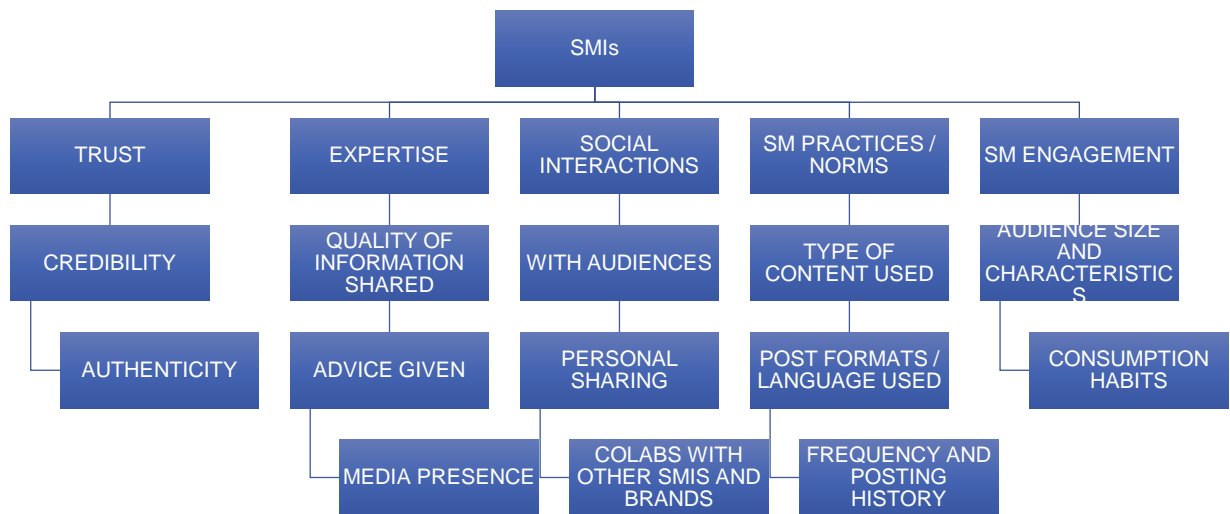
Figure 10.3 Instances Studied in SMI−Audience Relationships

10.3.2.1   Changing the *Habitus*

Bourdieu's concepts of capitals, *habitus,* practices and doxa are closely intertwined, as an agent's exchange of capitals and inherent *habitus* produces practices, which are governed by the *doxa* (rules) of the field (Gulledge, Roscoe and Townley 2015; Nass, Isbister and Lee 2000; Roling and Vieira 2014). Moreover, these concepts also shape an agent's consumption practices, aesthetic tastes and emotional attachments and, therefore, are central for the understanding of SMI−audience relationships and interactions framed in this research.

This research has identified numerous ways used by SMIs to influence the behaviours, consumption and habits of their audience by instituting "*product use"* practices. A common one is the production of makeup tutorials aimed at increasing product knowledge and highlighting occasions for usage. The combined effect of the SMI's capitals and the novelty or value of these tutorials, prompt audience members to embrace these "*new practices*", where, if the audience yields positive results from them, these practices get repeatedly shared and reproduced. Another method used by SMIs to promote products is by reviewing them as part of the content that they share on SNS. In these product reviews, SMIs are influencing the consumptions practices of their audiences by exercising critical judgement and sharing their technical expertise. Although prior studies have established the value of Bourdieu's theory of "*reproduction"* to explain and predict people's behavioural changes and how these are internalised and replicated (Lareau 2015; Nash 1990; Pernicka et al. 2021), their application to the study of SMIs has been less well explored.

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Furthermore, it was also identified that the practice of reviewing a product has such importance that many audience members do not consider purchasing a product unless it has been "*approved*" by the SMI. Here, the SMI's endorsement of a product becomes a powerful asset for a brand to have as a highly efficient way of generating "*social proof*" (justification) to validate indulgent consumption and reduce conflict (Poor, Duhachek and Krishnan 2013; Sunikka-Blank, Galvin and Behar 2017; Warde 2014). However, this research has demonstrated the SMI's approval or endorsement of a product is not enough to guarantee satisfaction or to compensate for flaws in a product. On the contrary, this research has highlighted that when an SMI is associated with a product, the audience expects that certain levels of pricing, quality and ethical practices are maintained, irrespectively of how much social capital they share with the SMI. As demonstrated by numerous examples found in this research, failure to meet these levels can create negative consequences for SMIs and brands.

10.3.2.2 Communities of Practice

In SM, a sense of community is developed through the interactions and identifications within members who bond by sharing their passions and feelings on given subjects (Borgonovi, Andrieu and Subramanian 2021; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; McAlexander and Koenig 2012). The SNA performed in this research confirmed the presence of well-defined communities of practice that emerged not only around the SMIs but also around other SMIs and brand names.

The SNA revealed well-defined communities that emerged around the main SMI, prominent influential nodes and some brand names. Thus it is possible to assert that distinctive communities of practice are formed around an SMI on SM, and in them, numerous community members exhibited strong emotional ties and loyalty towards the SMI. Given that SMIs can be part of another SMI's network, these communities are not exclusive, as evidenced by intersections and overlapping among them when an audience member followed several SMIs. Furthermore, networks where more than one SMI was present, exhibited higher levels of social capital than those that only had one.

While digital communications in the form of eWOM, can greatly affect the consumption behaviours of users in online communities ranging from their product familiarity to the extent of their variety seeking (Chu and Sung 2015; Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Susarla, Oh and Tan 2016), the network of terms and the community of practice analysis evidenced that most of the

SMIs, although they mentioned other prominent SMI, lacked the presence of brand names promoted in their communities, as well as relevant terms like makeup, buy and thanks as these term are related to the SMI's field, consumptive practices and evidence of social capital. This finding confirms that the communities of practices are primarily formed around SMIs and do not feature brand names or practices related to the use of beauty products that were expected to be present.

This research also identified that the most frequent terms used in the conversations taking place in these communities of practice were not related to the field of the SMI's expertise, suggesting that that the conversations taking place on Twitter around the SMI were spontaneous, rather than being guided by the SMI or prompted from the promotion of products and brands. This aspect should be carefully considered by brand managers looking to increase brand exposure or the adoption of a product via an SMI campaign.

The results obtained reveal the presence of ego-centric and socio-centric networks. The ego-centric networks were characterised by decreased levels of information flow and prominent levels of shared norms (*doxa*) which are in line with academic theories by Coleman (Coleman 1986; Coleman 1988; Coleman 1994) and Putnam (Putnam, Leonardi and Nonetti 1993; Putnam 2000; Putnam 2000), who argue that the social resources available to an individual, such as information and status, are strongly determined by the extent to which that individual is at the centre of a cohesive network of relationships. In these cases, the presence of strong social ties and shared beliefs help members secure benefits and limit their actions under a shared strict orthodoxy.

However, tight ties can generate a freeriding problem, as the less diligent members enforce the demands of the more active ones, backed by a collective normative organisation (Portes 1998). In such cases, behaviours like informational gift-giving, instead of being driven by altruism and reciprocity, are strongly driven by status-seeking behaviour. More importantly, the sentiments derived from such status are more likely to sustain these online communities (Gonzalez, Camarero and Cabezudo 2021; Lampel and Bhalla 2007; Taylor and Pagliari 2017). Hence, this research evidenced that while these types of communities presented high levels of purchase behaviours and loyalty to the SMI, the downside of it was that these were very niche oriented and where limited in the numbers of members, the reach of the SMI's messages and information flow.

In contrast, socio-centric networks presented a higher level of information flow, and in general their users exhibited strong consumption habits. Hence brands who are wanting to engage an

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SMI should consider whether their needs require an SMI who has a closed network versus an open one. A brand that is looking to make sales may benefit from a closed network, while one that is looking to create brand awareness may benefit from an open one. This aspect could be explored in future investigations.

Furthermore, the results obtained evidence that SMIs are effective in authenticating and legitimising practices, as demonstrated in the cluster and communities formed around them and by the many demonstrations and comments presented of follower loyalty, adoption of new practices and changing opinion as a result of the SMIs influence.

