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**The Prop Metaphor:  
How Consumers and Socially-visible Brands Connect**

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**The Prop Metaphor:  
How Consumers and Socially-visible Brands Connect**

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## **Dedication**

To my family:

Steven Allen Schulz

Debora Jean Schulz

Eric Steven Schulz

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**The Prop Metaphor:**  
**How Consumers and Socially-visible Brands Connect**

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Post-purchase consumer behavior is an area of consumer research that is underdeveloped. One new phenomenon that can be used to study post-purchase consumer behavior is the individual behavior related to “socially-visible brands.” A socially-visible brand (SVB) is a brand located on or near a person’s physical body while they are out in the public atmosphere. Understanding consumers’ use of their socially-visible brands sheds light onto this form of post-purchase behavior. From a theoretical standpoint, impression management theory from the field of social psychology and consumer culture theory from the field of consumer research were juxtaposed and applied to the topic of socially-visible brands. An organizing framework is presented which adapts the dramaturgical concepts from impression management theory to the field of consumer behavior. Two studies are then presented which look at consumer behavior through this organizing framework. Study one delves into the consumer culture surrounding consumer behavior associated with socially-visible brands. Study two shows how market segmentation factors predict consumer behaviors associated with socially-visible brands. The overall argument being made here that socially-visible brands are a “prop” or tool consumers use during their presentation of self to others.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Solomon (2009) defined consumer behavior as, “the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires” (p. 7). Understanding consumer behavior is a key to success for both marketing and advertising practitioners. It is a common strategy for both groups to engage in some form of market research as a way to understand the consumers they are trying to reach. From this, marketers can make strategic decisions about the four p’s of the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion) for any given brand, while advertisers can make strategic decisions about the campaign they will build around a brand (account planning, media buying, and creative execution).

The short-term goal for both groups is for the consumer to engage in a transaction with the brand, and the long-term goal for both groups is for the consumer to repeatedly purchase the brand over a period of time. This is the core assumption of brand loyalty. Marketing practitioners are often more heavily focused on the short-term goals discussed here, since they tend to place more emphasis on numbers related to sales, revenues, cost per goods sold, profits, market share, etc. Advertising practitioners are often more heavily focused on the long-term goals being discussed here. This is because they tend to place more emphasis on numbers related to brand awareness, brand attitudes, purchase intent, etc.

From this, both marketing and advertising practitioners along with marketing and advertising scholars have heavily focused on pre-purchase decision making processes involved with consumer behavior. In other words, what will make consumer X purchase

brand Y under condition Z? However, looking back at the definition of consumer behavior depicted in the first sentence of this paper, one can see that consumers continue to engage with the brand after they have made the decision to purchase it. In terms of a single transaction, the study of pre-purchase decisions is very intuitive. But, if the ultimate goal is brand loyalty through repeated purchases (which are often based on fluctuating perceptions of brand equity), then consumer post-purchase behavior should also be analyzed in an in-depth manner.

The argument is made here that post-purchase consumer behavior is an area of consumer research that is underdeveloped. This is true for both advertising and marketing practitioners but also for advertising and marketing scholars. Much of the academic literature on consumer behavior mirrors the actions of practitioners: a narrow emphasis on the pre-purchase decision making processes. The current research project is geared to extend the literature on post-purchase consumer behavior. The author's previous research has uncovered a new phenomenon related to post-purchase consumer behavior, and the research results presented here begins to aid in understanding this new phenomenon in a way that will benefit both advertising and marketing practitioners and scholars. This newly identified phenomenon is called "socially-visible brands."

A socially-visible brand (SVB) is a brand located on or near a person's physical body while he or she is out in the public atmosphere. This often includes the brands located on products such as clothes, shoes, glasses, sunglasses, and jewelry the person is wearing, but can also include the to-go beverages they bring with them, or even the purses, backpacks, tote bags, messenger bags, laptop computers, notebooks, and pens one carries by his or her side. Gaining understanding of consumers' post-purchase behavior in

terms of their socially-visible brand use will shed light onto how consumers are using products that display socially-visible brands and what “use of the brand” consumers experience when they wear and/or use products out in public where the brand is visible to others. It is argued here that socially-visible brands are communicating information to others about the consumer who is displaying this brand. Therefore, these socially-visible brands acts as a tool, or prop that consumers use in post-purchase consumption habits to communicate various aspects of their identity to others.

The research project presented here is focused on understanding the phenomenon of socially-visible brand and to validate the prop metaphor in consumer research. The overarching research question for this project asks, how do consumers use brands in a socially-visible way in order to create their identity and then communicate this identity to others? By studying the post-purchase consumer behavior associated with socially-visible brands, and by studying market segmentation factors associated with consumers, one will begin to answer these questions.

In chapter 2, a literature review is provided on the research surrounding the topics of consumers, brands, and identity. The goal is to understand how each area is discussed independently in the literature. From all of this, a gap in the literature emerges. The phenomenon of socially-visible brands is a conceptually unique area of interest, and the study one and study two research projects executed for this study attempted to uncover more about this phenomenon.

Then in chapter 3, the theoretical perspective of impression management theory from the field of social psychology is presented because it begins to connect the topics of “consumers” and “identity.” Impression management theory explains how individuals



create and communicate their identity to others. Next, from the field of consumer behavior, consumer culture theory is discussed. This theory describes a post-positivistic orientation to the study of consumer behavior. It also begins to connect the topics of “consumers” and “brands.” The final step is to juxtapose these two theories, and apply this knowledge to the phenomenon of socially-visible brands.

Chapter 4 discusses two pre-tests that were conducted by the author. Each pre-test supplies key information for the current study.

Chapter 5 lays out the methodology for study one. It is a qualitative look at post-purchase consumer behaviors in relation to socially-visible brands.

Chapter 6 presents the results from the qualitative interviews. First, the dramaturgical concepts from impression management theory are interpreted in the field of consumer behavior. Then, an organizing framework is presented which translates dramaturgical concepts into consumer behavior concepts. Research question one (How Do Consumers Use and Wear Socially-visible Brands?) is answered from the photographs taken during the interviews. The themes that develop out of this are: 1) brand frequency, 2) brand visibility, 3) brand distribution, and 4) brand abbreviation. Research question two (How Are Consumers Discussing the Socially-visible Brands They Use and Wear?) is answered from the interview transcripts. The themes that develop out of this area are: 1) utility, 2) attachment, and 3) trajectory. Overall, it is argued that the prop metaphor in consumer research is validated through the documentation, categorization, and interpretation from the interview study.

Chapter 7 lays out the methodology for study two. It is a quantitative look at post-purchase consumer behaviors in relation to socially-visible brands.

Chapter 8 presents the results from a quantitative survey. It indicates that demographics such as sex, age, education, and personal income do impact consumers' perceptions and behavioral intentions towards socially-visible brands. The cross-tabulations with sex showed that women were more likely to report behavioral intentions of wearing socially-visible brands, wearing larger socially-visible brands, socially-visible brands that display the full brand name, while men were more likely to report behavioral intentions of not wearing socially-visible brands in general, but if they would wear socially-visible brands, they would wear smaller socially-visible brands, and abbreviated socially-visible brands. Age correlated positively with the consumer-brand perceptions of the brand personality ruggedness. Age also correlated positively with brand extension fit. Education correlated negatively with brand visibility size. Finally, personal income positively correlated with the consumer-brand perception scale for the ruggedness brand personality. Personal income also correlated negatively with brand visibility size and brand visibility presence behavioral intentions.

Chapter 9 supplies a discussion and directions for future research, and finally chapter 10 concludes and summarizes this report. The overall argument being made here is that socially-visible brands are a “prop” consumers use during their presentation of self to others. Through socially-visible brands, consumers are communicating various aspects of their identity.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

A synthesized literature review on the topics of consumers, brands, and identity is discussed below. From this, the research questions were generated for the current study. Since the primary research question for this study is to understand how consumers use socially-visible brands to communicate their identity, it is important to provide an overview of each stream of research related to the core topics of this research question. For the topic of consumers, the emphasis was on conspicuous consumption and materialism. Conspicuous consumption describes the social use of brands. Materialism describes the perceived connection between consumers and the products they own. For the topic of brands, the emphasis was on consumer-brand connections. This looks more specifically at the perceived connections between consumers and the brands that they own. Finally, for the topic of identity, the emphasis was on the creation and communication of one's self-concept and social selves. This describes how individuals in general go about the process of creating and communicating their identity.

For each area, a seminal author was chosen and discussed in an in-depth manner. These authors were engaging in pioneering research at the time of their publication, and are therefore heavily cited by many subsequent researchers who study a similar field of interest. Several other researchers' works are also discussed to supply breadth of knowledge.

### **Consumers**

*Conspicuous consumption.* Conspicuous consumption describes the visibly displayed use of a brand and or product. Veblen's (1899/1981) seminal book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, analyzed the social distinctions made between upper and lower

classes of society through the displayed conspicuousness of certain behaviors.

Specifically, the conspicuous consumption of leisure and the conspicuous consumption of products are ways for people with a privileged status to communicate their higher social rank to others via their absence of work and wastefulness of spending.

Veblen also described the social process commonly referred to as “keeping up with the Joneses” which explains the continual one-upmanship as individuals strive to outdo his or her social equal in order to establish social dominance. He called this process “the pecuniary standard of living” (p. 63):

In any community where goods are held in severalty it is necessary, in order to his own peace of mind, that an individual should possess as large a portion of goods as others with whom he is accustomed to class himself; and it is extremely gratifying to possess something more than others. But as fast as a person makes new acquisitions, and becomes accustomed to the resulting new standard of wealth, the new standard forthwith ceases to afford appreciably greater satisfaction than the earlier standard did. The tendency in any case is constantly to make the present pecuniary standard the point of departure for a fresh increase of wealth; and this in turn gives rise to a new standard of sufficiency and a new pecuniary classification of one’s self as compared with one’s neighbours (sic). (p. 20)

In contemporary consumer research, the study of conspicuous consumption has also focused its scope on the upper class and on luxury brands. In line with Veblen’s work, these researchers are studying the communication of status by individuals (Mason, 1984; O’Cass & Frost, 2002; O’Cass & McEwen, 2004; O’Cass & Choy, 2008; Wiedmann, Hennings, & Siebels, 2009; Shukla, 2010) or the social power associated with brands of expensive products (Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Amaldoss & Jain, 2005; Crosno, Freling, & Skinner, 2009; Han, Nunes, & Dreze, 2010). However, it is also important to note that conspicuous consumption has been studied from the standpoint of economic theory

(Braun & Wicklund, 1989; Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996), due to the positive relationship between scarcity and value (Lynn, 1991).

*Materialism.* The topic of materialism describes the connection of consumers to the objects they possess. Belk's (1988) seminal article applied the theory of self-extension to the field of consumer research to explain the attachments consumers feel towards the items they consume. Theories of self-extension arose out of the psychology literature and they explain the multiple levels of the "self" construct. One's extended selves can be thought of as "concentric layers around the core self" (Belk, 1988, p. 152), and include one's body, one's thoughts, one's attributes, and one's possessions but can also include abstract ideas, other individuals, and even the surrounding environment.

In terms of mass communication, self-extension theory looks at the role of consumer products in building and maintaining one's sense of self. People use the possession of specific brands to express themselves (Douglas & Isherwood, 1978; Richins, 1994; Aaker, Benet-Martinez, & Garolera, 2001). Since brands possess symbolic meanings of culture, then possession of that brand allows one to indirectly possess that cultural meaning. Belk (1988) used the metaphor of "positive contamination" (p. 151) to describe the process of obtaining meaning by being in physical proximity to something possessing a desired trait. The hope is that some of the cultural significance will magically rub off from the object to the individual.

Belk (1988) argued that the reason consumer-product attachments emerge is that, "Our possessions are a major contributor to and reflections of our identities" (p. 139). In other words, the reason consumers feel some level of attachment to the items they possess is because the individual's sense of self has extended onto that item. Belk's other

articles discuss this in a more in depth manner (Belk, 1985; 1991; 1999; 2009; Belk, Ger, & Askegaard, 2003). However, other authors have explored this topic as well. For example, Wallendorf and Arnould (1988) discussed the communication aspects of objects:

We use objects as markers to denote our character to others; we also use objects as markers to remind ourselves of who we are. In this sense we derive our self-concept from objects. That is, we use objects to convey and extend our self-concepts to others as well as to demonstrate the self-concept to ourselves. Objects convey our connection to others and help express our sense of self. (p. 531)

Escalas and Bettman (2005) made similar comments:

Possessions can be used to satisfy psychological needs, such as actively creating one's self-concept, reinforcing and expressing self-identity, and allowing one to differentiate oneself and assert one's individuality. Possessions can also serve a social purpose by reflecting social ties to one's family, community, and/or cultural groups, including brand communities. (p. 378)

Other materialism researchers have looked at the development of materialism in children and young adults (Chaplin & John, 2007; Chaplin & Lowrey, 2010) and the link between materialism and existential security (Rindfleisch, Burroughs, & Wong, 2009) or what is also called terror management (Arndt, Solomon, Kasser, & Sheldon, 2004).

As we can see from the literature, consumers perceive special attachments to particular possessions (via materialism), and they publicly consume these items in order to communicate information to others (via conspicuous consumption). Since the current research project is focusing more on brands instead of products, it is also important to look at consumer-brand connections.

## **Brands**

Fournier's (1998) relationship theory is a seminal article on consumer-brand connections. Fournier sought to validate a relationship metaphor through the

operationalization of ways to measure a relationship's quality and strength. Many of the other research studies focusing on consumer-brand connections generated scales that can be used to measure the consumer's perception of the brand, including brand personality (Aaker, 1997); brand equity (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000); brand superiority (Maheswaran, 1994); and social value (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Consumer-brand scales also exist which attempt to measure the strength of the consumer-brand connection including brand familiarity (Simonin & Ruth, 1998); brand involvement (Kirmani, Sood, & Bridges, 1999); brand loyalty (Sen, Gurhan-Canali, & Morwitz, 2001); brand commitment (Beatty, Kahle, & Homer, 1988); satisfaction (Shiv & Huber, 2000); and trust in the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

## **Identity**

*Identity creation.* An individual's identity is made up of two parts: 1) the individual's evaluation of himself or herself which is called "self-concept" and 2) the individual's social identity, which evaluates how others view him or her. Social identity theory argues that one's personal identity (the individual self) and one's social identities (the collective selves) combine to form one's total identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Hogg, 2003).

*Identity communication.* Swann (1987) argued that people also engage in identity negotiations to obtain "existential security" (p. 1039). They desire stable self-concepts, and engage in activities that will provide them with feedback from others confirming their self-concept. Swann called this process "self-verification" (p. 1038). So, individuals are constantly engaging in identity communication social interactions in order to self-verify their own self-concept, social identities, and total identity.