10.3.2.3   SMI Product Approval

This research identified that the SMI's influence is most effective when the product is part of the SMI's own label. The present research corroborated the findings from previous research (Bajde, Nøjgaard and Sommer 2019; Cova and Ezan 2010; Laroche et al. 2012), in which the audience's loyalty to the SMI translates to the sale of products, especially when the SMIs shares strong social capital with an audience who exhibits frequent purchase behaviours. Furthermore, maximum benefits for the SMI and associated brands were reached when the *habitus,* loyalty and trust of the audiences had reached a generalised status of seeing the SMI's approval of a product a rule that determines whether a product is embraced with fervour or completely rejected.

This research also demonstrated that when an SMI has consolidated a position where consumption is the priority and whose audiences exhibit high levels of loyalty, once a product is recommended or launched by the SMI, this audience not only purchases these products, but tend to go "*frantic*" in ways that they usually would not engage, even to the point of going beyond their economic means. It is under these circumstances that as presented in this research, entire product lines would run out of stock in very short periods of time.

Lastly, an important SMI selection criterion for brands to consider is the number and product category of other brands that this SMI has already worked with. While this research has shown that SMIs can successfully promote several brands, SMIs who endorse a high number of brands from various product categories could prompt audiences to question whether these endorsements are genuine or just as a way for the SMI to gain profits.

10.3.3   SMI−Brand Findings and Recommendations Summary

Digital connectivity has changed how people relate and live. Network and communication infrastructures allow people and organisations to carry out most of their day-to-day activities, ranging from accessing education and entertainment, to making financial transactions, working remotely, campaigning, shopping and so on, online. As of January 2021, there were more than 4.66 billion internet users, that is 59.5% of the world population and 4.2 billion social media users worldwide. These number keep increasing (Auxier and Anderson 2021; Johnson 2021; World Population Review 2022). However, despite the many advantages, constant connection through digital technology and SM can have its downsides; the speed of interactions and changes in the technology demand that brands must constantly modify their marketing strategies to reach consumers in these platforms and meet the complexity of human relations are embedded in digital environments (Biggart and Beamish 2003; Castells 2004; Templeton 2021). This situation creates numerous challenges for marketing professionals to develop new sets of skills and who can understand and take on the constant market changes arising from SNS communications and the management of SMIs.

Regarding practices, this research informs marketing practitioners involved in SMI marketing campaigns about the importance of SMIs in the current digital marketing context. Moreover, just because an SMI enjoys popularity and has achieved good performance in the past with a brand or a product category, the direction and management of an SMI campaign is what will ultimately determine its success. In addition, brands should consider when choosing an SMI whether this person or its most prominent acquaintances, have or have had associations with any competitor brands in the same product category. This is to avoid extreme cases, such as the feud between JAMES CHARLES and GLAM LIFE GURU, which originated from JAMES CHARLES' endorsement of a rival product.

10.3.3.1   SMI Influence

Brands use celebrities as part of their branding strategy in hope that this association contributes to building a strong brand identity, as well as building affection and recall. A brand would hire a celebrity to endorse it via testimonials or by using their product or service. By delivering branded messages, a brand hopes to gain similar benefits as those gained by the celebrity's most popular content across SM and other digital channels (Adamopoulos, Ghose and Todri 2018; Kudeshia, Sikdar and Mittal 2016; Popescu 2014). This is a common practice in the beauty industry; to invest heavily on product promotion via celebrities, athletes or social

media endorsers as part as their advertising campaigns. In these cases, buzz, resonance and credibility have been deemed important factors for choosing celebrity endorsers (MacArthur et al. 2017; Pil and Leana 2009; Saatcioglu and Ozanne 2013).

Unlike celebrity endorsers, SMIs form a bond or relationship with their followers which is reciprocal, as followers now have a way to communicate with the celebrity and other followers which, when paired with a brand, can be used by an SMI to influence and persuade their followers in terms of brand perception and ultimately influence purchasing (Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Sokolova and Kefi 2020; von Mettenheim and Wiedmann 2021). However, this research has presented ample evidence to suggest that the use of SMIs in the marketing context should not be treated in the same way as that of celebrity endorsers. SMIs are individuals who have been able to rise to fame by leveraging their own troubles, achievements and expertise, under the public gaze of their audiences. Therefore the relationship between these two is significantly different from that of celebrities and their followers.

This research has shown how SMIs develop a very strong and unique sense of community with their followers, which goes beyond the mere interactions and identification within members who bond by sharing their passion identified in previous research (Bowden and Mirzaei 2021; Meek et al. 2019; Wirtz et al. 2013). This in some cases extreme sense of community leads to high levels of audience involvement, commitment and loyalty to the SMI. As demonstrated in the nethnographical account and shown in the SNA analysis, the stronger the social capital developed by an SMI, the stronger the loyalty, engagement and influence that the SMI has on their audience, which can be used in both a positive and negative way.

10.3.3.1.1   SMI−Brand Collaborations and Consumption

The results obtained suggest that when it comes to SMI−brand associations based on the "*Megaphone Effect*" (Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard 2020; Casaló, Flavián and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020; McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013) and the "*demotic-turn*" (Gambetti 2020; Reinikainen et al. 2020; Turner 2010), the SMI is more likely to gain capitals associated with the brand, such as symbolic capital in the case of well known brands, than the brand gaining capitals from the SMI. This finding corroborates another discovery of the present research, that irrespective of the target (whether it is a person, a theme, a brand or an organisation), the transfer of social capital is not a straightforward process.

The findings from this research suggests that a brand could maximise the gains obtained from the association with an SMI when high levels of consumption are exhibited by both the SMI and their audience and where the loyalty and trust of the audience is high enough that there is a need of "*SMI approval*" of a product before members of the audience make a purchase. Furthermore, a brand that co-creates products that are coherent with the SMI's field of expertise and *habitus* will most likely be able to reap maximum benefits from this endeavour.

This research also provided ample evidence that demonstrates the value of product co-creation between a brand and an SMI. While these types of associations can be highly profitable it is extremely important that a brand actively engages in listening to the SMI's proposals, especially in terms of the "*aesthetic*" aspect of the collaboration. Brands must always keep in mind that SMI's, as demonstrated in the results presented in this research, are extremely effective in shaping and creating trends, styles and innovation and, therefore, are deemed by their audiences as authorities in terms of socio-aesthetic dispositions. Furthermore, because of their relationship with their audience, they can add value to product development in ways that go beyond the symbolic addition of their name to a label. This recommendation is in line with previous research focused on symbolic and aesthetic capital development (Anderson et al. 2010; Entwistle 2002; Sharman 1997).

As discussed in Chapter 9, the significance of SMIs is such that many consumers will base their entire purchase decisions on the SMI's opinions and endorsement of products. Highly engaged followers prioritise checking if a product is "*SMI approved*" before making a purchase. The downside of these actions is that SMIs also disseminate negative opinions and product reviews, including videos created specifically to showcase their most hated products or when an SMI presents a negative review of a product. Also, it was demonstrated that when it comes to consumption practices loyal fans will purchase an SMI's products over brands that are just being endorsed or sponsored as demonstrated by the results presented in Chapters 7 and 8. In addition, the SMI's brand gained most diffusion as the tweets that included third party brands performed marginally.

Figure 10.4 presents a summary of the main findings from this doctoral thesis, highlighting the ways used by SMIs to firstly, grow the different capitals, secondly, to create social bonds and communities of practices within their audiences, thirdly, to become authorities and opinion leaders in their field and lastly, to shape consumption and reproduction practices in their audiences.
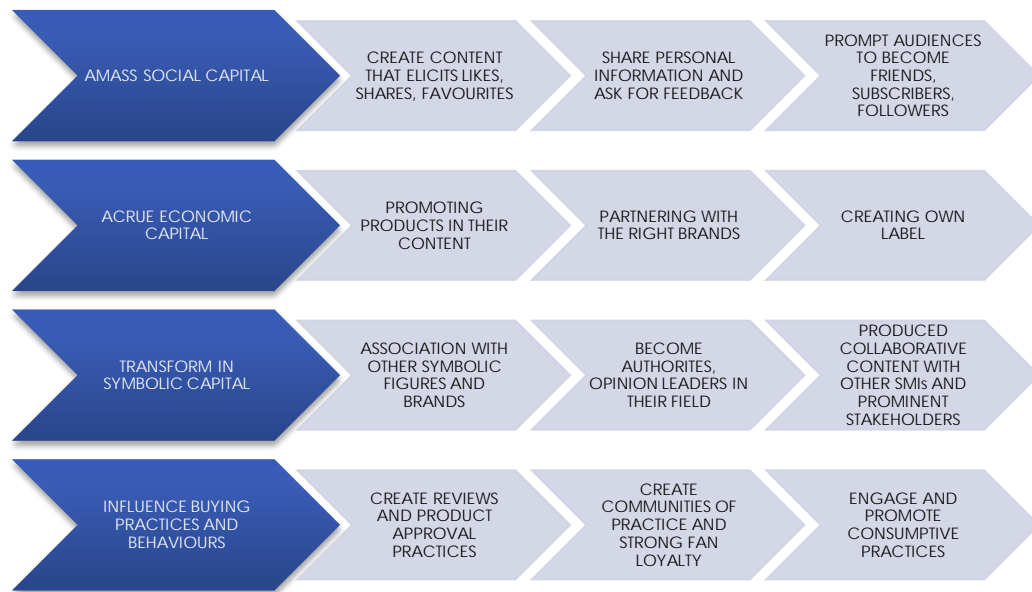
Figure 10.4 Capital Accumulation Process for an SMI

The downside of this finding is that only a handful of highly engaged users tweeting and commenting come from within the audience. Another dark to an SMI's influence is that audience members can overspend on products endorsed by the SMI, where in extreme cases, devoted followers have expressed their precarious economic situation after making multiple purchases elicited by the SMI or after trying to imitate the lifestyle portrayed by the SMI despite it being beyond their current means:

"I SPENT $1,000 FOLLOWING A @NIKKIETUTORIALS MAKEUP TUTORIAL" – NIKKIE TUTORIALS' Audience Member

10.3.3.1.2   Product Pricing, Quality and Customer Satisfaction

In line with marketing theories (Belk 2018; De Bruyn and Lilien 2008; Pai and Tsai 2016), the audiences expect the products or brands associated with the SMIs to be able to meet certain standards, which include pricing, quality, delivery, customer service and ethical practices. However, this research has highlighted the awareness today's consumers have of unethical and unmoral behaviours on the part of the SMI or associated brands.

While geo-social characteristics will influence consumption (Connolly and Dolan 2017; Pernicka et al. 2021; Saarenpaa, Kolehmainen and Niska 2013), the results obtained in this research suggest that the SMI's influence is not limited to geographical locations. Instead, the limits of product consumption are imposed by a brand's own distribution and logistics, and the

language spoken by the SMI. Hence, it becomes imperative for a brand to carefully plan the logistics, stock management and product distribution of an SMI−brand product, in order to avoid problems such as website downtime, limited offer of payment gateways, high worldwide shipping costs and delayed delivery timelines.

Ample evidence has been presented in this research to indicate that when audiences feel that an item is not what is promised or is overpriced, they will quickly engage negative engagement behaviours, despite the amount of social capital associated with the SMI. The behaviours reported in this research included posting critiques on SM, making demands on the stores carrying the item to discontinue stocking the product or reduce its price. The result also suggests that the intensity of these criticisms and the audience's negative engagement are proportionate to the amount of social capital and trust that users bestow on the SMI. In these cases, audiences are more likely to *"blame"* the brand and "*protect*" the SMI, unless the SMI does not address these issues or does not give a satisfactory answer to the audience. Hence, a response addressing the issues from the SMI will have more impact that one from the brand.

Furthermore, the SMI's symbolic and cultural capital, as well as their position of authority in the field, can also influence the commercial success of products that they endorse. For example, as ZOELLA is not a makeup artist, and consequently audiences did not consider her as part of the beauty community, the success of her cosmetics line can be considered as lower than the success gained by the SMI's who were recognised as makeup artists. Furthermore, because of poor choices in the pricing in quality of her brand's products, audiences nicknamed her "*Scammella*", as she experienced the loss of subscribers all through 2018 and 2019 without any signs of possible recovery at the time of writing. This finding suggests that careful consideration should be placed in terms of coherently matching products and brands with SMI's.

Although brand-SMI associations can be very profitable, this research has established that consumers expect good quality products when they order from the SMIs. It is very important that brands engage in practices such as being "*eco-friendly*", *"no animal testing"*, being "*vegan*" and many more depending on the practices and topics shared between the SMI and their audience. Brands that fail to fulfil these requirements as part of their product development, as demonstrated in this research, will most likely suffer from negative reactions being posted online and in extreme cases, suffer from "*boycott*" campaigns at the hands of angered audiences. Should such cases arise, it is imperative that the SMI addresses any concerns that the audience may have, clarify information based on facts, propose solutions

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and engage with consumers to learn and act upon any problems that may arise from the production, distribution and customer service of the products offered. This recommendation clearly increases the scope of the responsibilities that an SMI should have when co-creating products with a brand, as it extends the usual tasks required for a brand ambassador to perform as part of their contract. The reason is that the "*personal*" relationship between the SMI and its audience members becomes critical in the acceptance or rejection of a product, thus co-created products are valued by the consumers as an extension of such relationship. Consequently, such scenarios call for the SMI to take a much more active role in helping ensure that customer satisfaction is achieved from all aspects of the marketing process.

Lastly, current legislation regarding branded content and its promotion is still under development, creating uncertainty in audiences about the spontaneity and sincerity of the content shared. Unlike paid or sponsored content presented on TV, radio or print, which is distinct and marked as such and heavily regulated (de Veirman and Hudders 2020; Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell 2000; Sokolova and Kefi 2020), it is impossible to discern in a SNS the authenticity of a judgement versus a paid message unless it has been expressively labelled or tagged as "*paid*" or "*sponsored*" content. Here, the lack of advertising regulations that monitor the reach, quality and effectiveness of the SMI's paid endorsements can have a negatively impact on the brand and in consumers, especially if these messages present false claims, inaccurate information or product misuse. Therefore the SMI's paid endorsements should be advertised as such, to differentiate them from their legitimate opinions and to prevent the audience from purchasing a product under the false understanding that the message from the SMI was not influenced by monetary payment.

10.3.3.1.3   Negative Engagement and Cancel Culture

While academic and industry literature agree that the use of SMIs is a powerful tool for marketers (Abidin 2016; Akpinar and Berger 2017; Wirtz et al. 2013), this research has identified critical areas of concern for brands wishing to engage with SMIs. Firstly, while the current academic literature identifies criticism mainly directed at the fact that SMIs are self-made "*celebrities*" who have lacked the industry expertise or other merits that would make them worthy of holding such position in any other circumstance (Colliander and Erlandsson 2015; Kronrod and Huber 2019; Rahman et al. 2022), this research has identified that a bigger problem faced by brands is the posting of negative judgements and opinions online and how these can harm a brand.

As has been shown, SMIs have been the centre of plenty of turmoil, controversies and feuds that have led to calls for consumers to boycott products, demand disassociation from an SMI and cause reputational damage. This is a dangerous reality for brands, and this research has presented evidence to suggest that the treatment of negative engagement and dissemination of negative content are taking place at a worldwide level and, more importantly, is proportional to the negative social capital generated in an SMI's audience.

When it comes to negative content, even if a tweet is deleted or there is a retrospective apology, in most cases it may be already too late. This is also true when it comes to an SMI feeling that they had been mistreated by a brand. SMIs constantly post content related to their feelings and knowledge of the field, and if they feel misunderstood or betrayed by a brand they may let their audience know with immediate effect. Therefore under the intrinsic *"instant"* and *"shared"* nature of SM, this research also has highlighted that it is impossible for an individual, a brand or even an organisation to control how content is interpreted and disseminated online. This finding reveals an important vulnerability found on SNS which reinforces the need for systems that help marketers and brands identify damaging content being posted online and for the development of robust "*damage control*" measures prior to the appearance of problems, as any delays in managing a negative situation found online lends itself to any responses being "*too little, too late*".