Consumer researchers have looked at creating and communicating one's individual identity through topics such as identity reconstruction through consumption (Schouten, 1991); compensatory and/or restorative consumption (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008); stigmatized identity and consumption (Argo & Main, 2008); shaken self and restorative consumption (Gao, Wheeler, & Shiv, 2009); identity, retirement, and consumption (Schau, Gilly, & Wolfbarger, 2009); bi-cultural identity and frame switching (Luna, Ringberg, & Peracchio, 2008); family identity and consumption habits (Epp & Price, 2008; Epp & Price, 2011); identity signaling (Berger & Heath, 2007); self-construal and impulsive consumption (Zhang & Shrum, 2009); self-concept and products (Solomon 1983); and self-construal and brand identification (Swaminathan, Page, & Gurhan-Canli, 2007). In terms of creating and communicating one's social identity, consumer researchers have looked at communal consumption (Ramanathan & McGill, 2007) or what is sometimes referred to as brand communities (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001); ideology and consumption communities (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007); social culture and consumption (McCracken, 1986); consumer competitiveness and consumption (Mowen, 2004); consumption mimicry by others (Tanner, Ferraro, Chartrand, Bettman, & Van Baaren, 2008); and reference groups and brand dissociation (White & Dahl, 2007).

Tying it all together, from the above literature one can see that past researchers have looked at how consumers use brands and products in a conspicuous manner (conspicuous consumption), the attachments consumers possess towards these products (materialism), the attachments consumers possess towards brands (consumer-brand perceptions), and how consumers are creating and communicating their identity to others



(individual and social identity). However, no previous research has looked at how consumers use socially-visible brands in order to create and communicate their identity. A gap in the literature exists. The next section goes on to further explain this gap by identifying this unique unit of analysis – socially-visible brands – and how it is conceptually distinct from other topics in the current literature.

### **GAP IN THE LITERATURE**

In order to be clear about the unit of analysis of socially-visible brands, four conceptual distinctions will be made to illustrate the lack of prior examination of the conspicuous consumption of all brands that are used in public. The four conceptual distinctions are: 1) studying conspicuous vs. inconspicuous consumption, 2) studying brands vs. products, 3) studying socially-visible vs. invisible brands, and 4) studying both luxury brands as well as mass consumed brands.

#### **Distinction #1: Conspicuous vs. Inconspicuous Consumption**

Berger and Ward (2010) uncovered the notion of inconspicuous consumption. In a pre-test, the authors first sought to understand the occurrence of brand explicitness at it pertains to the price of the product. The authors conducted a content analysis of the brand explicitness of sunglasses. Their results showed an inverted U-shaped relationship between brand prominence and product price. Specifically, 21% of the sunglasses whose price was less than \$50 displayed a brand logo. But, 84% of the sunglasses whose price was between \$100 and \$300 displayed a brand logo. However, only 30% of sunglasses whose price was above \$500 displayed a brand logo. The authors replicated these results with the product category of women's handbags.

In light of these results, the primary research question for their research study was to understand this U-shaped pattern between brand prominence and product price, and explain how this pattern impacts interpersonal interactions among consumers who purchase these goods. Berger and Ward (2010) hypothesized that the U-shaped pattern is occurring in part because of conspicuous consumption. They argue that consumers of low-priced sunglasses are not eager to visually display this brand to others. But, consumers of medium-priced sunglasses are eager to visually display this brand because it communicates a measure of social distinction from the consumers who purchase the low priced sunglasses. This behavior falls in line with a lot of previous research on conspicuous consumption – those with more social power communicating their distinctiveness from those with less social power (Veblen, 1899/1981). Therefore, the process of conspicuous consumption is explaining the increase of brand explicitness from low to medium priced sunglasses.

But, Berger and Ward (2010) explained the decrease in brand explicitness as the price goes from medium to high priced sunglasses with a process they called “inconspicuous consumption” (p. 555). They argued that consumers of high-priced sunglasses are engaging in a slightly different behavioral process. Rather than showing distinctiveness from the lower classes in order to communicate their social power, they display a visual cue as a way to mark social inclusion and similarity with other consumers who possess high social status. In other words, they use subtle signals that other high-end consumers will recognize, but are unrecognizable to consumers of the low and mid price range of a given product category because they are not familiar with these communicative signals.

Overall, the post-purchase consumer behavior process Berger and Ward uncovered – inconspicuous consumption – studies the communication of identity cues to other consumers. But, the subtle aesthetic cues of inconspicuous consumption (such as the red under sole on the Christian Louboutin shoes and Burberry plaid pattern) are not included in this study since they are something *in addition to* the actual brand name and logo associated with a product. Socially-visible brands falls under the category of conspicuous consumption, not inconspicuous consumption. Therefore, the current research project focuses on the conspicuous consumption of brands.

### **Distinction #2: Conspicuous Consumption of Brands vs. Products**

As stated above, Veblen's (1899/1981) book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, analyzed the social distinctions made between upper and lower classes of society through the displayed conspicuousness of certain behaviors:

It is a distinction of a personal kind – of superiority and inferiority. (p. 5)

In any community where such an invidious comparison of persons is habitually made, visible success becomes an end sought for its own utility as a basis of esteem. Esteem is gained and dispraise is avoided by putting one's efficiency in evidence. (p. 10)

Veblen often focused directly on the upper class, and how they remain distinct from the middle class, and then how the middle class mimics the upper classes as a way remain distinct from the lower class. Veblen called this process “pecuniary emulation” (p. 15):

It is among this highest leisure class, who have no superiors and few peers, that decorum finds its fullest and maturest expression; and it is this highest class also that gives decorum that definitive formulation which serves as a canon of conduct for the classes beneath. (p. 33)

By narrowly focusing on the upper classes' conspicuous behavior, Veblen studied the process of the communication of social status via social power, although he often referred to this as the communication of social honor, reputation, or respect:

The possession of goods, whether acquired aggressively by one's own exertion or passively by transmission through inheritance from others, becomes a conventional basis of reputability. The possession of wealth, which was at the outset valued simply as an evidence of efficiency, becomes, in popular apprehension, itself a meritorious act. Wealth is now itself intrinsically honourable (sic) and confers honour (sic) on its possessor. (p. 19)

In order to stand well in the eyes of the community, it is necessary to come up to a certain, somewhat indefinite, conventional standard of wealth; just as in the earlier predatory stage it is necessary for the barbarian man to come up to the tribe's standard of physical endurance, cunning, and skill at arms. (p. 20)

It is important to note that Veblen made no mention of the conspicuous consumption of specific brands, he only discussed one's leisure time and products. This is in large part due to the date of the publication (late 1800s) which was during the industrializing age surrounding the Industrial Revolution (early 1800s) (Arens, Winegold, & Arens, 2009). In the current research project, the focus will be on the conspicuous consumption of brands rather than products.

### **Distinction #3: Conspicuous Consumption of Socially-visible Brands**

The socially-visible (vs. privately-visible) distinction is the third conception that needs to be assessed. Coupland's (2005) phenomenon of "invisible brands" (p. 106) will aid in this discussion. Coupland defined an invisible brand as, "a brand that has been taken from the marketplace and now exists in the household, yet is considered mundane and blends into the household environment in an inconspicuous manner" (p. 106).

For her research, Coupland (2005) conducted a 16-month ethnography in two households (the Rollings and the Kitz-Mahls) in order to examine the post-purchase

consumer behavior processes that turn these brands invisible. In her results, Coupland explained the process of turning a brand into an invisible brand. This process consisted of three steps: 1) brand newness, 2) brand camouflage, and 3) brand invisibility. In terms of managerial implications, Coupland's (2005) work emphasizes the importance of product packaging, especially for low-involvement products like kitchen pantry staples. The current research project is geared more towards the brands that are consumed outside of one's home. Therefore, the focus will be on the conspicuous consumption of socially-visible brands rather than privately-visible brands.

#### **Distinction #4: Luxury Brands and Mass Consumed Brands**

Much of contemporary academic research on the conspicuous consumption of brands focuses narrowly on luxury brands. These studies focus on high-end brands and how consumers of luxury brands communicate their social status to others (Wiedmann, Hennings, & Siebels, 2009; Han, Nunes, & Dreze, 2010; Shukla, 2010). But, the focus of this research project is to study the communication of identity (not solely status). Therefore, the last conceptual distinction argues that when one is studying socially-visible brands, one is broadening the scope from just luxury brands (high price range) to include the mass consumed brands (low to mid price range). It is important to note that this includes luxury brands. Therefore, the conceptualization of socially-visible brands is the conspicuous consumption of brands that are visible in the social atmosphere, and includes luxury and mass consumed brands.

### **CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

With a firmer understanding of the term socially-visible brands and how it is grounded in the academic literature, the discussion will now layer on two theoretical perspectives. First, the theory of impression management will be covered from the social psychology literature. This theory utilizes a unique theatric metaphor in describing the identity negotiation process. In particular, researchers can study how objects are often utilized by individuals as props for their presentation of self. Then, consumer culture theory from the field of consumer behavior will be discussed. This perspective is grounded in a holistic, naturalistic, and interpretive approach to studying consumer behavior and social phenomena. Juxtaposing these two lines of research set the stage for the current research study.

#### **Impression Management Theory**

Goffman's (1959) impression management theory argued that individuals utilize techniques during social interactions in order to attempt to exert control over the perceptions of others about their identity:

I shall consider the way in which the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them. (p. xi)

In line with the identity literature discussed above, the goal for any individual is to develop congruence between one's self-concept and the feedback one receives from the social groups to which one belongs:

He may wish them to think highly of him, or to think that he thinks highly of them, or to perceive how in fact he feels toward them, or to obtain no clear-cut impression; he may wish to ensure sufficient harmony so that the interaction can be sustained, or to defraud, get rid of, confuse, mislead, antagonize, or insult them. Regardless of the particular objective which the individual has in mind and

of his motive for having the objective, it will be in his interests to control the conduct of the others, especially their responsive treatment of him. (p. 3-4)

Therefore, impression management describes the process of creating and (temporarily) stabilizing one's identity. This process is continuous and everyone engages in it when they enter the social atmosphere:

When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitude toward them, his competence, his trustworthiness, etc. (p. 1)

This kind of control upon the part of the individual reinstates the symmetry of the communication process, and sets the stage for a kind of information game – a potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery. (p. 8)

The impression management process occurs with both preventive and corrective customs. Preventive customs help the individual to avoid embarrassment, while the corrective customs assist the individual in overcoming embarrassment. When these two techniques are employed by the individual, Goffman called them “defensive practices” (p. 13). When these techniques are engaged by others in terms of defining the situation, Goffman called them “protective practices” (p. 13). As one can see, the motivations for both the individual and society to engage in the impression management process are to find balance in terms of the meanings associated with the social interaction. In other words, an identity negotiation process is occurring. If balance is achieved, a level of psychological ease is created for the individual, and a level of sociological harmony is established for the members in that community.

Goffman (1959) used an interesting metaphor to explain impression management theory. He described the individual as an actor in a play who puts on a show for others,

“A ‘performance’ may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants” (p. 15).

When it is on a dyadic level, he described this social interaction as actor-to-actor, when it is on a reference group level, he described these social interactions as the group of actors in front of (or behind) the stage curtain, and when it is on a societal level, he described the social interactions as the actor (with his or her fellow performers) on stage in front of a live audience. The audience, watching the performance, evaluates whether or not the actor has succeeded in his or her intended role. If the actor is deemed successful by others in his or her role portrayal, then the individual may develop expectations of how he or she is to be treated by others in the future based on this role. But, if the actor is unsuccessful in his or her performance, it will not resonate with the audience. Therefore, through his or her poor performance, the actor cannot expect to be treated by others as someone who is successful in that role.

The application of impression management theory attempts to analyze the actor while he or she is putting on a “front” (Goffman 1959, p. 22) while in a geographic “setting” (p. 22). The actor’s front is comprised of both the actor’s “appearance” (how the actors looks) and “manner” (how the actor behaves) (p. 24). Goffman also made a point to discuss the props actors use with certain costumes, items, and masks in order to communicate his or her role in the play. He called any piece of information that can be used by the individual to manage his or her impression as a “sign-vehicle” (p. 1). Therefore, a level of semiotics is at play here, where a three-way interaction is occurring between the actor, the prop, and the audience.



Overall, impression management theory is a “framework that can be applied to any concrete social establishment, be it domestic, industrial, or commercial” (p. xi). In this research study, the impression management framework will be applied to the topic of socially-visible brands. In particular, Goffman’s (1959) prop metaphor will assist in understanding the connections between consumers and the brands they use out in public.

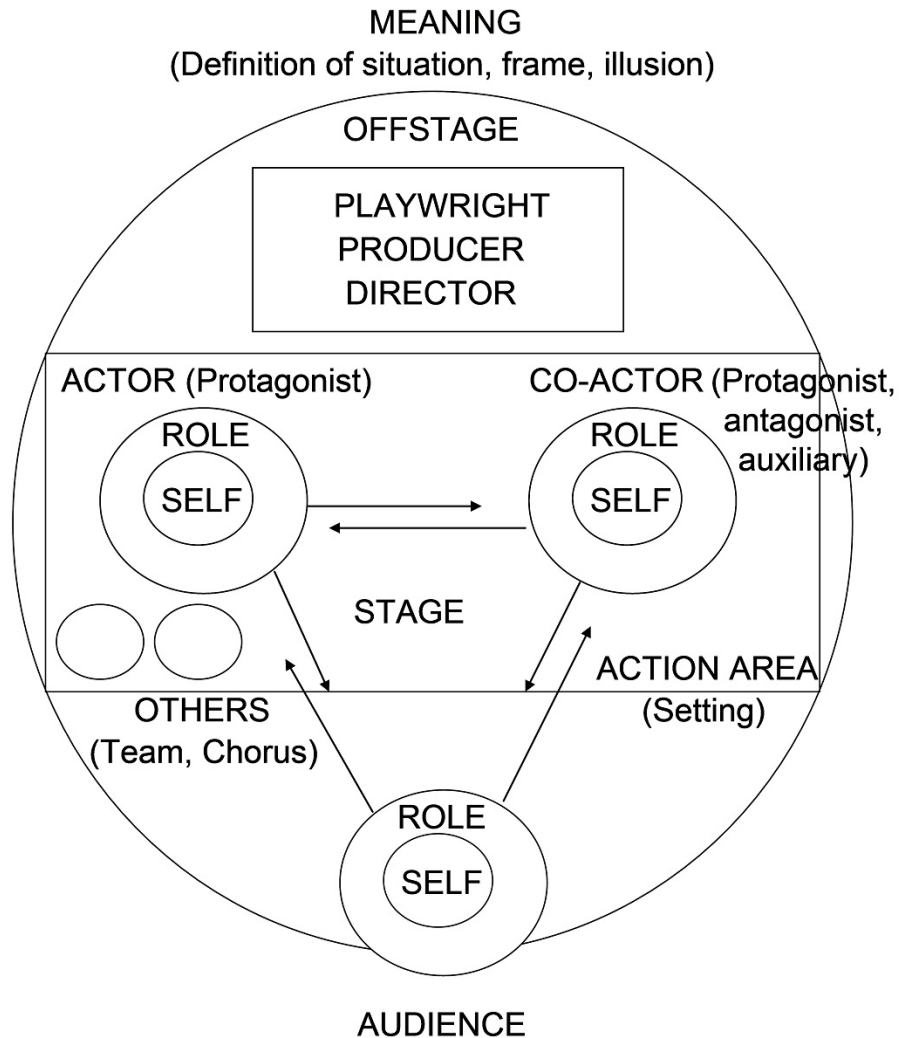
It is important to point out that the dramaturgical literature supplies a rich stream of other concepts theories that researchers can utilize for studying consumer behavior. For example, Hare and Blumberg (1988) supplied their own dramaturgical framework that is especially helpful for studying social interactions. Figure 1 displays a visual diagram depicting how their concepts may interact. Therefore, a more fleshed out theatric metaphor includes the following components:

- Stage
- Backstage
- Backstage staff
- Offstage
- Producers
- Directors
- Playwrights
- Protagonist
- Antagonist
- Roles
- Self
- Auxiliary player
- Team
- Chorus
- Reference groups
- Audience member(s)
- Props

The full use of all of these concepts for analysis is beyond the scope of this study, however the idea to supply a visual diagram for an organizing framework developed out of Hare and Blumberg’s original diagram. Dramaturgy is a rich resource for researchers

to use for studying human behavior, but in particular for consumer researchers to study consumer behavior.

**Figure 1: Hare and Blumberg (1988) Dramaturgical Framework**



(Hare & Blumberg, 1988, p. 7)

Whereas Goffman's (1959) impression management theory provides a perspective of how to study a *phenomenon* (here, the prop metaphor), consumer culture theory provides insight on how to study the *consumers connected to any given phenomena*. The discussion of theory will now shift to incorporate consumer culture theory. An overview

of consumer culture theory will be provided which will show how the consumer culture perspective has been utilized in previous research.

### **Consumer Culture Theory**

According to Arnould and Thompson (2005), consumer culture theory (CCT) is interested in studying, “the socio-cultural, experiential, symbolic, and ideological aspects of consumption” (p. 868). It approaches consumer research in a more holistic, naturalistic, and interpretive manner than much of the more positivistic research being done in this field (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although it does not adhere strictly to qualitative methodologies, many of the seminal papers for consumer culture theory are based off of ethnographies, interviews, visual rhetoric, case studies, and mixed methods.

Researchers in consumer culture theory seek to get out of the laboratory, and look at the “cultural complexity” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p. 868) and “heterogeneous distribution of meanings and multiplicity of overlapping cultural groupings that exist within the broader socio-historic frame of globalization and market capitalism” (p. 869). Perhaps what sets consumer culture theory apart from more positivistic research methodologies is its reluctance to “determine action as a causal force” (p. 869). In other words, consumer culture theory is more interested in *describing* the relationships among consumers, brands, and advertisements than *predicting* them.

Arnould and Thompson (2005) explain that much of consumer culture theory research falls under four main categories: 1) consumer identity projects, 2) marketplace cultures, 3) socio-historic patterning of consumption, and 4) mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers’ interpretive strategies. The current research project is explicitly focused on consumer identity projects. As one can see, consumer culture theory

looks at the whole consumption cycle, including “acquisition, consumption and possession, and disposition processes” (p. 871) from a micro, meso, and macro level. Consumer culture theory assumes an active rather than a passive consumer and therefore studies, “how consumers actively rework and transform symbolic meanings encoded in advertisements, brands, retail settings, or material goods to manifest their particular personal and social circumstances and further their identity and lifestyle goals” (p. 871).

Arnould and Thompson (2005) provided an overview of consumer culture theory studies. Four of these seminal articles will be referenced because they provide guiding frameworks for the current research project. First, Holt’s (1995) research on consumption practices discusses the use of metaphors in consumer research. For the current research project, the theatric metaphor is being adapted from Goffman’s (1959) work, and the prop metaphor is being explicitly applied to the post-purchase consumer behavior associated with socially-visible brands. Second, Fournier’s (1998) work shows how to validate a metaphor in consumer research. As one will see, Fournier validated the relationship metaphor. The current research project is seeking to validate the prop metaphor in relation to consumer behavior. Third, Muniz and O’Guinn’s (2001) work displays the process of triangulating data sources in order to come to understand a social phenomenon. These authors explained the phenomenon of brand communities in consumer behavior using interviews, netnography, and sociometry. The current research project triangulate data sources from photographs, interview transcripts, and survey items in order to understand the phenomenon of socially-visible brands. Finally, Thompson and Tambyah’s (1999) work is an excellent example of research seeking to understand how consumers construct their identity through consumption. They looked at how class and

gender are consumed for individuals who live and work internationally. The current research project studied the identities being created and communicated through the use of socially-visible brands. Looking at how previous researchers have approached studying metaphors, social phenomena, and identity narratives in consumer behavior has guided the current research agenda. In addition, the theories of impression management and consumer culture serve as anchoring points for the current study. But, before the current research project is presented, it is important to take a step back and understand how the author herself arrived at this topic. Therefore, two pre-tests are discussed which describe the author's previous endeavors to understand how consumers create and communicate their identity through socially-visible brands.

## **CHAPTER 4: AUTHOR'S PREVIOUS WORK**

Consumer researchers have long been interested in how individuals present themselves and how individuals use material goods, such as clothing and possessions (e.g., McCracken, 1986; Belk, 1988; Richins, 1994) to aid in defining and communicating their roles in society. This research stream was expanded by studying how consumers use socially-visible brands to create and communicate their identity. Socially-visible offer identity cues to others about one's self-concept, but they also assist in the bonding relationships one has with others. Therefore, they serve in the identity negotiation process between an individual and society. Social identity theory, self-verification theory, and impression management theory from social psychology were juxtaposed with consumer culture theory and self-extension theory from the field of consumer research. Overall, it was argued that socially-visible brands are a strategic tool consumers can use for creating and communicating their identity.

### **Themes of Socially-visible Brand Use**

Previous research by the author identified several themes that are incorporated into the current project. Utilizing Belk's (1988) pioneering self-extension theory (Schulz, 2009) examined how consumers use brands in order to communicate their identity to others. The process of self-extension includes the extension of one's self onto the goods consumers use, but also the extension of cultural meanings attached to brands extending themselves back onto the consumer.

While some previous research (Ahuvia, 2005; Tian & Belk, 2005) analyzed and conceptually explained the process of self-extension through brand use, little research had examined the material culture of self-extension through brand use. In other words, if the

process of self-extension were a culture, what are the norms and rituals associated with this culture? Schulz (2009) examined how individuals interact with the brands they use and how these brands can become an extension of one's identity. A three-month ethnography was conducted as a way to understand the culture of using brands for self-extension with a focus on the process of using brands in the social atmosphere and how this behavior helps them to create and communicate their identity to others. The notes taken in this study were compiled from public settings in a college town in the south central U.S. (e.g., coffee shops, sidewalks, public transportation, campus meeting spots, etc.). The researcher was primarily a passive observer of consumer brand use through self-extension in a natural environment. Since the ethnographic fieldnotes for this study were only taken in public areas, then the brands used for self-extension are the brands located on or near an individual's physical body once they have left the privacy of their own homes. In other words, the study focused on the brands that people carry along with them while participating in the process of being a social citizen, whether going to work, school, etc.

In the results the author argued that the communication of one's identity through brand self-extension is greatly affected by the choices one makes: 1) on the body, 2) with the body, 3) by the definition of what constitutes a "brand," and 4) the decision as to whether or not to even use brands. These preliminary themes described how people wear brands on their physical body and the branded locations they take their body to during their day-to-day routines. The sub-themes for the brands people wore on their body included: 1) brand frequency, 2) brand distribution, 3) brand visibility, 4) brand recognition, 5) brand layering, and 6) brand clustering.

## **Brands on the Body**

*Brand frequency & brand distribution.* Brand frequency describes the number of visible brands showing on an individual's body that can be viewed by others. An individual may possess a brand frequency count of zero, one, five, etc. It is dependent on the individual's decision to wear and/or carry articles around with them. Brand distribution is the placement of brands on various locations of the human body. While collecting observation notes during this ethnographic study, the author noticed that the human body can be divided into five specific areas where brand placement is extremely common. These five areas are: 1) head, 2) torso, 3) hands, 4) legs, and 5) feet. As one can see, brand distribution and brand frequency are highly related because the higher amounts of visible brands on one's body means that the individual probably has also placed these brands in more than one location on his/her body.

*Brand visibility & brand recognition.* Brand visibility describes the likelihood that others will see and therefore receive the communication about one's identity through brand use. In other words, brand visibility describes the size and/or the brand's ability to attract attention. One way to measure brand visibility would be to determine if others could see one's brand from one foot away, five feet away, 50 feet away, etc. Another theme related to the idea of brand visibility is the theme brand recognition. Many corporate brand logos are often abbreviations, acronyms or purely visual logos. Many people may "see" this brand placed on an individual's body. However, if it is some form of an abbreviation then only the people who recognize what that brand stands for will understand the identity the individual is trying to communicate. An example of an abbreviation would be "McD's" which stands for McDonalds. Some examples of



acronyms would include “A&F” which stands for Abercrombie and Fitch, “D&G” which stands for Dolce and Gabbana, and “LV” which stands for Louis Vuitton. An example of a purely visual logo would include the Nike swoosh.

*Brand layering & brand clustering.* Two final, inter-related sub-themes deal with an individual’s decision to wear multiple brands. The first is called brand layering, and it describes an individual’s decision to wear multiple brands that do not share commonalities. An example would be if a person was walking down the street wearing a Nike t-shirt and Levi’s jeans, while carrying Starbucks coffee and an Apple computer laptop. The second interrelated sub-theme is brand clustering, and describes an individual’s decision to wear multiple brands that do share commonalities. An example of this is when an individual is wearing several pieces of athletic-oriented brands: a Nike t-shirt, Adidas track pants, Puma tennis shoes, and a Converse baseball hat.

These six sub-themes involve decisions an individual makes about how they will use brands on their body in order to communicate their identity to others through self-extension. Each decision affects the communication process because each brand possesses a level of communicative power, and the inclusion of each brand affects all the other brands included. Overall, the ethnographic study on self-extension through brand use, the argument was made that the daily decisions one makes on the body, with the body, with less traditional brands and without brands at all greatly impacts the ability for brands to communicate one’s identity. The fact that the majority of people wear different clothes everyday means that one is not even allowed to “be” the same person day after day. Therefore, the continual process of identity negotiation occurs not only between strangers, but also among acquaintances each and every day.

## **CHAPTER 5: INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY**

The goal of this research project was to document and understand the phenomenon of socially-visible brands. The author's previous research had looked at the phenomenon of socially-visible brands using two distinctly qualitative methods: ethnographic observation fieldnotes and face-to-face interviews. In previous research (Schulz, 2009; Schulz & Stout, 2010), patterns of behavior were being recognized and studied, and then people were interviewed to talk about these patterns. Now, with a firmer understanding of the topic of socially-visible brands, collecting descriptive data on a more detailed level of is the next step. The interviews investigated actual socially-visible brand use by everyday consumers. One goal here is to advance the consumer culture theory literature by studying consumer behavior in a qualitative fashion. Like stated above, consumer culture theory is a post-positivistic approach to studying consumer behavior, and therefore the data collection methodology has been set up according to post-positivistic guidelines. See Appendix 1 for a summary of Lincoln & Guba's [1985] characteristics of post-positivistic research.

### **Research Questions**

The interviews sought to answer the following two research questions:

**RQ1:** How do consumers use and wear socially-visible brands?

**RQ2:** How are consumers discussing the socially-visible brands they use and wear?

Research question one is geared towards looking at the experiential and holistic aspects of the post-purchase consumption habits related to socially-visible brands (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). By looking at the behaviors associated with socially-visible brand use, the researcher can begin to understand the "cultural complexity" (Arnould & Thompson,

2005, p. 868) of socially-visible brand use. Wearing socially-visible brands is an experience the consumer engages in, and the researcher can look at this experience and develop ways to analyze it.

The second research question is focused more on one of Arnould and Thompson's (2005) main categories of consumer culture theory: consumer identity projects. By talking with consumers about the socially-visible brands they wear, the researcher can begin to understand how consumers use socially-visible brands as a way to create and communicate their identity. Identity and consumption is a relevant topic to marketing and advertising scholars and practitioners (Schouten, 1991; Berger & Heath, 2007; Swaminathan, Page, & Gurhan-Canli, 2007; Ramanathan & McGill, 2007; White & Dahl, 2007; Ringberg, & Peracchio, 2008; Rucker & Galinsky, 2008; Gao, Wheeler, & Shiv, 2009; Schau, Gilly, & Wolfbarger, 2009; Zhang & Shrum, 2009; Epp & Price, 2011). In line with the theatric metaphor that Goffman (1959) outlined in his impression management theory, the overall goal for the interviews was to talk with respondents in order to discuss how they use socially-visible brands as a way to create and communicate their identity.

### **Study Protocol**

Face-to-face interviews took place with 20 research participants. Each interview occurred in the participant's home. By going into their house, the author was able to study more areas of the impression management process in a "natural setting" (see Appendix 1). In particular, the individual's home can be viewed as that individual's backstage where the actor gets ready to enter the social atmosphere.

The interviews were audio recorded with a digital voice recorder. After signing a consent form, the interviewer first asked respondents about their life histories, interests, major accomplishments, and top-of-mind brand awareness. This was to gain an overall snapshot of the individual's sense of self. Then, respondents were asked to create five outfits for various social situations. The social situations were: 1) their favorite outfit, 2) an outfit for a typical workday, 3) an outfit for going out with friends, 4) an outfit for an evening meal with one's family, and 5) an outfit for date night with his/her significant other. Each assembled outfit was laid out on the floor or a bed and photographed with a digital camera.

The brands in each outfit were written down, and the researcher took note of which brands were socially-visible. Then, the interviewer and the research participants again sat down and discussed each socially-visible brand and his or her outfits in greater detail. In terms of the socially-visible brands, the research participants were asked: What meanings come to mind when you think about this brand? How did you first hear about this brand? What motivates you to purchase this brand again and again?, and so forth. Next, when discussing each outfit, the participants were shown the BrandAsset Valuator archetypes (Arens, Winegold, & Arens, 2009) and asked to pick one of the archetypes as a role that fits with the current identity they are trying to communicate with that outfit. The full interview protocol can be seen in Appendix 2.