Furthermore, conversations around SMIs covered topics that range from beauty, makeup and teaching to a minority of more sensitive topics, such as animal testing awareness, gay pride, racism and homophobia. Given the archival nature of the internet, posted will remain online and available for look-up, even after they have been deleted, therefore being accessible for years to come. This research has presented several cases where SMIs have faced serious accusations of racism, sexual harassment and homophobia that have affected in negative ways, in addition to the SMI in question, their close relationships and any partnerships with brands or organisations, despite having happened in the past. Hence it is very important for brands looking to associate themselves with an SMI that they assess the practices, beliefs, topics, themes and *habitus* of the SMI's audience prior to engaging in a collaboration. If these are not assessed correctly, instead of creating resonance from the collaboration, it will most likely result in negative content being shared online about the brand.

Although the relationship between cause and effect is not clear on SNS due to the constant interplay between agents and networks, it has been demonstrated that SM interactions can lead to social anxiety, anonymous cyber bullying and digital disconnection with the physical world (Kidd 2017; Ko et al. 2012; Lamberton and Stephen 2016). Therefore it is important that

when any kind of textual analysis is performed, that the results obtained are put into context. This recommendation is particularly important when the emerging topics cannot be categorised as being only positive or negative, in which case a brand may have to rely on opinion mining techniques to evaluate the effectiveness of the SMI's promotional efforts.

In addition, the SMI or brand involved needs to be alert as consumers on SNS can post negative content instantly and continuously. Hence, timely and effective addressing of the consumer's queries or problems is paramount when carrying out an SMI campaign on SM, as the damage to reputations and credibility can be quick and have a "*viral*" effect when operating within an instant online environment.

10.3.3.2   SMI Selection

As discussed in Chapter 2, numerous industry reports coincide in the fact that the main challenges that brands face in terms of developing a SMIS marketing strategy are selecting the influencer, how the content should be produced, how to measure results and how to best manage their relationship with that influencer (Belanche et al. 2021; Dhanesh and Duthler 2019; Wisenberg Brin 2018). Despite these difficulties, SMIs have become a very important means of amplification, which today has gain high relevance in shaping the opinions and consumption behaviours of consumers all over the world (Donthu et al. 2022; Dwivedi et al. 2021; Jafari, Aly and Doherty 2022).

This research has illustrated the mechanisms used by SMIs to bond with their audiences. The activities, characteristics and means of communication are different between SMIs and celebrities, and so the same selection criteria used for celebrities should not be applied blindly to SMIs. More importantly, this research disputes the use of an SMI's number of followers as the most appropriate signal of user engagement and proposes a new understanding for its measurement; one that includes data, such as the number of favourites and retweets over time, the nature of popular content and the propagation speed and geographical reach it. As the creation of the capitals is a reciprocal process inherent in SMI−audience interactions, brands interested in working with an SMI should also examine the SMI's audience behaviours, engagement levels and if these behaviours differ in followers and non-followers.

In addition, the emoji and sentiment analyses demonstrated that the opinions and comments surrounding an all the SMIs observed tend to be polarised. This fact denotes an element of risk when it comes to brands working with SMIs, as there is hardly any middle ground that

could prove to be safe in situations that do not go as planned. Furthermore, situations where an SMI has "*gone rogue*" create a situation of basic "*damage control*" that the brand must be equipped to address. Some problems within these types of situations can be attributed to the SMIs' relatively young age and maturity. At times, comments or posts were not well thought out or were created in anger, in other cases, they were simply misinterpreted.

This research has highlighted that some of the problems associated with consumers' discontent lies in the fact that SNS allow them to express their dissatisfaction in an immediate and direct way, which then is re-shared, commented on and voted on; something that was not possible with traditional media. These situations create very difficult scenarios for brands to manage and, more importantly, to remedy. Disturbances in SNS can pose a difficult situation for marketers, as this research has shown that an SMI's audience is equally likely to endorse or reject such products, based on the SMI's behaviour. Additionally, angry fans who feel that the SMI has been mistreated will take on brands within SNS to defend the SMI against what they may see as unfair treatment. This can create "*negative engagement*", as fans demonstrate their anger with negative videos, posts, memes and photos, sometimes with them destroying the products online for all to see.

The conversations around the SMIs covered numerous topics that range from their field of expertise to a minority of more sensitive topics, such as discrimination, racism and ethical animal treatment. Therefore it is recommended that, when conducting social network/textual analysis, the results are put into context, as their meaning can change depending on the situation. Furthermore, caution should be exercised by brands as advertising and government regulations can limit and even negatively impact the reach, quality and effectiveness of the message provided by the SMI, especially if the information provided is not accurate or if there is misuse and falsehood in the SMI's claims, information shared and its meaning which can lead to sanctions and negative press (Canhoto et al. 2015; Rahman et al. 2022; Zhou and Whitla 2011).

This research has shown that the most viral tweets are those that are feud related, comical and personal. The other category of tweets that received noteworthy numbers of favourites and retweets related to "*giveaways*", ones that require users to follow the SMI or associated brand. This leaves a question, "*How much influence does the tweet gain from the SMI themselves or does it mostly come from the users who enter purely to gain a prize?*" Future research could address this gap in knowledge to differentiate between an SMI's influence and other contributing factors, for example, the opportunity of winning a prize.

The SNA showed that the SMIs in this research, apart from JEFFREE STAR and JAMES CHARLES, were the main nodes in each one of their networks. However, while these networks mentioned other prominent SMI, there were no mentions of keywords that denoted social capital or represented the interests or activities in the "*beauty community*", such as "*makeup*", "*buy*" and "*thanks*". Moreover, brand names that were promoted by that SMI were missing as part of the most prominent nodes in the community. This was true for both the network of terms and the community of practices analysis.

While this research has shown that SMIs can influence the opinions of their followers and create successful consumption habits in their audiences, it has identified a series of significant methodological problems. As presented in Chapter 2, while the problem of identifying key nodes in the structure of a network that are effective and well-suited sources of influence, the measurement of their effectiveness and the quality of the social capital accumulated are important for academic and practical applications in marketing and advertising. Previous research has failed to describe the reasons behind the spread of the influence or considered other nuances in affecting social relationships (Alberghini, Cricelli and Grimaldi 2014; Aral 2011; Qiu, Tang and Whinston 2015). Hence, as part of the methodological contribution of this research, a series of computational strategies have been proposed to help solve these problems. The specifics of each one of these contributions are discussed in detail in the Methodological Contributions section.

10.4 Methodological Contributions

This research presents important quantitative, qualitative and SNA methodological contributions developed along with empirical knowledge. The theoretical underpinnings of these were developed under the sociological discipline, as its academic and scientific principles helped the author propose new methods to rigorously explore groups and crowds, observe social dynamics, investigate social patters, social processes and their spread that are currently taking place in digital environments were essential in the methodological development of this research.

As this research focuses on the likelihood that an SMI reaches their audiences and creates specific behavioural changes using their influence and social capital to amplify their reach over a network, the methodological solutions developed by the researcher allowed the achievement of this objective, and to cut down on the extensive time periods required to collect, process and analyse the data. This also facilitated the categorisation and

interpretation of meaningful observations and consequently, the exploration of meaningful insights and achievement of conclusive results. These contributions can be summarised as:

- ► Obtaining and integrating longitudinal data from multiple sources.
- ► Tweet ranking (network weight).
- ► Mentions and hashtags processing.
- ► Emoji processing and vocabulary standardising script.

These methodological improvements arose from the strategies used to overcome the different challenges faced in terms of computing power limitations, data access restrictions and analysis methodologies, particularly as it has focused mainly on Network Analysis using a maximisation of the information diffusion approach (Alberghini, Cricelli and Grimaldi 2014; Aral 2011; Qiu, Tang and Whinston 2015). The development of these approaches also obligated the researcher to engage in significant programming learning and to trial several innovate approaches, before refining the necessary techniques to solve these problems. Hence the use of novel programming tactics significantly improved the reliability of the data, decreased the data gathering time and increased the limited processing capabilities of the researcher's computer system. Otherwise, it would have been impossible to achieve conclusive results within the timeline allowed for completion of a doctorate.

Although the explanation provided suggests this was a straightforward process of identifying these restrictions and then writing the script to solve them, the process of creating the final script involved multiple versions and refinements in the programming code to produce the necessary high quality and timely results. The specific details of these methodological advances are discussed in the upcoming sections of this chapter.