Interview respondents were then asked to again go through their closet and pull out any additional item with a socially-visible brand. The definition of a socially-visible brand was explained to each research participant so they understood what to look for and present to the researcher. These items were photographed as well. This information

captured the array of choices consumers have at their disposal in terms of the socially-visible brands. Finally, respondents filled out a brief demographic survey.

### **Population Sampling**

Utilizing a non-probability sampling method, a sample of 20 research participants brought in descriptive data to reach a level of saturation needed for post-positivistic data analysis. Weiss (1994) outlined the concept of “saturation” in the following statement:

When do you decide you have interviewed enough people? The best answer is that you stop when you encounter diminishing returns, when the information you obtain is redundant or peripheral, when what you do learn that is new adds too little to what you already know to justify the time and cost of the interviewing. (p. 21)

As one can see, a saturation threshold is achieved where the majority of new information from additional participants is no longer novel or unique.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also summarized the importance of “purposive sampling” for post-positivistic research studies to determine sample size:

In naturalistic investigations, which are tied to intimately to contextual factors, the purpose of sampling will most often be to include as much information as possible, in all of its various ramifications and constructions; hence, maximum variation sampling will usually be the sampling mode of choice. The object of the game is not to focus on the similarities that can be developed into generalizations, but to detail the many specifics that give the context its unique flavor. (Lincoln & Guba, p. 201)

In order to obtain the depth that naturalistic research thrives on, purposive sampling is a technique to gather the cultural complexity from a small pool of participants. Twenty research participants were purposively sampled for this study. This is a relatively small amount of participants. However, as one sees below, the sample of 20 participants included both men and women from a variety of ages, educational attainment levels, occupations, and incomes. The author utilized a combination of Lincoln and Guba’s

method of “maximum variation sampling” and “convenience sampling,” and contacted individuals from her own web of personal connections. She did not interview any of her immediate family members, close friends, or close co-workers. She did, however, interview extended family members, friends who were acquaintances, and co-workers who were acquaintances. She then asked these research participants to pass her information on to their friends in a snowball sampling method. Therefore, some of the research participants were strangers to the author until the day of the interview.

### **Analysis**

The interview data presents a description of consumer behavior related to socially-visible brands. The author’s goal was to understand this behavior from the consumers’ vantage point. Post-positivistic methods of analysis were utilized to analyze the interview data (see Appendix 1). In particular, the “human instrument” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which is the author herself, was the primary tool to analyze the interview data. The use of a camera and a digital audio recorder supplemented the efforts of the human instrument, but the human instrument was still the predominant collector of data. The author as a human instrument engaged in an inductive analysis of the photographs and interview transcripts generated from the interviews. While conducting the interviews, the author began to take personal notes of certain themes that were being repeated across participants, however, only when she was able to analyze the full dataset did she begin to code and sort the data according to the method outlined by Weiss (1994): 1) coding, 2) sorting, 3) local integration, and 4) formal integration.

The first step, coding, describes the conceptualization of thematic categories that emerge from the data, “The idea in coding is to link what the respondent says in his or

her interview to the concepts and categories that will appear in the report” (Weiss, 1994, p. 154). The author went through the interview transcripts and the photographs taken during the interviews and coded the data according to the themes that inductive arose out of the data.

Step number two is to then sort the data points into thematically matched piles, “Make second copies of transcripts and notes. Put the first copies away, to serve as an archive...Cut up the second copies of the material into topical units corresponding to the labels on the file folders” (Weiss, 1994, p. 156-157). The author cut up the interview transcripts and photos into thematically-matching themes so that she could see these themes with the data lumped together.

Local integration is when the researcher examines each thematic pile to generate a solid understanding, “One way to achieve local integration is simply to summarize the excerpt file and its codings: Here is what is said in this area, and this is what I believe it to mean” (Weiss, 1994, p. 158). The author studied each theme and fleshed out the conceptualization and sub-themes for each of the major themes from the data.

Finally, inclusive integration looks across themes and holistically interprets the data, “Inclusive integration knits into a single coherent story the otherwise isolated areas of analysis that result from local integration. The problem in inclusive integration is to develop a framework that will include all the analyses the investigator wants to report, moves logically from one area to the next, and leads to some general conclusion” (Weiss, 1994, p. 160). This stage primarily occurred as the author wrote up the results section discussed below. Each theme was presented, and examples from the data were supplied

in the report to substantiate each theme. The organizing framework discussed below is the overarching result of the inclusive integration step.

In general, there is a flow to conducting post-positivistic research. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) describe this with the "emergent design," "negotiated outcomes," and "focus-determined boundaries" of naturalistic inquiry. It is also important to point out that the results of post-positivistic research is not intended to be generalizable outside the small sample used to supply the data. In other words, the post-positivistic researcher is "tentative" (see Appendix 1) in his or her interpretation of the data. Post-positivistic data cannot aid the researcher in predicting the future behavior of others. But, post-positivistic data does supply the researcher with knowledge in understanding the current behaviors of his or her research participants who are connected to the social phenomenon being investigated.

The question of methodological rigor is important for both positivistic and post-positivistic researchers. Lincoln and Guba (1985) supply the criteria of "trustworthiness" for post-positivistic researchers to use as a way to gauge their level of sound data collection and analysis (see Appendix 1). The author implemented the "truth value," "applicability," "consistency," and "neutrality" steps into her methodology set up, data collection, and analysis. In particular, her "audit trail" of analytical processes was shown to her advisor in order to supply transparency to her analytical process. The stages of her audit trail consisted of: 1) raw interview transcripts, 2) coded interview transcripts, 3) thematic memos written by the author to herself during analysis, and 4) sorted interview quotes sorted by emerging themes. The results of the interview data are presented in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 6: INTERVIEW RESULTS

The interview results supply a descriptive look at the post-purchase behavior associated with socially-visible brand use. In Appendix 3, a brief life history is presented for each participant. This portrait of the individual allows the contextual richness of one's life experiences to assist in understanding his or her current behaviors and perceptions. A brief demographic questionnaire was also administered to each of the 20 interview participants. These results are presented in Table 1. As one can see, the interview population sample consisted of both men and women from a variety of ages, ethnicities, educational achievements, incomes, marital states, and number of dependents. Going further into the occupation of each participants career, Table 2 summarizes the various life stages each participant is at. Some are just starting their careers, others have had long, full careers, while still others are currently unemployed or partially employed.

**Table 1: Interview Participant Demographics**

#	First Name	Age	Sex	Ethnicity	Education	Personal Income	Marital Status	Children
1	Hannah	19	Female	Caucasian	Some college	Under \$10,000	Single, never married	0
2	Elizabeth	21	Female	Hispanic	Some college	Under \$10,000	Single, never married	0
3	Brooke	24	Female	Caucasian	Some graduate school	\$20,000 - \$29,999	Single, never married	0
4	Ashley	24	Female	African American	Some graduate school	\$30,000 - \$39,999	Single, never married	0
5	Maya	25	Female	Caucasian	College graduate	Under \$10,000	Single, never married	0
6	Lauren	25	Female	Hispanic	Some graduate school	\$20,000 - \$29,999	Single, never married	0
7	Leah	28	Female	Caucasian	Some graduate school	\$10,000 - \$19,999	Married	0
8	Madison	28	Female	Caucasian	Some graduate school	\$10,000 - \$19,999	Married	0
9	Samantha	28	Female	Caucasian	College graduate	\$20,000 - \$29,999	Married	2
10	Claire	42	Female	Caucasian	Some college	\$30,000 - \$39,999	Married	2
11	Allison	51	Female	Caucasian	College graduate	\$30,000 - \$39,999	Married	2
12	Benjamin	18	Male	Caucasian	Some college	Under \$10,000	Single, never married	0
13	Gabriel	19	Male	Asian American	Some college	Under \$10,000	Single, never married	0
14	Ryan	26	Male	Caucasian/Hispanic/Native American	Some graduate school	\$30,000 - \$39,999	Single, never married	0
15	Luke	27	Male	Caucasian	College graduate	\$30,000 - \$39,999	Single, never married	0
16	Jacob	29	Male	African American	Graduate school graduate	Under \$10,000	Single, never married	0
17	William	32	Male	African American	Graduate school graduate	\$70,000 - \$79,999	Married	2
18	Michael	34	Male	African American	Graduate school graduate	\$20,000 - \$29,999	Married	0
19	Ethan	36	Male	Caucasian	Some graduate school	\$10,000 - \$19,999	Single, never married	0
20	Aaron	55	Male	Caucasian	High school graduate	\$30,000 - \$39,999	Married	2

**Table 2: Interview Participant Occupational Background**

First Name	Education	Degree	Major	Current Job	Household Income
Aaron	High school graduate	NA	NA	Customer service	\$60,000 - \$69,999
Claire	Some college	NA	NA	Bank teller	\$70,000 - \$79,999
Hannah	Some college	Bachelor's	Political Communication	Student	< \$10,000
Elizabeth	Some college	Bachelor's	Radio-Television-Film	Student/substitute teacher	\$150,000 +
Benjamin	Some college	Bachelor's	Radio-Television-Film	Student	< \$10,000
Gabriel	Some college	Bachelor's	Finance	Student/business intern	\$40,000 - \$49,999
Allison	College graduate	Associate's	Accounting	Office manager	\$60,000 - \$69,999
Maya	College graduate	Bachelor's	Politics	Unemployed	< \$10,000
Samantha	College graduate	Associate's	Veterinary Technician	Office manager	\$100,000 - \$109,999
		Bachelor's	Business		
Luke	College graduate	Bachelor's	Editorial / Broadcast Production	Sportswriter	\$30,000 - \$39,999
Lauren	Some graduate school	Bachelor's	Marketing / International Business; Minor in Spanish	Advertising intern	\$20,000 - \$29,999
		Master's	Advertising		
Leah	Some graduate school	Bachelor's	Journalism / Radio-Television	Graduate student/advertising intern	\$70,000 - \$79,999
		Master's	Advertising		
Madison	Some graduate school	Bachelor's	German / Linguistics	Graduate student	\$20,000 - \$29,999
		Master's	Advertising		
Brooke	Some graduate school	Bachelor's	Management Information Systems	Graduate assistant	\$20,000 - \$29,999
		Master's	Advertising		
Ryan	Some graduate school	Bachelor's	Journalism / English; Minor: Media Studies	Graduate student	\$30,000 - \$39,999
		Master's	Advertising		
Ethan	Some graduate school	Bachelor's	Fine Arts	Advertising intern	\$10,000 - \$19,999
		Master's	Advertising		
Ashley	Some graduate school	Bachelor's	News-editorial Journalism	Chief publicist at a PR firm	\$40,000 - \$49,999
		Master's	Advertising		
Michael	Graduate school graduate	Bachelor's	Marketing	Assistant Instructor	\$50,000 - \$59,999
		Master's	Business Administration		
		Ph.D.	Advertising		
William	Graduate school graduate	Bachelor's	Industrial Engineering	Engineer	\$100,000 - \$109,999
		Master's	Engineering		
Jacob	Graduate school graduate	Bachelor's	Advertising / Public Relations; Minor in Comm. Studies	Graduate student/ teaching assistant	< \$10,000
		Master's	Advertising		
		Ph.D.	Advertising		

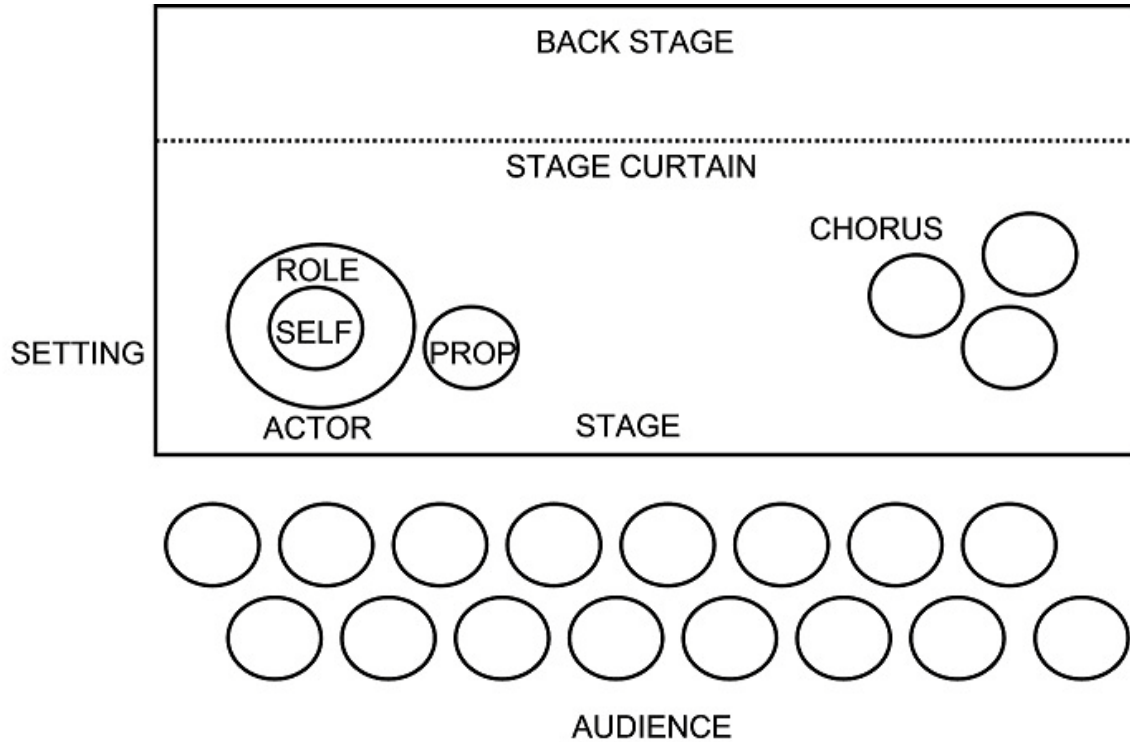
## Part 1: Dramaturgy in Consumer Research

The prop metaphor from impression management theory was a guiding framework for setting up the data collection procedures for this research study on socially-visible brands. Goffman's (1959) impression management theory mentioned several theatric concepts such as the actor, the audience, the setting, other actors, front-stage and backstage dynamics, and props. A visual diagram of dramaturgical concepts supplies an organizing framework for the analysis of the interview data for the current research study. Figure 2 displays this organizing framework. It is based off of the primary concepts from impression management theory in particular and dramaturgy in general:

- Actor
- Self
- Role
- Stage
- Backstage
- Stage curtain
- Chorus
- Audience
- Props
- Setting

Several of these components emerged from the interviews for this study when the research participant in each interview session is focusing on the entire outfit he or she created. They are discussed below. These concepts were not inductively generated from the interview transcripts, but aid in the validation of utilizing a theatric lens to the study of consumer behavior.

**Figure 2: Dramaturgy Visual Diagram**



*Actor-self*. First, when research participants were discussing their favorite outfit, the interaction of the actor's sense of self was often discussed. Table 3 summarizes several interview quotes on the favorite outfits.

**Table 3: Interview Quotes for Favorite Outfit**

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Interview Quote</b>
Elizabeth	"Whenever I think of this outfit, I felt really good. I felt super-confident. With that confidence, I felt like I was in this position of power. I was definitely standing out."
Ashley	"With that I am sociable, I am cute, but I still feel powerful. I am relaxed but I still feel confident."
Lauren	"I feel like with that outfit I can really take it from school, to work, and out for drinks. So just joyous, free-spirited, I don't have to worry about anything. It's comfortable, at least the shoes are."
Madison	"That outfit is kind of fun and relaxed. It is not trying to say a whole lot. It is just, kind of, 'This is me.' There is not a lot to the outfit, it is very simple."
Claire	"I would say the actress, because I feel glamorous and involved and dramatic."
Gabriel	"I feel confident. I'm not necessarily heroic or anything, but I feel confident."
Jacob	"It does really put me at peace. It makes me feel like I am being authentic. Because of my conservative nature. It blends in with my nature – the button-up shirt and the boat shoes. That is a style that I have had ever since I was little. It almost feels like home."
William	"To me it is dignified. The image that I am trying to portray is that I am serious about being here, I am serious about what I want to do. I am serious about this particular business, if it is an interview, if it is a business meeting, if it is going to work, if it is a party. I like to portray that, 'I am somebody who would like to be taken seriously.'"
Michael	"I think what I am striving for across the board would be Sage - peace. Internally, that is how I see myself. Definitely want to be centered and at peace."

When discussing their favorite outfit, one could interpret their association with this outfit as displaying their self, whether it is confident (Elizabeth, Gabriel), social (Ashley), joyous (Lauren), fun (Madison), glamorous (Claire), peaceful (Jacob, Michael), and dignified (William).

*Actor-role & audience.* When the actor is asked to prepare for roles that involve an inherent audience, the actor begins to assess his or her perceived judgment of their ability to portray their role properly. The audience can be one's co-workers, friends, family members, and dating partners. Each research participant was asked to pick one of the archetypes from the BrandAsset Valuator to describe the role they are portraying in each outfit. Table 4 summarizes the archetypal choices.

**Table 4: Chosen Archetypes for Each Outfit**

#	First Name	Outfit #1 Archetype	Outfit #2 Archetype	Outfit #3 Archetype	Outfit #4 Archetype	Outfit #5 Archetype
1	Hannah	Troubadour	Matriarch	Jester	Angel	Warrior
2	Elizabeth	Warrior	Matriarch	Patriarch / Warrior	Queen	Actress / Angel
3	Brooke	Angel / Shadow Mother	Matriarch	Troubadour	Actress	Enchantress
4	Ashley	Queen	Matriarch	Warrior	Troubadour	Queen
5	Maya	Queen	Patriarch	Jester	Actress	Troubadour
6	Lauren	Troubadour	Jester	Queen	Matriarch	Angel
7	Leah	Queen	Queen / Magician	Troubadour	Sage	Troubadour / Actress
8	Madison	Troubadour	Sage	Actress	Queen	Enchantress
9	Samantha	Matriarch	Queen	Mother Earth	Mother Earth / Queen	Magician
10	Claire	Actress	Patriarch	Troubadour	Mother Earth	Jester
11	Allison	Mother Earth	Matriarch	Jester	Queen	Enchantress
12	Benjamin	Queen	Enchantress	Warrior	Angel	Patriarch
13	Gabriel	Warrior	Jester	Enchantress	Mother Earth	Queen
14	Ryan	Actress	Magician / Matriarch / Warrior	Troubadour / Jester	Angel / Mother Earth	Actress / Queen
15	Luke	Queen	Warrior	Troubadour	Mother Earth	Sage
16	Jacob	Sage	Warrior	Slave	Actress	Mother Earth
17	William	Patriarch	Dictator	Queen	Matriarch	Warrior
18	Michael	Sage	Sage	Troubadour	Warrior	Sage / Jester
19	Ethan	Mother Earth	Mother Earth	Mother Earth	Warrior / Magician	Warrior / Magician
20	Aaron	Matriarch	Mother Earth	Queen	Queen	Actress

For example, when asked to put together an outfit for dinner with the family, Leah began to anticipate her parents' evaluation of her:

Leah: Hmm, let's find the reserved one (laughs). Sage.

Interviewer: Yeah, why is that?

Leah: Like, a button-down shirt. I feel that it is reserved, but also you want to impress your parents. You want them to think that you are doing well, and that they should be proud of you. So I guess that wise comes in there.

Interviewer: Kind of like a "buttoned-down Leah."

Leah: Yeah. (laughs)

Although Leah has a sense of self, when she expects to present herself in front of her parents, she feels a need to portray a role to her parents that she is “doing well,” and her goal is to ensure they continue to be proud of her. Therefore, Leah is more reserved in her presentation of self in front of her parents. Madison and William make similar comments for their family outfits as well:

Madison: I guess maybe that is more of the Queen, because it is relaxed and social, comforting, saying that, “I am happy with where I am in life. I am comfortable with myself.” But I still like to look pretty nice in front of my parents so they can see that I am well adjusted.

William: I want to be on my best behavior. This is my parents. I like to seem organized, systematic, controlled.

It seems that the parental audience can often strongly influence the actor’s role preparation based off of anticipated evaluations.

The work setting can also provide audience members that place pressure on the actor to perform at an expected level in order to communicate his or her role effectively. Aaron, Luke, and Elizabeth all commented on this with their work outfits:

Aaron: People come in with all types of questions, and they know I am going to be able to help them.

Luke: I always feel confident in my job, and I have to appear that I look confident when I am out in the field. I have to know what I am talking about. The one second it appears that I don’t know what is going on, people don’t think I am credible anymore. I could be wearing a suit at that point and I can’t retrieve how they view me at that point.

Elizabeth: As a substitute teacher, you are supposed to be in a nurturing role. You are an intellectual mentor, even if it is just for a day to these students. With the nice slacks you are very professional. They even tell you at these orientation meetings for substitute teachers, “At other places you can get by with jeans, but for subbing you have to be set apart.” Even though I am 21 and they are 18 years

old, I have to set myself apart in some way. I do that with my clothing, but obviously with the way that I carry myself. Also, with clothing because that is their first impression. You want to look more adult, more in control, more like you know how to handle things.

For the workplace setting, the actors here feel the need to successfully communicate their job's role in a competent manner to their audience. Their work costumes help them to do so.

Finally, the date night setting can display some audience characteristics for the actor's role preparation. Leah, Madison, William, and Aaron provide examples:

Leah: I like the glamorous. When you go on a date, you try to look sexy so that your man will be attracted to you and be proud to have you as a date.

Madison: Trying to be more sensual. It is short, it has got a really low neckline, with the heels, yeah, I am trying to play up the sexiness to my husband.

William: Hmm, I've got to impress. Got to look confident. I want to feel good about myself. I want to show my spouse that I'm serious.

Aaron: A little more dressed up. A little more glamorous, dramatic. A little more involved. I'm going out on a date with mom, and I have to look good.

The date audience places some pressure on the actor to dress to impress in their role portrayal.

*Chorus.* Other individuals can also be perceived by the actor to be on stage with him or her. This dynamic creates a "one-ness" or a "we-ness" where the actor and the other actors are together on stage. They are combining their separate roles to put on a larger role for the external audience. Typically, this emerged when the actor was expecting to enter a setting with friends and family. Luke, William, Maya, and Ashley provide examples of the chorus dynamic:

Luke (Family): I really just picked that shirt because I knew my dad would be wearing something of the exact same nature. The common man. He was down

here a week and a half ago, and I started to pattern my outfits after what he would wear. I know he is going to wear this plaid, button-down shirt. Not flashy at all.

William (Friends): For that outfit I am going out with my friends. They already know who I am. I don't have to define who I am. I am going to be pretty comfortable, pretty sociable, which is taking me to the Queen. I don't have anything to prove there.

Ashley: That is one of my favorite shirts. With the Jessica Simpson shoes – love those shoes. That one definitely makes me feel powerful and ready to hit the night life with my ladies and yeah, just conquer the night.

Here, friends and family are viewed as non-judgmental co-actors who the actor feels relaxed with and able to tap into his or her true self.

*Setting.* Finally, the setting can also play an influence. The setting may supply the actor with a mood to take on as he or she takes on the role for that setting. As the actor puts on the costume to play his or her role for a given setting, the actor may also put on an emotion as a part of his or her role preparation. Leah, Allison, Lauren, and Jacob describe how the setting influenced their mood based off of the outfits they put together for that setting:

Leah (Family): I felt that with the scarf with it is very bright and pink, and to me that is pretty fun and happy and joyous. Ready to have a good time with my friends. I am going to be more free than I would be at work. In a different social setting.

Allison (Friends): Well, I am going out to have fun. I feel a little more lighthearted when I put that outfit on.

Lauren (Date): When I think of dates, I think you just have to be relaxed and look good. And you don't know where you are going so jeans are very versatile for wherever you go. So yeah, just optimistic that it might turn out well.

Jacob (Work): I feel like I am going to work, so I do feel confident. Maroon can be a power color. It is one of my best-fitting shirts. I like the way it feels on my body. That particular polo is a more contoured-fit Ralph Lauren ... It fits in the places that I like, and so that generates the confidence that you feel like you at least look good that day.

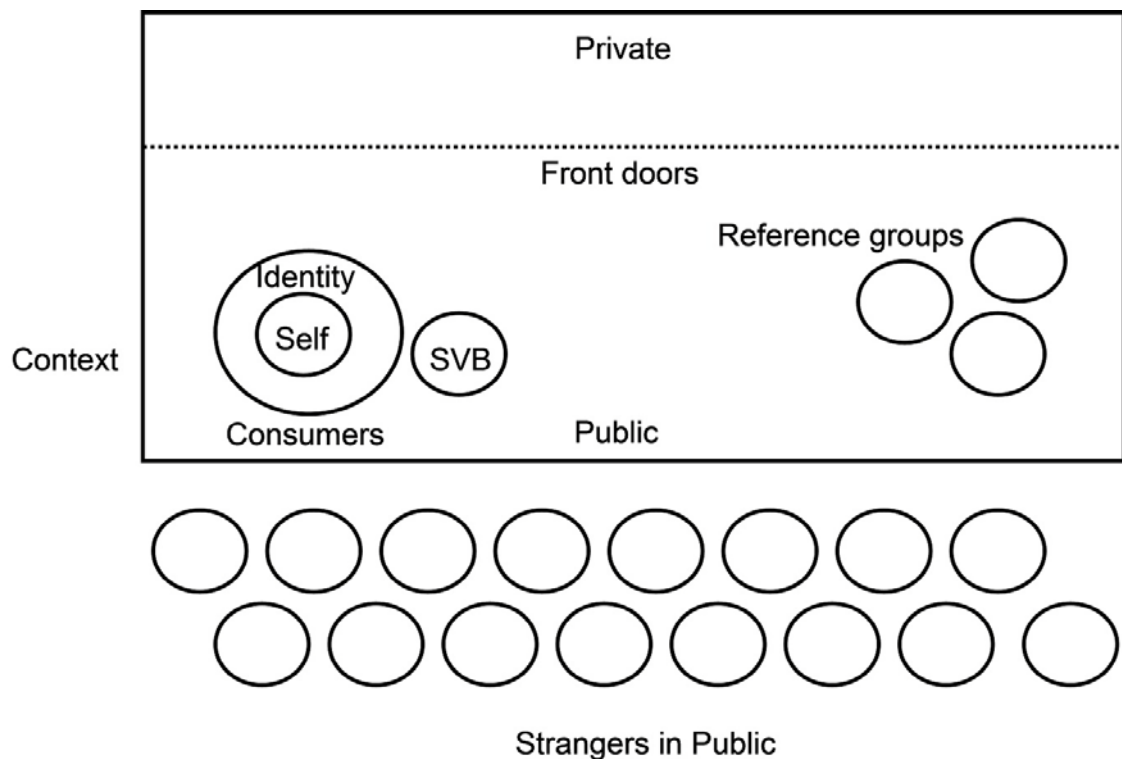


In these settings, in these outfits, the actors (Leah, Allison, Lauren, Jacob) are tapping into a mood (joyous, lighthearted, optimistic, powerful) as they prepare to enter a specific setting (family dinner, night out with friends, date night, work day).

## Part 2: Dramaturgy & Socially-visible Brands

Since this research study is adapting the theatric metaphor to consumer behavior associated with socially-visible brands, an organizing framework for the dramaturgical analysis of consumer behavior and socially-visible brands was also created. This can be seen in Figure 3. This second organizing framework is helpful to interpret the results from research questions one and two.