10.4.1   Obtaining Longitudinal Data

As discussed in Chapter 9, while longitudinal case studies are a valuable research strategy for investigating behaviour over time, many researchers avoid using this methodology because of the considerable time and effort required for its effectively deployment (Bailey et al. 2018; Hassett, Reynolds and Sandberg 2018; Upreti et al. 2021). These difficulties were addressed by the researcher learning how to program in R and Python (coding languages) and to use Gephi (computer software for SNA) to gain access to the required longitudinal Twitter data. This approach allowed 12 years of observational data to be collected and, reflecting that the data was accessed from three different sources, made it possible to fill a wide range of gaps

within it. Each one of the SMI's datasets was then "*cleaned*", "*pre-processed*" and carefully merged into a single file for each SMI, which was used for the analysis stage of this research.

Furthermore, as not all the emerging topics from the textual analysis of the tweets could be categorised as being positive or negative, the researcher considered it beneficial to put into context the results of the textual analysis by linking them to the netnographic account. To facilitate this task, the events explored in the netnography focused on the most significant moments identified in the time series analysis.

10.4.2   Ranking of Tweets (Network Weight)

The main constructs in Bourdieu's sociology are the theories about the field, the capitals and the *habitus*, providing a theoretical framework for analysing changes in practices and power dynamics within relationships that is useable from the individual to a global level (Claussen, Wacquant and Akçaoğlu 2017; Harvey et al. 2020; Tapp and Warren 2010). Hence, from a relational point of view, Bourdieu's theories of social interaction attribute "*importance*" to the position of a node in a network based on its social capital. However, despite the advances of the last decade regarding the concept of social capital, academics have identified that the social capital found in SNS has an ambiguous relationship with trust and influence. The reason for this ambiguity is that bridging social capital is directly linked with general trust, while bonding social capital is inversely related to it (Hudson et al. 2016; Khan et al. 2017; Libai et al. 2010).

Since the data collected consisted of over nine million tweets, there were significant problems in the processing stages. Therefore to expedite the processing of ranking and categorising the tweets collected, and to aid the creation of network graphs that were suitable for interpretation, and to create a working measure that would help quantify the strength and quality of each user's social capital, the researcher created a way to measure the importance of an individual tweet based on its author's social connections and relative importance in the network. This technique measured the strength of a single tweet by its associated audience responses (favourites and retweets it has accumulated) and multiplied it by pre-existing factors, which are the total number of followers and friends that this person has. The results obtained were used to set a filter to create a subgroup of the network's most important tweets, which was displayed as a clear network graph. This measure was calculated for each tweet using the following formula that gave an overall score (rank of importance) of all the tweets collected:

$$\text{NETWORK WEIGHT} = (\text{FAVOURITES+RETWEETS}) \times (\text{FOLLOWERS+FRIENDS})$$

This approach ranked the nodes based on their ability to reach and enlist specific change within the audience to increase loyal audience numbers and promote sponsors, other users or themselves. The purpose of introducing this technique was to accurately assess the levels of social capital exhibited in "*weighted*" networks and the strength of the influence of an SMI on them. As the academic literature has shown that the use of "*weighted*" measures in a business environment can bring a deeper understanding of a group in relation to the importance of a node's distance and population (Leban et al. 2020; Lopez, Magliocca and Crooks 2019; Poushter 2016), this proposed measure aims to facilitate the measurement of a tweet's reach, network acceptance and overall value of the information shared. More importantly, this method presents a viable solution to the problem of finding influential nodes and measuring the strength of the social capital of a user, by employing a combination of social signals, network size and rebroadcasting indicators to quantify the importance, reach and social capital of a tweet.

10.4.3 Mentions and Hashtags Processing

As this research employed NLP, socio-linguistic and SM analysis techniques, it was imperative that all necessary corrections and processing of the data were in place before undertaking the main analysis. In this case, these measures were also necessary as the data downloaded presented extensive formatting and file size issues. Thus following this methodological requirement was critical for obtaining reliable results, given that improper or incomplete pre-processing of SM data can easily yield erroneous results.

The results presented in Chapter 8 demonstrate that mentions and hashtags can be used to assess the capitals and to identify clusters and influential nodes. This research has identified that mentions can be used to assess the social and symbolic capital shared between any referenced party, the SMI and the audience. The same analysis applies to hashtags, which in addition can be used to assess cultural capital, because these represent concepts, themes and ideas. The study of communities and influential nodes offers a valuable opportunity for the assessment of the social capital share between the SMI and the audiences, as the connections that link these are quantifiable signals of social capital. In this research, such links were created using the hashtags and mentions contained in the tweets, as their proper identification facilitated the process of visualising their networks and assessing the strength of the social capital shared.

The process of "*hashtag and mention completion*" (Antonakaki, Fragopoulou and Ioannidis 2021; Jiao and Qu 2019; Rizk and Elragal 2020) was used to ensure the quality and homogony of the hashtags and mentions found in each dataset. Therefore during the pre-processing stages, the names of the selected SMIs, other prominent influencers, celebrities and brands names were correctly spelt and formatted as mentions, while prominent associations, key topics and ideas of importance were formatted as hashtags, which then formed the networks of hashtags. In the process of "*hashtag completion",* important concepts and ideas were converted into hashtags. This process was of extreme value, as it also allowed for the proper identification and coding of themes, topics and collaborations between SMIs and brands, which then formed the networks of mentions. Similarly, the process of "*mention completion*" identified and reshaped frequently used keywords that relate to prominent usernames already in use on Twitter.

10.4.4   Emoji Processing and Vocabulary Script

Users on Twitter frequently display their opinions in the form of graphics, such as memes or "*gifs*" (animated images), in addition to emojis. These images were shown to create a particular class of "*fan art*" that is common in SNS. Hence, the tweets were analysed in both their textual and graphical form; their analysis included frequent cultural and comical references that could alter the meaning or sentiment of a tweet. The researcher placed high importance in perfecting the methods for data collection and analysis to obtain valid results by ensuring that no significant topic or mention could be omitted, to produce a holistic view for understanding the dynamics and implications of an SMI's social connections, influence and authority.

Given that the analysis of emojis in conjunction with the textual part of a tweet can form a deeper understanding of the emotion or sentiment within each tweet, this research has used the principle of "*semantic meaning*" to provide such an approach**.** In the field of natural language processing, words or emojis with the same meaning can be grouped as one (distributional hypothesi*s*) to facilitate their processing (Bilro, Loureiro and Guerreiro 2019; Grus 2019; Instagram Engineering 2015).

While the corpus of this research includes tweets in several languages, the most prominent language was English. As previously mentioned, the content of the tweets was "*cleaned*" and "*pre-processed*" by a programming script that standardised abbreviations, hashtags, mentions,

usernames, expressions and emoticons into a uniform format. Another important measure taken by the researcher to ensure the proper treatment of the data was converting graphical characters contained in the tweets into their code equivalent. Previous studies reviewed in the literature failed to mention this step, which is an important omission, given the importance of these special inputs and characters to this kind of research.

10.5 Limitations

An important limitation of this research is that while it takes place in online networking sites, its focus is not on online communities. The reason behind this decision was the limits on the computational resources available to the researcher, as discussed in Chapter 4, the resources need to compute the large file size and high number of data points collected present limitations when using traditional tools, such as spreadsheet-based software (Microsoft Excel) and programming ones, such as Python and R Studio. This meant that the behaviour of specific groups and clusters in isolation was not considered in the data analysis. This research has not covered the analysis of SMIs as part of the "*cancel culture*" phenomenon, which refers to public calls for morality and punishment as a reaction to unjust treatment, harassment, abuse of power or violence from the elite classes (Clark 2020; Ng 2020; Veil and Waymer 2021). While several important examples of discursive accountability practices from the audiences were identified, including "*dragging*" (humiliating), calling out, boycotting and even blacklisting, the underlying ethical questions raised by these situations are beyond the scope of this project. There is, however, scope for future research to explore SMI "*cancel culture*".