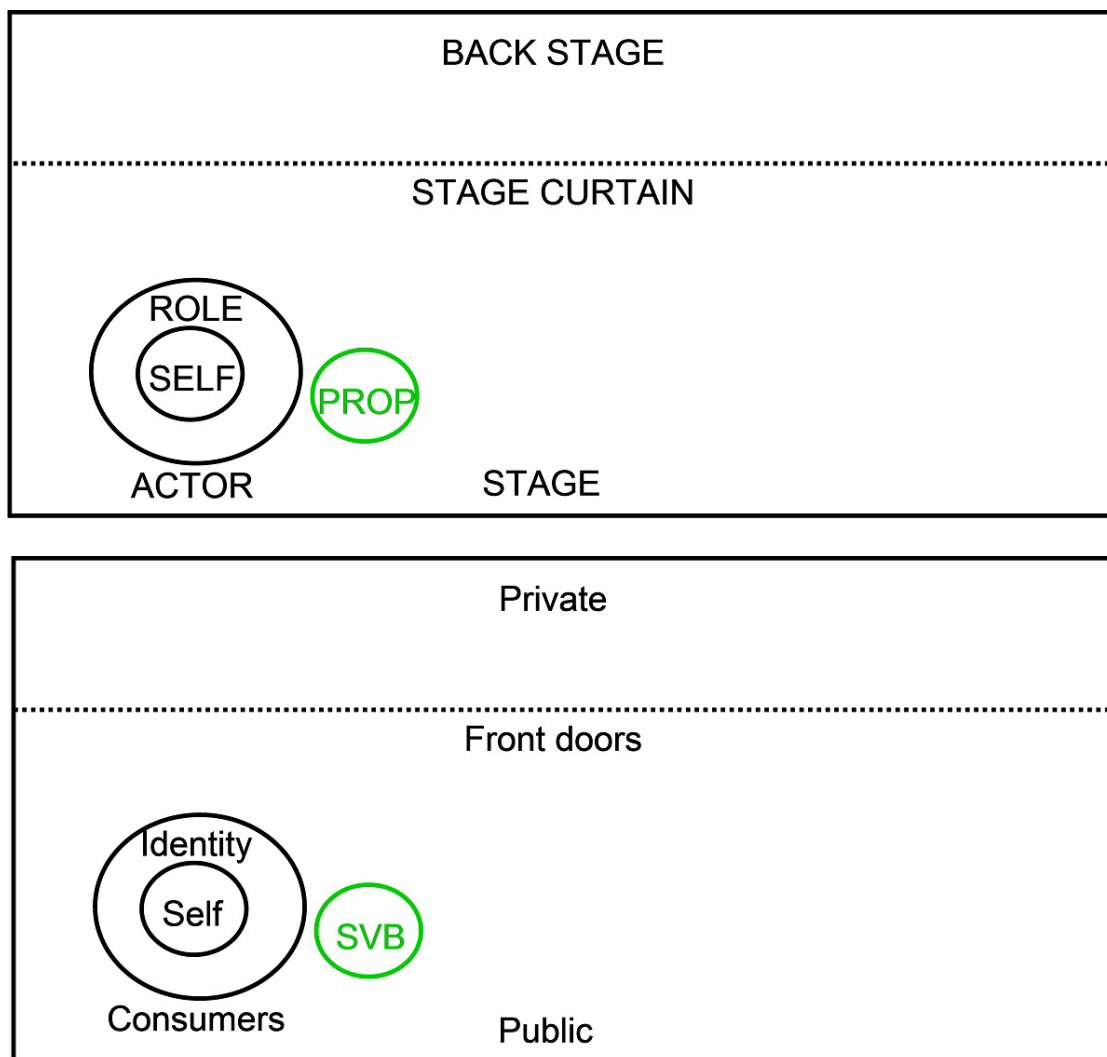
**Figure 3: Dramaturgy in Consumer Research Diagram**



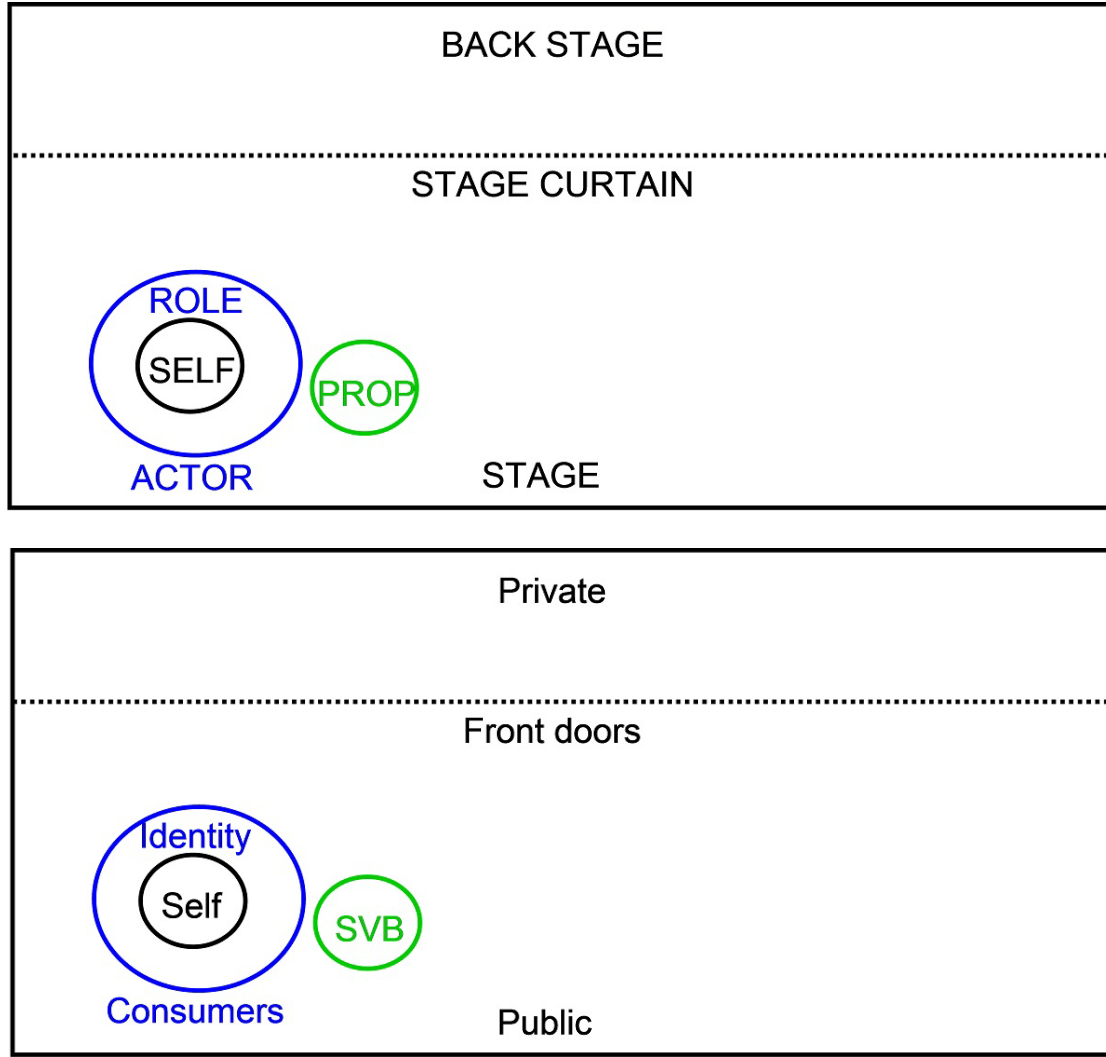
The results of research question one are based off of the photographs and describe the choices consumers make in terms of how they use and wear socially-visible brands.

Therefore, research question one supplies socially-visible brand (prop) variables (see Figure 4). The results of research question two are based off of the interview transcripts and describe the perceptions consumers hold towards the socially-visible brands they wear. Therefore, it is interpreting the actor-role interactions with props, also known as the consumer-identity interactions with socially-visible brands (see Figure 5).

**Figure 4: Research Question 1: Prop Variables**



**Figure 5: Research Question 2: Actor-role Interaction with Prop**



**Research Question #1: How Do Consumers Use and Wear Socially-visible Brands?**

The goal of the first research question was to look at post-purchase consumption habits in relation to socially-visible brands. The photographs from the interviews were the articles that assisted the most when answering research question number one. Over 1,000 photographs were taken, assessed, and interpreted from the 20 participants. Like stated in the methods section, each participant assembled five outfits for various social scenarios. The entire outfit was photographed, and each socially-visible brand was photographed up close. Then, participants were asked to go through their closet and pull

out any additional item they owned that they would wear or use out in public that displayed a socially-visible brand. Appendix 4 shows a table listing each of the socially-visible brands documented for each participant. Appendix 5 shows the outfits created by each participant for each of the five scenarios.

In line with consumer culture theory, the cultural complexity of socially-visible brands associated with consumer identity projects came to light through the photographs taken during this research study. The richness and vastness of consumption constellations from consumer to consumer was emphasized as the data was collected from research participant to participant. No two outfits look alike. No two consumers have the same set of socially-visible brands. Overlap occurs, naturally, but the array of choices and combinations available to consumers in the marketplace allows for unique identities to be crafted in part by the use of socially-visible brands in post-purchase consumption habits.

In line with impression management theory, Goffman's theatric metaphor aided in the understanding of how consumers manage their impression in part, through the outfits they wear out in public. By going into the research participant's home, the researcher was granted access to the actor's backstage. The actor was then asked to assemble a costume from their wardrobe in order to perform at a role for a specific setting. The anticipated presence of other actors helped to guide the research participant's role preparation. The researcher documented each of the five costumes, and paid particular attention to the props associated with each outfit. Here, the focus is on socially-visible brands as a prop the actor uses to communicate his or her role to others.

Just as Fournier (1998) validated the intuitive relationship metaphor in consumer research by empirically documenting and categorizing the types and trajectories of

consumer-brand relationships through case studies, one goal of this research study is to validate the intuitive prop metaphor in consumer research. Through documentation and categorization, four themes of socially-visible brands were fleshed out. These themes replicated the preliminary findings of the author's first pre-test (Schulz, 2009). Therefore, while these four themes were first inductively identified in a previous study, they have been further refined and clearly documented in this study. The four themes associated with the phenomenological occurrence of socially-visible brands are: 1) brand frequency, 2) brand visibility, 3) brand distribution, and 4) brand abbreviation.

### **Brand Frequency**

Brand frequency describes the quantifiable number of socially-visible brands. However, this can be further broken down into the number of socially-visible brands on the individual, and the number of socially-visible brands on each product. For example, one individual may be wearing two socially-visible brands, while another individual may be wearing four socially-visible brands. This shows a variability of socially-visible brands on the individual level. Plus, any product may display more than one socially-visible brand. For example, one Nike t-shirt may display the logo one time while another Nike t-shirt displays the logo five times. So there are gross and unique counts of socially-visible brands on each product as well. Therefore, the brand frequency category has four sub-themes: 1) individual unique brand frequency, 2) individual gross brand frequency, 3) product unique brand frequency, and 4) product gross brand frequency. Examples are discussed below.

*Individual unique brand frequency.* Individual unique brand frequency describes the number of unique socially-visible brands on the individual person. Figure 6 displays

two outfits created by two separate research participants and comparing the two outfits, one can see two distinct levels of brand frequency. The outfit from Claire on the left has an individual unique brand frequency of one (Silver), while the outfit for Aaron on the right displays an individual unique brand frequency of three: 1) Bomgarrs, 2) Sandy River, and 3) New Balance. Therefore, Aaron's outfit is displaying a higher level of individual unique brand frequency.

**Figure 6: Individual Unique Brand Frequency Example**



*Individual gross brand frequency.* Individual gross brand frequency describes the total number of socially-visible brand on the individual. Figure 7 shows two outfits

created by two research participants: Leah and Lauren. Both outfits display one unique socially-visible brand. Leah's outfit displays American Eagle, while Lauren's outfit displays Fossil. But, while American Eagle appears on Leah's outfit once, Fossil appears on Lauren's outfit three times. Again, Leah and Lauren have the same level of individual unique brand frequency, but Lauren has a higher level of individual gross brand frequency (three) than Leah (one).

**Figure 7: Individual Gross Brand Frequency Example**



*Product unique brand frequency.* Each product can also display levels of unique brand frequencies. Figure 8 displays two products that vary in terms of the number of unique socially-visible brands. These pictures are not from research participants' outfits, but are from other products in the closet that research participants showed the researcher. The t-shirt on the left is from Gabriel and it displays the Armani Exchange brand.



Therefore it has a product unique brand frequency of one. The basketball jersey on the right is from Michael and it displays three brands: 1) Los Angeles Lakers, 2) National Basketball Association (NBA), and 3) Nike. Therefore, this jersey has a product unique brand frequency of three.

**Figure 8: Product Unique Brand Frequency Example**



*Product gross brand frequency.* Each product can also be assessed for the gross number of brand frequencies. In Figure 9, both of the shirts are from Gabriel. They are both Armani Exchange shirts. Both shirts have a product unique brand frequency of one. The red shirt on the left has a product gross brand frequency of one, however, the black shirt on the right has a product gross brand frequency of 10. At least 10 times, the words “Armani Exchange” appear on the shirt. Therefore, even though both shirts display the same socially-visible brand, the shirt on the right has a higher product gross brand frequency.



**Figure 9: Product Gross Brand Frequency Example**



### **Brand Visibility**

Brand visibility describes the extent that other individuals can perceive a socially-visible brand on a person. The first sub-theme is whether or not a brand is present on an item. This is a present or absent dichotomy. The second sub-theme is the size of the brand in terms of physical dimensions. Socially-visible brands can be measured in terms of length and height and an overall measurement can be assessed. The third sub-theme of brand visibility is the clarity of the socially-visible brands. Some brands are clear and easy to see, while others are overlapped or partially covered when in use. These obstructions decrease that brand's visibility. Examples are discussed below.

*Brand visibility presence.* Like stated above, the presence of socially-visible brands is a yes or no dichotomy. As one can see in Figure 10, Madison's outfit on the left displays no socially-visible brands, while Ryan's outfit on the right does display socially-visible brands. Each outfit consists of clothing items associated with brands, however Ryan's outfit is the only one where the brands are socially-visible to others.

**Figure 10: Brand Visibility Presence Example**

**Madison – Outfit #1**



**Ryan – Outfit #4**



*Brand visibility size.* Brand visibility size describes the physical height and width of a socially-visible brand. In Figure 11, the two shirts from Luke's closet show a range of brand visibility size. On the left, the Billabong socially-visible brand on the blue shirt is smaller in size compared to the Adidas socially-visible brand on the white shirt on the right.

**Figure 11: Brand Visibility Size Example**



*Brand visibility clarity.* Some socially-visible brands are easier to see than others. Sometimes the brand stands alone on a blank background, while other times, it is overlapping or being obstructed from view by other aspects of the product. As one can see in Figure 12, Maya's green sweatshirt on the left displays a Puma socially-visible brand that is very clear to see, while Leah's t-shirt on the right displays a Texas Longhorns socially-visible brand that is not very clear to see. The Texas Longhorns socially-visible brand is somewhat harder to see because it has been placed on an orange and white tie-dye background. Therefore, the Puma socially-visible brand on the left has a higher level of clarity than the Texas Longhorns socially-visible brand on the right.

**Figure 12: Brand Visibility Clarity Example**



## **Brand Distribution**

Brand distribution describes the physical location of the socially-visible brand on the individual and on each product. Brand distribution has two sub-themes: 1) brand distribution on the body and 2) brand distribution on the product.

*Brand distribution on the body.* Figure 13 displays some variation of brand distribution on the body. On the left, Gabriel's outfit displays three socially-visible brands: Express, Gucci, and Ralph Lauren Polo. These brands are distributed on several aspects of his body. Express appears on his sweater (upper torso) and his jeans (mid-torso), Gucci appears on his belt (mid-torso), and Ralph Lauren Polo appears on his shoes (feet). Therefore, Gabriel has socially-visible brands distributed on various parts of his body. On the right, Hannah's outfit only displays one socially-visible brand: Fossil. This brand is on her purse and is therefore seen at her mid-torso. Katherine only has socially-visible brands distributed on a single portion of her body.

**Figure 13: Brand Distribution on the Body Example**



*Brand distribution on the product.* Figure 14 displays a pair of tennis shoes from Leah with the Puma brand displayed in a socially-visible manner. The front and back pictures of these shoes show that the Puma socially-visible brand appears on several parts of the shoe, and therefore are distributed to several aspects of the shoe: 1) the lip of the shoe by the shoelaces, 2) the front of the shoe by the toes, 3) the back of the shoe by the heel, 4) the side of the shoe on the outside, and 5) the side of the shoe on the inside. The Puma socially-visible brand has been distributed across various parts of these tennis shoes.



**Figure 14: Brand Distribution on the Product Example**



### **Brand Abbreviation**

Finally, brand abbreviation theme describes whether or not the full brand name is communicated. This is a dichotomous detection of abbreviation or full use of the brand name. If abbreviation has been detected, it can be further coded into three sub-themes: 1) shortened name brand abbreviation, 2) acronym brand abbreviation, and 3) non-verbal brand abbreviation.

*Shortened name brand abbreviation.* Figure 15 displays two sweatshirts from Claire that display the Aeropostale socially-visible brand. The teal sweatshirt on the left does not abbreviate the brand name and states the full “Aeropostale,” while the maroon sweatshirt on the right abbreviates the brand name and only says, “Aero.”

**Figure 15: Shortened Name Brand Abbreviation Example**



*Acronym brand abbreviation.* Figure 16 shows a t-shirt from Aaron where the socially-visible brand is an abbreviated acronym. The full brand name is the “University of Nebraska at Kearney,” but the socially-visible brand only states, “UNK.” UNK is an acronym for University of Nebraska at Kearney, and is therefore an abbreviated version of this brand.

**Figure 16: Acronym Brand Abbreviation Example**



*Non-verbal brand abbreviation.* Figure 17 shows a polo shirt from Aaron where the socially-visible brand does not use any words. The brand displayed on the polo is Reebok, however, only the visual, non-verbal aspects of the logo appear on the polo shirt. Therefore, this shirt does not say “Reebok,” but the visual logo is communicating this brand in a non-verbal, abbreviated manner.

**Figure 17: Non-verbal Brand Abbreviation Example**



### **Summary**

One could argue that the photographing of research participants’ socially-visible brands is a study of the artifacts associated with the material culture linked to the intersection of consumers, brands, and identity. Tilley (2007) pointed out the importance of studying artifacts:

Artefacts (sic) can be considered as signs bearing meaning, signifying beyond themselves. From this perspective material culture becomes a text to be ‘read’ and a semiotic discourse to be “decoded.” (p. 258)

Things communicate in a different way, such that if I could say it, why would I dance it, or paint it, or sculpt it? etc. Things often “say” and communicate precisely that which cannot be communicated in words. A silent discourse of the object may permit the cultural unsaid to be said, or marked out. (p. 259)



Therefore, the “silent discourse” of socially-visible brands is an indirect route to the impression management and identity negotiations occurring between an individual and society. One could argue that socially-visible brands permit the cultural unsaid to be said. They innately do not possess any social power. But, through the meanings attached to them among the collective unconscious (via McCracken’s [1986] movement of meaning model), socially-visible brands are capable of impacting consumer identity projects. They are props that impact social interactions.

### **Research Question #2: How Are Consumers Discussing the Socially-visible Brands They Use and Wear?**

Three primary themes inductively arose out of the interview dialogue when the research participants discussed their perceptions of the socially-visible brands they own. These themes are: 1) utility, 2) attachment, and 3) trajectory.

#### **Utility**

The first theme describes whether or not the research participant is focusing on the brand versus the product. All products have a brand (i.e., the company or organization that manufactured and sold the item), however at times consumers are uninterested or even unaware of the socially-visible brand connected to a particular product. Therefore, when discussing their use of the item, the consumer focuses more on the product rather than the brand. When focusing on the product the research participant was often discussing the functional needs that the product fulfilled. On the other hand, when the consumer does focus on the brand rather than the product, he or she tended to explain how that brand assisted in the expression of his or her identity. This can be restated by saying that when discussing the brand, the research participant is discussing the symbolic

needs that the brand is perceived to fulfill. Overall, the sub-themes of product-functional-use and brand-symbolic-expression is tethering out the gradient of a utility theme describing post-purchase consumption habits in relation to socially-visible brands.

*Brand-symbolic-expression.* An example of the brand-symbolic-expression sub-theme can be seen in Ryan's discussion of his Diesel jeans:

Diesel to me, I believe first and foremost the color first of all is really good on all of their jeans. The cut is really flattering. I think that they are really comfortable. I think Diesels are very classic and so that is why I was attracted to them, because the look is more low-key but they weren't cheap. To me, Diesel represents a very masculine energy, a very masculine brand. Everything about Diesel's advertising and line is very masculine. This alternative ... I always envision this like 25-year-old man in L.A. with messed-up hair and a ripped t-shirt with these really nice Diesel jeans. That is kind of the image I get for them.

When Ryan is wearing his Diesel jeans, he is projecting a "very masculine" persona to society. Although he appreciates the flattering cut and the comfort of these jeans, which are more functional aspects of this product, one can argue that it is the persona Ryan associates with the Diesel brand that is the dominating factor. Ryan could probably find other jeans in the marketplace that are comfortable or that are flattering in the way they are cut, but only the Diesel brand holds the perception in Ryan's mind of the, "25-year-old man in L.A. with messed-up hair and a ripped t-shirt." When Ryan wears these jeans, he is able to channel that persona, and to communicate this aspect of his identity to others.

Another example of the brand-symbolic-expression sub-theme comes from Luke and his Lucky button-down shirt, "With Lucky, it kind of represents an easygoing personality. You are not trying to show off too much. Happy-go-lucky as the term suggests (laughs)." Here, Luke is explaining that one aspect of his identity is an unflashy, easygoing personality. He in turn identifies with the Lucky brand because of the similar

connotations he associates with his brand. When Luke wears the Lucky brand, he is communicating to others that he is “happy-go-lucky.”

A third example is from Elizabeth and her identification with Express, “When I think of Express, I think of a more mature – and when I say mature I don’t mean old, but more of people my age – I think of chic, classy look, and still at the same time very professional.” When Elizabeth wears Express, she is communicating the aspects of her identity that are “mature,” “chic,” “classy,” and “professional.” Brook and Ryan supply two more examples of the brand-symbolic-expression aspects of the utility continuum:

Brooke on Adidas: They have always been comfortable. I really like the designs. I have just always loved their logo - the three bars and the perfect triangle. It is very comfortable. It is a classic look. They do have a few, like, neon colored shirts. So you can see that they are trying to reach out there, but it is still very navy blues and blacks and whites. I guess you could call it boring, but I just think that it is traditional.

Ryan on Ben Sherman: Ben Sherman is a very British brand. It is quirky, which I like. It is this weird, British quirky. I think that it is very, very stylish. Ben Sherman and Paul Frank both have a very quirky, artsy, very colorful, which I like. I just love the way they look.

*Product-functional-use.* Now the focus will turn more towards the research participants who chose to focus on the product rather than the brand. It is important to point out that these responses arose from questions by the researcher on the brand. In other words, the research participants were asked about the socially-visible brand and they responded by talking about the product displaying the socially-visible brand. One example is from Aaron and his Lee jeans, “Lee is rugged quality, I think. And they are price competitive. They are rugged, they are good quality. They stand up, they hold up. I’m hard on them. They take a beating.” Although Aaron is discussing the Lee brand, he is focusing on the functional benefits of this brand: quality and price. When he is wearing

them and the socially-visible brand is showing, Aaron is not communicating aspects of his price or his quality. It is the jean aspect of the product that he identifies with rather than the Lee aspect of the item.

A second example of the product-functional-use sub-theme is when Allison discusses her New Balance tennis shoes, “They were for comfort. They were for support, durability. I count on those shoes to hold up. I know that they are going to take the wear and tear.” These shoes are durable and comfortable for Allison. When she wears them, and other people see her wearing them, they are not likely to assume that Allison is durable and comfortable. This socially-visible brand has little expressive utility for Allison, but a high amount of functional utility.

Finally, a third example comes from William and his discussion of his Arizona jeans:

I think the first thing is that they have been fitting me pretty well. I am not the traditional American figure in a way. I am pretty long, and I am not as wide. So most times I may find the height to be right, but the waist to be wrong, and vice versa. But that brand has been fitting me pretty well. Usually that is the first brand I look at.

Again, it is the function of the blue jeans (here the fit) rather than the expression of the socially-visible brand that the consumer focuses on. When William is wearing these jeans, very little of his identity is being communicated when other people see him wearing these jeans.

### **Attachment**

The second theme for post-purchase socially-visible brand use by consumers is a gradient of the level of attachment the consumer perceives to have towards the brand. Low levels of attachment display low levels of perceived consumer-brand connections.

On some level the consumer is identifying with the brand in order to engage in a relationship with it (i.e., to own the brand and use it). But only when the consumer has surpassed a threshold of attachment can he or she be classified as connected to that brand.

*Low attachment.* Examples of consumers possessing low levels of attachment with the socially-visible brands they currently own and use display a certain level of identification. They are currently engaged in a relationship with this brand, however it is not currently an important relationship for them. Out of the constellation of brands that consumers possess, typically only a few are deemed salient and important. The others are perhaps a bit more periphery.

The first example of low levels of consumer attachment is Luke's perception of his Arizona jeans:

Those are almost the boring, the get-the-job done jeans. There is no thought when I put those on. I wear those to work when I am not going out in front of people. When I am going around my counterparts, my office workers I don't need to show off anything. I am just there.

Luke describes these jeans as "boring" and "get-the-job done." His affect is flat when he describes this brand, and he does not seem very attached to it. To him, this brand is "just there." The consumer-brand relationship here is not very intense. Benjamin, Brooke, and Gabriel also supply examples of low levels of attachments consumers hold towards their socially-visible brands:

Benjamin on U.S. Polo Association: One time I just got a pair of their pants and liked them, so then I just went back and got more.

Brooke on Union Bay: I know it is popular, but that is about all I have. I just thought they were really colorful.

Gabriel on Express: I like the quality. I like the style. They are reasonably priced.

*High attachment.* The other end of the attachment theme displays high levels of consumer-brand relational connections. Here the consumer is so identified with that brand that they are committed to it and they are the loyal consumers that marketers strive to develop. Often, as the consumer discusses this brand, he or she will “tell the story” of their relationship with that brand. A level of relational attachment has developed as the consumer has been satisfied with that brand’s performance over time. An example of this comes from Lauren and her discussion of the Fossil brand:

I remember first buying Fossil watches when I was in high school. Because that was the cool thing, you know. And at that time in high school, they didn’t have any clothing in their stores. Then they went to leather goods. I remember buying, I am a huge messenger bag person - I don’t do purses. So they had a messenger bag from Fossil for a Christmas gift, and it lasted forever - I still have it too. So, it was like, “Alright this is pretty good.” So when they started bringing in shirts and dresses, I went back there and bought it and I thought they were really cute. They started doing shoes, honestly, last season. So I am like, alright, well they got me with the watches - it is pretty cool. Then the shirts were nice, the dresses were phenomenal, and the shoes - really - they are divine. They truly are divine. So I could definitely say that I am a loyal customer. I am not afraid. I am a very loyal customer. Granted, I can’t go and buy there on a whim. Their sizes vary. I know that as a fact. Their sizes and their cuts vary. So I always have to try them out first. But I know that at least this season, I have to buy one thing because at least they have one cute thing per season.

Lauren freely admits being attached to the Fossil brand. When she discusses this brand, she uses words like “cool,” “good,” “cute,” “nice,” “phenomenal,” and “divine.” She displays high levels of commitment to this brand by purchasing it across product lines: watches, messenger bags, clothing, and shoes. One could argue that Lauren’s relationship to the Fossil brand displays high levels of attachment.

A second example of consumer-brand attachment is Michael’s discussion of the Levi’s brand:

From trial and error, I just know that Levi’s are going to fit me well. They make 10,000 cuts, so I know that it is going to be my body size and fit. With other

brands, I haven't been able to find that. Either they fit too tightly somewhere, or they are not long enough, or there is just something else wrong with the fit. They are not ridiculously expensive, and they are going to last a long time. I have a pair now with tons of holes in them, and I know that I am not going to be able to hold onto them much longer. The belt buckle thing is falling off. I am going to have to get new jeans soon, I know. I am going to be able to find some Levi's jeans that are going to fit me. I like the fact that they are not Ed Hardy with crazy things all over the back of them. I am too old for that kind of thing. It is just plain, simple jeans. If I want to get a boot cut or something I can do that, but I don't have to be outrageous. Maybe 10-15 years ago I would be a bit more audacious, but I kind of like being more subtle with my jeans.

Michael displays a high level of attachment with the Levi's brand because of his confidence that when he is shopping for a new pair of jeans, he possesses some assurance that the Levi's jeans will fit him well. He even displays some attachment anxiety as he expresses his reluctance to give up his current pair, which is quickly losing its ability to function properly. One could argue that Michael is committed to the Levi's brand and that his attachment with this brand is high.

A third example is from Benjamin and his relationship with Vans shoes:

Since I was pretty young, I have always liked their shoes. I used to skateboard, and they are for skateboarding, but that's long behind me. And, they have gotten a lot more stylish as they have gone along. They used to be a lot more for skateboarding, but now everyone kind of wears them. I also think that they hold up really well and look nice and the style of them kind of matches what I am going for usually.

Again, Benjamin describes his attachment with this socially-visible brand as it has evolved over time. He continues to purchase this brand because it continues to be a relevant option for him and his situation in the marketplace.

## **Trajectory**

In line with Fournier's (1998) relational trajectories, there are inception and termination points for each consumer for each brand that they own and use. At some point in time, the consumer was introduced to a brand and decided whether or not to

engage in a consumer-brand relationship. At another point in time, the consumer-brand relationship will end. This could be due to the death of either party or due to a growing apart where the consumer and the brand no longer have aligned expectations. Therefore the third theme for consumers perceptions towards their socially-visible brands describes the inception and termination points on the relational trajectory.

*Inception.* Just as many of the research participants would tell the story of their consumer-brand relationship, many of them would also explain their introduction to this brand. This is the story of how the consumer first encountered the socially-visible brand, and was often due to a another person. For example, Lauren's relationship to the Lacoste brand has a distinct inception point:

I can definitely tell you where that brand came from. That brand came from my dad. The whole, coming to America, going to the status thing. Coming to America, my parents, they ... at that time ... still now Lacoste is an expensive brand. Same thing with the Fossil brand, they have lasted him. My dad has always had those shirts. They lasted awhile. The only reason he would get a new one is not only to get another color, but because it really has faltered. They don't shrink, for the most part they don't shrink. The color doesn't wear. While other people were wearing things that were really ubiquitous, my dad didn't. And that is why.