As discussed in Chapter 4, the large number of statistical operations and the multitude of analytical methods used for the analysis stages, increase the likelihood of human error and risk incorrect values or inaccurate results being obtained. The sheer amount of data collected meant that it could not be possessed using traditional methods. Although the ability of the powerful statistical platform R Studio to solve this problem was tested, unfortunately it failed in providing the robustness needed for processing each SMI's datasets. To get the results required, the researcher had to learn yet another programming language, Python. Although this was not an easy undertaking, this approach ultimately provided the necessary empirical results. In the process of discovering the dynamics and trends contained in the data, the researcher had to write over 100,000 lines of code and to learn three programming languages to amass and analyse the required empirical data. Yet, this research was limited by the amount of analysis that it was feasibly to conduct within the resources and timeframes available. While this research focuses on field-specific SMIs with large audiences, in this case

beauty SMIs, it does not study other types of influencers, such as micro and nano influencers or SMIs from other areas of experts. As such, the results do not assess the effectiveness of SMIs that move between different fields in promoting brands that cross different fields of action.

The following sections describe in detail the main challenges and limitations encountered in this research that constrains the knowledge generated.

10.5.1   Consumer Profiling

Although the researcher tried to access the audiences' demographic information via Twitter's API, most users had set their location preferences to be hidden or had resorted to writing irrelevant locations, for example "*Earth*", "*The Moon*" and "*Here*" to name a few. Given that the data collected did not contain the geolocational information, the researcher created a script that identified the main countries and cities mentioned in the tweets by labelling these words as locations based on a list of the most popular locations referenced.

Hence, this research roughly conceptualises the SMI's consumer profile as people between the ages of 15 to 25, categorised as "*generation Z*" and "*millennials*" (Feher 2021; Hulyk 2015; Sakdiyakorn, Golubovskaya and Solnet 2021), mainly located in the USA, UK, Australia and parts of Europe. Future studies could look to create specific profiles based on the SMIs' attributes, age, location, ethnicity or area of expertise. This information could then be cross-referenced to provide greater detail when looking at the SMIs that are most influential in a particular market segment or addressing what SMI attributes are most effective at fulfilling a given brand's requirement. This information could also be cross-referenced with the images and information available on the audiences' profiles to generate a target consumer profile. In terms of the number of followers, ZOELLA had the greatest number of combined audience members, over 12 million across different accounts, followed by JEFFREE STAR with over 6 million followers. Due to the constraints of the data and the analysis, it was not possible to identify the users that followed just one SMI or several.

10.5.2   Chronological Analysis

While longitudinal studies present many advantages over other types of methodologies for the creation of empirically-based understanding and development of theories that provide a causal explanation (Bailey et al. 2018; de Mello, Da Rocha and Da Silva 2019; Harris and

Orth 2020), previous research has demonstrated that this type of methodology requires a considerable computational resource for its proper execution (Gelman and Vehtari 2021; Leeflang et al. 2014; Sharma, Ahuja and Alavi 2018).

Through this research used several methodologies to overcome Twitter's restriction in terms of the data that could be downloaded, not all tweets related to the selected SMI's were downloaded. This limitation relates to tweets that have been deleted, censured, made private or hidden from the public. Also, as no sales data has been obtained from any of the brands mentioned in this research, the analysis of the audience's purchase behaviour is limited to the information that has been made public by each user. These issues, along with the constrained resources and time available for conducting this research, restricted the inclusion of a causality analysis. However, future research could potentially explore the audience behaviour changes prompted by the SMIs using this type of analysis.

10.5.3   Textual, Emoji and Sentiment Analysis

Another limitation concerned the extensive variation in language used by Twitter users, making the task of obtaining a dataset with textual homogeneity extremely difficult. Several Python libraries and extensive lines of code written by the researcher normalised the text as much as possible. Skipping this additional step could have led to performing an inaccurate or incomplete analysis. These methods could be further improved in the future, by adapting the context of the language used within Twitter to better represent *"millennial" or "generation Z"* members.

Emojis are graphical illustrations of mood and emotions shared online. A problem was faced preserving the integrity of the emojis downloaded. As these symbols are interpreted by a local machine (the researcher's computer) for processing, these became corrupted and unidentifiable. After several attempts, this problem was solved by downloading the emojis UTF-8 equivalent, so that their graphical representation could be verified against their unique identification code. In addition, it was essential to ensure that the sentiment polarity and subjectivity of each tweet was calculated. Although this proved to be a difficult task, after testing several Python libraries, *TextBlob* produced the most suitable results.

10.5.4   Other Limitations

Unlike SNS like YouTube, which uses a "*thumbs down*" button to indicate viewers' dislike, Twitter users are limited to only favouriting, retweeting, commenting and sharing. While it is relatively easy to determine positive feelings, this limitation becomes a problem for identifying negative content, as currently it is impossible to identify these feelings if the tweet's content does not contain negative words, emojis or media. Furthermore, the only feasible way to identify "*negatively*" related instances such as sarcasm, paraphrasing and slang require using complex analysis based on machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI).

Due to Twitter's limited characterisation of social relationships, exemplified by users only being able to adopt one of two instances: friend or follower, it becomes difficult to quantify the strength of the social ties in Twitter. The researcher faced difficulties in segmenting the SMIs followed by each user. While this information would have been useful for the analysis of affiliations or to make in-depth comparisons of the different behaviours exhibited in this SNS, its retrieval meant that further processing power was required. In addition, numerous processes were needed to compute social signals and obtained metrics, such as "*engagement level*". Future studies could explore the efficiency of SMIs in turning audience numbers into associated interest or sales.

10.6 Future Research

This research has focused on consumer markets, where the knowledge produced can be applied in the context of a "*how to guide"* for marketers engaging in SMI marketing campaigns. While academic theories about celebrity endorsers were used in this study, the knowledge gained could be expanded to examining the different messages and responses gained from content shared on SM by SMIs versus celebrities and other types of authority figures or iconic personalities.

This research focused solely on the SMIs and their audiences, without any special considerations having been made regarding the study of the behaviour of groups. Hence future studies could explore an SMI's influence who is associated with sporting, leisure, activist, religious, political, educational, professional contexts, or any other type of specialised association.

Future studies could expand this knowledge, to incorporate the influence that organisations and brands themselves have on consumers. Another approach would be to study business-to-business and business-to-government associations in an organisational only marketing context. As a result, future research could extend the knowledge of the attitudes and performance outcomes on new respective audiences and in other areas, such as food, travel, fitness, parenting, gaming and so on. Future investigations could increase marketing knowledge when pairing a well known brand with a less-known figure, such as a micro or nano-influencer.

As this research was based on Twitter, prospective studies could study SMIs on other platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, or on direct messaging apps such as WhatsApp, WeChat and Viber.

This research has presented evidence that the level of trust in an SMI varies depending on each case. Future studies could explore SMI hierarchies and the factors influencing these social structures. Moreover, this research focused solely on online interactions. Future research could analyse SMI−audience interactions and social capital in the physical world. This suggestion does not imply that the levels of social capital and influence are lower than in the physical world, it just cautions about the many challenges present in tracking word of mouth (WOM) in the physical world, which are absent in SM due to the "*digital footprint*" left by digital communications (Godes and Mayzlin 2004; Mayzlin 2006; Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels 2009). Further investigation is proposed for determining the specific value of retweets, as this measure that quantifies the spread (sharing) of messages on Twitter.

As two of the strongest appeals identified as being used by the SMIs are cuteness and humour, further studies could explore how SMIs use these appeals to grow followers and gain content virality and their effect on the SMI's social capital and influence. This study uncovered a clear linear correlation between favourites and retweets. An interesting future study could explore the possibility of finding an SMI how exhibits an inverse trend. While this research is limited to beauty SMIs, future studies could include other fields of expertise to identify similarities or differences in the *habitus*, capital and field. Future research could address whether the presence of members of the LGBT community has had a positive effect in generating equality and inclusion, as from the six chosen SMIs for this research, three identified as gay men and one as a transgender woman.

Future research could address the gap in knowledge identified regarding how the influence of an SMI affects the levels of engagement of an audience. For example, a study could focus on

how to differentiate between an SMI's influence from the mere opportunity to win a prize from a contest promoted by the SMI. Lastly, future research that requires Python in a Windows environment could benefit from the knowledge acquired from this project, in that researchers may benefit from installing Windows Visual Studio Python Toolbox instead of the whole Microsoft Visual Studio Community suite. By doing this, the installation size decreased and the performance was improved by lowering the demand on system running them. While the time series analysis presented was used to identify events to be explored in the netnography, it would be worthwhile if future studies could further the development of this type of analysis and extend it to forecasting metrics and behaviours. Future research could also use estimation and prediction algorithms to estimate an SMI's follower growth, information spread patterns and favourites and retweets probability. This information could be used by brands and decision-makers to plan their marketing strategy when collaborating with SMIs.

Innovation in the field of NLP could deal with common misspellings and word variations used in SNS, by creating new libraries of current words, demographic related terms ones and expressions, as these could benefit research in a myriad of fields, such as medicine, politics, education or business. Furthermore, the use of these NPL libraries should not be restricted to a particular SNS, but rather should be able to process, as a minimum text sourced from the top three most used SNS. It is important to state that future research could address analysing SMIs in languages other than English. The results of the semantic analysis presented only included tweets that were written in English, but the tweets collected were written in 40 other languages. Consequently, the analysis of these languages could uncover important variations and trends based on language segmentation. Another important observation made was that although many tweets were categorised as written in other languages or as "*undefined*", these were in fact written in English. Future scripts could categorise tweets under the correct language that they are written in. Future research could correct this by validating that the language stated is the language used within the content of the tweet itself. This step can take place within the code in the pre-processing (clean up) stage so that the researcher could confirm that the languages selected produced meaningful results. Future studies could also establish measures that quantify the presence of "*negative*" social capital, all the scales reviewed measured this concept in a "*benign*" way.

10.7 Autobiographical Reflection and Final Words

The concept of "*influence*" has always been of interest to the researcher, particularly in terms of its application and consequences when used to entice consumers to buy. Hence this

project was important at an academic and personal level, as the researcher felt extremely fortunate and grateful to have had this opportunity. During the development of this research, it was evident that the researcher's curiosity and passion for this topic constantly motivated her, aided by the great support that she received from her supervisory team and those close to her. This allowed her to overcome challenges and difficulties positively and optimistically. From a reflective point of view, the researcher realised that while currently people find themselves increasingly in a state of "*perpetual contact*", although useful for keeping in touch, overcoming geographical limitations and communicating ideas, the disadvantage is that the worldwide spread and adoption of SM raises a variety of issues that range from the need of technical expertise to data privacy and online safety.

This research is motivated by the desire to better understand the factors that make a successful SMI marketing strategy in the current "*cluttered digital environment*" (De Bruyn and Lilien 2008; Leeflang et al. 2014; Quinton and Simkin 2016), as people struggle to understand these new technologies, their place in their daily lives and the consequences for their relationships (Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard 2020; Leeflang et al. 2014; Naylor, Lamberton and West 2012). Consequently, the boundaries between interpersonal communication and mass media become blurred, feelings of loneliness and alienation increase in the population and personal identification and recognition are increasingly defined by consumerist practices, such as the exhibition of branded products owned.

SNS have given SMIs an ideal environment to create bonds with their followers, making it easier than ever to respond/send messages to individuals or their masses of followers. By leveraging their averageness and personality, using self-branding strategies, they can establish strong online identities on SNS, such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram. SMIs aim to maximise their prominence and recognition while strengthening the loyalty of their followers, exploiting and fulfilling the most basic of human needs, to feel connected and part of something greater than themselves (De Bruyn and Lilien 2008; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; McAlexander and Koenig 2012). This creates a sense of individualised SMI−follower connection characterised by the presence of much stronger bonds and feelings of loyalty not available in other types of environments. When paired with a brand, SMIs (as in the case of celebrities) can use this bond to influence and persuade their followers, improve brand perception and ultimately, increase purchases (Bayazıt, Durmuş and Yıldırım 2017; Hung 2014; Johns and English 2016), therefore if a brand were able to materialise a strong and coherent long-term relationship with an SMI who was also able to maintain its social position and following, then such brand could then reap the benefits derived from this association (Ahmed and Rafiq 2003; Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo 2004; Susarla, Oh and Tan

2016). Finally, as SMIs can gain vast numbers of followers, new communities being constantly being created around them and the products that they promote.

By having undertaken this project, the researcher was able to increase her academic knowledge and research skills, which included familiarising herself with different research methodologies; learning new programming languages and software packages; improving her time management and writing skills amongst many others. Hence the need to have undertaken these activities signals the likelihood that a researcher may need additional training when undertaking similar research.

From a methodological standpoint, the researcher affirmed her decision to perform this research using the CCT theories, that allowed her to create knowledge regarding identities (individual and collective), relationships, practices and other specifics of the sociological process behind the inner beliefs that lead consumers to act upon (Amiraslani et al. 2021; Askegaard and Linnet 2011; Venkatesh and Peñaloza 2014). Also, it is important to note that the quantitative and qualitative analysis presented a series of limitations for the understanding of how information flows between an SMI and its audience and the associations are created around the SMI. This information was extremely important to understand how SMIs create and nurture relationships and lastly, how they exert their influence online. Because of this, it was necessary to include a *Social Network Analysis* to understand the composition of the information disseminated around an SMI and the type and closeness of the networks formed, independent from the presence of communities of practices.

As experienced by the researcher, academics from a range of fields wanting to research Twitter may find this task difficult if they are not familiar with the technical aspects involved in doing so. Thus, to be able to use such a large amount of data collected, the researcher had to divide the processing stages. Despite this division, there were moments when the computer used would not run the necessary scripts properly, producing errors within the processing stages and making it necessary to re-run the script. Ideally, a high-powered server or supercomputer would be much better equipped for the exploration of online behaviour. This could make it possible to utilise all 64 instances recorded by Twitter to create a highly comprehensive and detailed set of insights that could explain many online behaviours. A by-product of this research has been the creation of a powerful script that, in addition to helping the researcher clean up and normalise the tweet content, can also perform the quantitative, qualitative and social network analysis of a dataset based on a predetermined Excel template.

Finally, while SMIs share personal details about their life to strengthen the bonds with their audiences, the questions of "*When do these cross the lines of morality and decency becoming simply inappropriate and too explicit in their content?*" and "*Are brands willing to be associated with this type of content or are they just not aware of it?*" arise. Such content is rarely forgotten and can be brought up at any time, therefore, brands looking to work with volatile SMIs should be aware that they may not change their behaviour after being contracted. This viewpoint is best supported by the statements made by JEFFREE STAR in an interview with *Allure* Magazine, where he justifies his past confrontations with brands without taking any apparent responsibility or suggestion that he was aware of the negative consequences of his actions:

> *"We all know I've fought with several makeup brands over the years and I think what happens is we forget that we're all just people with feelings".* – JEFFREE STAR (Mackenzie 2017)

11. APPENDIX

11.1 Appendix 1

CU ethics certificate of approval for pilot API study:

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THE APOSTLES OF THE DIGITAL ERA - PILOT RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION

ⓘ This project was submitted via the Legacy version of CU ETHICS, therefore some sections may be incomplete

Project [Low risk]   Checklist **8**   Comments **7**   Approval Stages [Authorised]

Applicant Details

Full name	Isabel Galvis
Faculty/Subsidiary/Area	Faculty of Business and Law
School/Institute/Unit	School of Marketing and Management
Research Centre	None
Supervisor	Prof. Lyndon Simkin
Module name	FBL-PHD - FBL PhD Students Applications

CU ethics certificate of approval for main API study:

(/app)

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ETHICS

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PROJECT P72733

THE APOSTLES OF THE DIGITAL ERA - TWITTER API RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION

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Project [Medium risk]   Checklist **15**   Comments **5**   Approval Stages [Authorised]

Applicant Details

Full name	Isabel Galvis
Faculty/Subsidiary/Area	Faculty of Business and Law
School/Institute/Unit	School of Marketing and Management
Research Centre	None
Supervisor	Prof. Lyndon Simkin
Module name	FBL-PHD - FBL PhD Students Applications

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11.2 Appendix 2

Further concepts from Bourdieu's theories and their measures are described in   Table 11.1:

FIELD	DEFINITION / USE	AUTHOR
SOCIAL TIES		
Sociology	The strength of social ties can be measured by the time invested in maintaining the ties, the emotional intensity and the degree of intimacy, the level of reciprocity in the relationship.	(Granovetter 1973)
	Measure: Measuring Tie Strength.	(Marsden and Campbell 1984)
WOM	The value of the message depends on the strength of the tie with the sender and the likelihood that the source possesses information that the recipient does not and its position intersects a cluster different to the recipient, playing the role of information broker.	(Burt 2000)
	Measure: Cambridge Social Interaction and Stratification (CAMSIS) Scale.	(Stewart, Prandy and Blackburn 1980)
Marketing	A strong relationship can impact positively a range of outcome variables including share of the business, customer advocacy and profit.	(Narver and Slater 1990)
	Measure: Measuring Strong, Weak and In-Between Ties.	(Huszti, Dávid and Vajda 2013)
	A greater number of strong ties enhances social capital through cohesion, loyalty and trust among members sharing ethnic characteristics and key facets of economic social life.	(Portes 1998)
	Homophily is related to strong social ties (bonding ties) and social capital.	(Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe 2007)
	The strength of weak ties for job research.	(Granovetter 1973)
	Cross-platform comparison of users-gratification, bridging and bonding in SNS.	(Phua, Jin and Kim 2017)
TRUST, AUTHENTICITY		
Psychology	Relationships cannot be created or managed without trust.	(Morgan and Hunt 1994)
Business	There is a distinction between trust in individuals and in an organisation.	(Hopewell 2015)
Marketing	Trust is an antecedent of commitment in a relationship.	(Morgan and Hunt 1994)
	New measures of authenticity in YouTube.	(Tolson 2010)
INFLUENCE, PERSUASION		
Psychology	An individual's actions can cause some contacts to do the same by providing information or by increasing the value of the action to them.	(Bandura 1977)
Marketing	Targeting social persuasion with SMIs.	(Langner, Hennigs and Wiedmann 2013)
	WOM relates to impersonal products, information and experience outside the social circle, that can outweigh the "*like-me*" benefit, allowing dissimilar links to be information brokers. eWOM affects consumption behaviours, ranging from product knowledge to variety seeking.	(Oliver 2014)
	eWOM affected the consumption behaviours of users in virtual communities, ranging from the extent of their product knowledge to the breadth of their variety seeking. Not all eWOM communications are equally persuasive. When eWOM is sponsored, it is not as effective, as sponsorship leads to source bias and recipients may discount sponsored messages.	(King, Racherla and Bush 2014)
NETWORK		
Sociology	Structure, size and scope enhance the relational and cognitive aspects of the network.	(Bourdieu 1977; Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998)
	Personal networks are a major source of cultural resources, more powerful than class itself.	(Erickson 1996)
Network Analysis	Centrally located nodes are critical to the information flow and exchange of knowledge within the network, accumulate greater knowledge and are in are more likely to innovative.	(Salman and Saives 2005)
Marketing	Leveraging brand messages by using SMIs.	(Ioanid, Militaru and Mihai 2015)
ATTACHMENT, INVOLVEMENT		
Psychology	Attachment is an emotion-laden target-specific bond between a person and a specific object.	(Bowlby 2005; Bowlby 2012)
	Measure: Multi-item Measures of the four attachment behaviours.	(Hazan and Shaver 1990; Hazan and Shaver 1994)
	Stronger attachments are associated with feeling connection, affection, love and passion.	(Hazan and Shaver 1987)
	Desire to make strong emotional attachments to others is a basic human need.	(Bowlby 2012)
	State of mental readiness that influences the allocation of cognitive resources to a consumption object, decision or action.	(Thomson, MacInnis and Park 2005)
	Measure: Involvement scale ($\alpha = 0.94$).	(Zaichkowsky 1985)
Marketing	People can form emotional attachments to a variety of objects, including gifts, pets, collectables, places, celebrities, brands or other types of special or favourite objects.	(Bowlby 2012)
STATUS, POWER		
Sociology	Network size and diversity increase with social status.	(Marsden 1987)
	Cultural inequality is more a hierarchy of knowledge than of taste.	(Erickson 1996)
PRACTICES AND DOXA		
Business	Employees in an organisation share a characteristic *habitus*, practices and *doxa*s.	(Lyke 2017)

Table 11.1 Other Important Theories, Concepts and Measures

11.3 Appendix 3

Additional Terms and Conditions of Leading SNS are described in Table 11.2

SNS	CONSENT POLICY

YOUTUBE (*YouTube* 2010)	'You agree not to collect or harvest any personal data of any user of the Website or any Service (and agree that this shall be deemed to include YouTube account names)'
	
	'When you upload or post Content to YouTube, you grant:
	
	    A. to YouTube, a worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty-free, transferable licence (with right to sub-licence) to use, reproduce, distribute, prepare derivative works of, display and perform that Content in connection with the provision of the Service and otherwise in connection with the provision of the Service and YouTube's business, including without limitation for promoting and redistributing part or all of the Service (and derivative works thereof) in any media formats and through any media channels;
	    B. to each user of the Service, a worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty-free licence to access your Content through the Service and to use, reproduce, distribute, prepare derivative works of, display and perform such Content to the extent permitted by the functionality of the Service and under these Terms'.
	
	'With the exception of Content submitted to the Service by you, all other Content on the Service is either owned by or licensed to YouTube and is subject to copyright, trademark rights and other intellectual property rights of YouTube or YouTube's licensors. Any third-party trade or service marks present on Content not uploaded or posted by you are trade or service marks of their respective owners. Such Content may not be downloaded, copied, reproduced, distributed, transmitted, broadcast, displayed, sold, licensed or otherwise exploited for any other purpose whatsoever without the prior written consent of YouTube or where applicable, YouTube's licensors. YouTube and its licensors reserve all rights not expressly granted in and to their Content'.

INSTAGRAM (*Instagram Inc.* 2013)	'You are solely responsible for your conduct and any data, text, files, information, usernames, images, graphics, photos, profiles, audio and video clips, sounds, musical works, works of authorship, applications, links and other content or materials (collectively, "Content") that you submit, post or display on or via the Service'. 'Instagram does not claim ownership of any Content that you post on or through the Service. Instead, you hereby grant to Instagram a non-exclusive, fully paid and royalty-free, transferable, sub-licensable, worldwide license to use the Content that you post on or through the Service, subject to the Service's Privacy Policy, available here http://instagram.com/legal/privacy/, including but not limited to sections 3 ("Sharing of Your Information"), 4 ("How We Store Your Information") and 5 ("Your Choices About Your Information"). You can choose who can view your Content and activities, including your photos, as described in the Privacy Policy'. 'You represent and warrant that: (i) you own the Content posted by you on or through the Service or otherwise have the right to grant the rights and licenses set forth in these Terms of Use; (ii) the posting and use of your Content on or through the Service does not violate, misappropriate or infringe on the rights of any third party, including, without limitation, privacy rights, publicity rights, copyrights, trademark and/or other intellectual property rights; (iii) you agree to pay for all royalties, fees and any other monies owed by reason of Content you post on or through the Service; and (iv) you have the legal right and capacity to enter into these Terms of Use in your jurisdiction'.
SNAPCHAT (*Snap Inc.* 2017)	'You may not copy, modify, distribute, sell or lease any part of our Services, nor may you reverse engineer or attempt to extract the source code of that software, unless laws prohibit these restrictions or you have our written permission to do so'. 'Many of our Services let you create, upload, post, send, receive and store content. When you do that, you retain whatever ownership rights in that content you had to begin with. But you grant us a license to use that content. How broad that license is depends on which Services you use and the settings you have selected. We call Story submissions that are set to be viewable by Everyone as well as content you submit to crowd-sourced Services, including Our Story, "Public Content." For all content you submit to the Services other than Public Content, you grant Snap Inc. and our affiliates a worldwide, royalty-free, sublicensable and transferable license to host, store, use, display, reproduce, modify, adapt, edit, publish and distribute that content. This license is for the limited purpose of operating, developing, providing, promoting and improving the Services and researching and developing new ones. Because Public Content is inherently public and chronicles matters of public interest, the license you grant us for this content is broader. In addition to granting us the rights mentioned in the previous paragraph, you also grant us a perpetual license to create derivative works from, promote, exhibit, broadcast, syndicate, sublicense, publicly perform and publicly display Public Content in any form and in any and all media or distribution methods (now known or later developed). To the extent it's necessary, when you appear in, create, upload, post or send Public Content, you also grant Snap Inc., our affiliates and our business partners the unrestricted, worldwide, perpetual right and

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Table 11.2 Additional Terms and Conditions of Leading SNS

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