As a child, Lauren saw her father's relationship with this brand evolve over time. When it was her turn to enter the marketplace, she too decided to engage in a relationship with this brand. Her relationship to Lacoste is not the same as her father's, but one could argue that she was introduced to this brand by her father.

Another example is Madison's inception point to the X2 brand:

The only clothing items I have had for the X2 brand are denim, like jeans. All of those jeans were actually hand-me-downs from a friend of mine who used to work at Dillard's. I guess that was one of the brands that they carried. But they are still, like, two of the jeans I threw away because I just wore them out. They were filled with holes. But, they fit. Both my sister and I have traded off those jeans because they just fit so well. It is really hard to find jeans that sit at the right height on my waist and are the right tightness. I don't know, I am really picky about the jean's



fit. I don't want it to be too loose, I don't want it to be too bulky. I don't want it to be too tight. I want it to sit a certain way so it is mostly the fit on those. I think they are cute, like they are cool and trendy, too, but the fit more than anything.

Madison first interacted with this brand from her friend – she was given these jeans as her friend discarded them. However, with this introduction Madison's relationship to this brand has blossomed.

Finally, Ethan's relationship with Patagonia extends back to his childhood when he was first introduced to the brand:

A long time ago, one of my friends always had nice clothes growing up, cooler clothes than we did. I don't own any other Patagonia. This is the first. I had a Patagonia jacket a long time ago, a coat. That was a fancy coat. It was expensive. But I saw this shirt the other day, and I really liked it. You know, because it is like a \$100 shirt, and I can't afford it. But, it was on sale. Mostly I like it because of the color. And I like the brand. It is a quality brand.

The amount of time between introduction and purchase was long here – years – however Ethan still recounts his first experiences with this brand and how it continues to shape his current behaviors. Here are some other consumer-brand inception examples:

William on Brahma: I just bought those. Those are my first pair of boots. I just started working there three months ago. I like them because they fit well. I like the material as well. I am very particular about that. The outer material is something I can wash and then polish if I need to. In terms of personality, I would say rugged. It is a steel-toed boot. It is something for the most part that men have been wearing historically. It is a masculine type of shoe. I could have went with something that looked like sneakers with a steel-toe, but I chose to go with that because it feels good.

Jacob on Ralph Lauren Polo: I have seen a lot of people that I aspire to be like wearing the inconspicuous Polo. Like professors. A lot of professors wear Polo stuff. Also, I do like hip-hop to a degree, and they glorify Ralph Lauren. I am surprised that Ralph Lauren would be on that level. Hip-hop and the conservatism of Ralph Lauren doesn't seem to blend, but it did. You can listen to a lot of music that highlights Ralph Lauren. When I was in college, a lot of people were wearing Polo. All ethnicities, all people of different socioeconomic backgrounds. It was almost like a brand that meant that you were trying to aspire to a certain level because Polos are not cheap. I personally wait for it to go on sale. If you get it at

full price, you can pay anywhere from \$50 to \$100 dollars for one shirt. I don't have that kind of money yet so I have to wait for it.

Jacob on Levi's: I grew up on Levi's. That was handed down to me from my mother. My mother was like, "Guys wear Levi's. I hear good things about them." I probably literally wore Levi's from the time I was 10 until the time I was 25.

Hannah on Fossil: That is my first Fossil. My mom got it for me for my birthday. My birthday is in February, so it was just last month. It's new and it's small because I don't like heavy things when I go to class. It is really easy to carry the essentials. I think of it as one of the nicer brands because usually my purses are from J.C. Penny or whatever is on sale. The fact that it is a Fossil, it is a little bit more expensive. My mom buys Fossil, she gets Fossil all of the time. So the fact that it is Fossil it is like, "Oh, it is like my mom."

Gabriel on Ralph Lauren Polo: My friends started wearing it. That is how it interested me. I like the brand, but then I started seeing them wear it too.

Gabriel on Armani Exchange: I got into it because my brother-in-law. I used to like it before, just because of TV ads and stuff like that, but I got more into it because of my brother-in-law used to be a model for them. He would show me his pictures in them, and he has a huge collection of it because he was a model. It made me want to get it too, and maybe aspire to be a model too.

*Termination.* The opposite of a relationship's beginning, of course, is the end of the relationship. Sometimes, when the research participant was telling the story of their current relationship with a brand, they felt it was necessary to explain the ending of their previous consumer-brand relationship in that same product category. For example, Jacob currently consumes Calvin Klein jeans, but this is a recent occurrence:

I typically wore Levi's jeans, and I just got tired of wearing Levi's. From that point, I switched to Gap. And then I got tired of wearing Gap jeans, and so I was like, "Okay, what's next?" Then my mom was like, "Is there anything you need?," and I was like, "I think I need some jeans," and she bought Calvin Klein jeans. When she sent them to me, they felt good. And now I am hooked. They are probably the best pair of jeans I have ever own.

Jacob has had previous relationships with Levi's and Gap for his blue jeans, but those relationships are dead for the moment as he focuses on Calvin Klein.

Another example Jacob used was to describe his current relationship with Adidas based off of his past relationship with Nike:

First of all, I am a Nike-hater (laughs). I used to be a loyal Nike person, but for some reason they annoyed me. I don't know why. I don't think it is anything they did, I just think their shoes are too high priced. It goes back to utility. They tore up too quickly for how much they cost. That disparity between cost and durability drove me crazy. It caused me to move on to another brand.

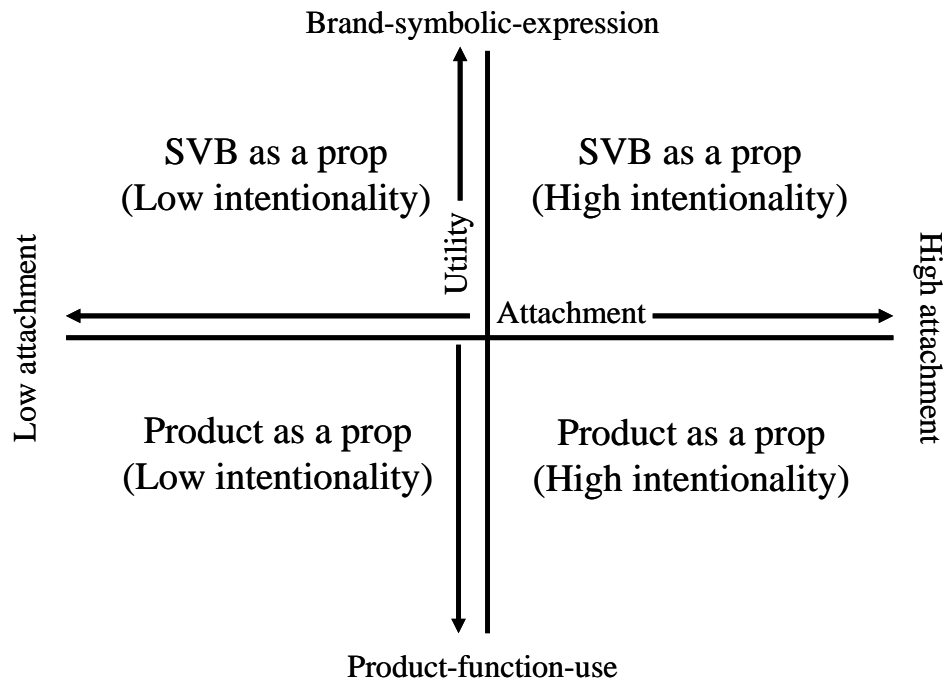
Sometimes, when relationships end, the attitude of one party sours towards another.

Jacob was previously a loyal consumer to Nike, but through unmet expectations, he decided to terminate this relationship and move on to Adidas.

### **Prop Metaphor Matrix**

Overlapping two of the above themes – utility and attachment – one can see a four-quadrant matrix emerge. This can be seen in Figure 18. The first, upper-left hand quadrant is a mixture of brand-symbolic-expression utility and low levels of attachment. The second quadrant is a combination of brand-symbolic-expression utility and high levels of attachment. The third quadrant is a blend of product-functional-use utility and low levels of attachment. Finally, the fourth quadrant is a fusion of product-functional-use utility and high levels of attachment.

**Figure 18: Prop Metaphor Matrix**



*Brand-symbolic-expression utility and low levels of attachment.* In Quadrant 1, consumer describe low levels of attachment with their socially-visible brand. But, they do identify with this brand, and it does help him or her to express a part of himself or herself.

An example of this is Claire and her Cathy Van Zeeland purse:

I don't know, just the style of the purses, and the big gems on them. I am a big gem person, like diamonds and stuff like that. As you can tell, with some of my clothes I have gems on them. I just like it. It makes it look rich and fancy. Even though I am not a glamorous person.

Although Claire may not consider herself a “glamorous person,” she still likes gems, diamonds, and at least looking “rich and fancy.” Therefore, her use of her Cathy Van Zeeland allows her to tap into these aspects of her identity, and to communicate to other individuals that a part of Claire is a touch of glamour.

Another example is Jacob and his Sperry boat shoes:

I have always been a fan of boat shoes. That might have to do with the preppy culture that I grew up in. In high school I would definitely say that I was a ‘prep.’

If you saw pictures of me then, I would probably be wearing boat shoes. My style has not evolved much since then ... I would definitely say that it is a reliable brand. I have had those shoes longer than any other boat shoe brand – Nautica, Dockers, and Timberland.

Jacob admits that an aspect of his identity is the meanings associated with the “preppy” culture. Therefore, he communicates this to others by wearing Sperry boat shoes. He has tried other brands of boat shoes in the past – Nautica, Dockers, and Timberland – but his Sperry boat shoes are an enduring prop Jacob can use to communicate his preppy personality to others.

A third example is Gabriel’s description of Hollister, “Hollister is kind of a teenage look it gives you. I started wearing that when I was in high school. Mainly it is just a brand that makes me look young and trendy.” Just as Cathy Van Zeeland helps Claire feel and communicate glamour, and Sperry helps Jacob feel and communicate peppiness, Hollister is a brand that aids Gabriel’s identity project in feeling “young and trendy.” When Gabriel wears this brand in public, other people seeing him wear that brand may also attribute meanings like young and trendy to Gabriel. One could argue that Hollister is a prop Gabriel utilizes to communicate youth and trendiness to an audience.

A final example is Michael’s description of his Roar jacket:

To me, it is almost gaudy. You have got this crazy print on the inside, and the tailoring is very jagged and different. It is not really representative of me really as far as I don’t try to be really showy. I’m typically quiet, but I think that there is a part of me that wants to be like that. So I am able to kind of take on that persona a little bit.

Michael does not identify with this brand on a high level. In fact, he calls it “almost gaudy,” “crazy,” “jagged and different.” He does not view these descriptions as central aspects of his identity, but when he wears this jacket, “a little bit” of this part of himself can be communicated to others.

*Brand-symbolic-expression utility and high levels of attachment. Quadrant 2*

describes the consumer's high levels of attachment consumers' to their socially-visible brand. He or she strongly identifies with this brand, and uses it to express himself or herself. An example is Michael's discussion of Converse:

I have always kind of liked Converse because they aren't the big guys – Reebok, Nike. They are owned by Nike. I like that fact that they are more laid back. I like that the logo is not blaring in your face. Sometimes you don't see the logo anywhere on it. I like just the variety of shoes. There is kind of this basic foundation of the shoe, but you can get them in all sorts of colors and patterns and fabrics. It is that original basketball shoe. It has that kind of history with it. It feels like before things became this spectacle. Basketball and the shoe industry. They haven't really followed that trend.

To Michael, Converse is "laid back," "not blaring in your face," not one of "the big guys," "original," and not a "spectacle." Michael's identity probably contains some of these aspects as well. When Michael wears Converse, he is communicating his laid back, original, and unflashy sense of self.

In terms of impression management theory, consumer-brand relationships that fall into Quadrants 1 and 2 display the prop metaphor of the socially-visible brand. The consumer is focusing on the brand, and views it as an expressive tool for his or her identity. In Quadrant 1, since the level of attachment is low, then the intentionality of the consumer using the socially-visible brand as a prop is probably lower. But in Quadrant 2, one could argue that the high levels of attachment with high levels of intentionality of using the socially-visible brand as a prop the actor uses to communicate his or her role to others.

*Product-functional-use utility and low levels of attachment. Quadrant 3* describes the consumer's focus on the product while displaying a low level of attachment.

Therefore, the socially-visible brand is perceived as something extra. It is periphery to the

consumer's sense of utility. An example is Ryan's description of his Puma shoes, "The only reason that I bought them was because they are incredibly shiny and incredibly silver and unique." The brand on these shoes is quite visible, however Ryan identifies more with the "shiny and incredibly silver" aspects of the product rather than the brand itself. It is doubtful that Ryan possesses shiny and silver aspects in his identity, so he is focused more on the functional use of the item, rather than the expressive utility.

A second example is Allison's description of her Cherokee sweatshirt, "I'm not sure the brand has a whole lot of meaning for me. It was just a color that I liked, and it was a style that I liked, and it happened to be on sale." The brand is quite visible on this sweatshirt, however, the consumer is identifying more with the functional attributes (color, price, style) rather than the expressive attributes. She also does not possess a high amount of attachment to this product ("it happened to be on sale").

A third example is Benjamin's discussion of an Ocean Pacific sweatshirt:

Benjamin: Let's see, I got that from Wal-mart, and I like how it looks because that is kind of the new style going around. The sweatshirt with the lines striped on it. It was pretty cheap, and I liked it. It isn't really for keeping you warm though, because it is really thin. It is just for looks. But I like it. You see a lot of my age people wearing those type of jackets. Like Daniel Tosh of Tosh.0. He usually has a jacket on like that. And the actor on the show Chuck, he usually has one.

Interviewer: That is interesting. Is it that brand or is it that look?

Benjamin: I think it is just that look. Not necessarily the brand. But it is kind of like, "You are nerdy, but you are also cool."

Like in the examples above with Ryan and Allison, the brand on this sweatshirt is quite visible, but Benjamin is focusing on the product rather than the brand. He is using this item in a somewhat expressive manner ("You are nerdy, but you are cool."), but it is the product rather than the specific brand that is communicating these meanings to others.

*Product-functional-use utility and high levels of attachment.* Quadrant 4 explains the consumer's focus on the product but displays a high level of attachment. One example of this is Luke's discussion of St. John's Bay:

I wore a lot of those polos in high school. That is probably the one brand that fits my personality the most. The shirts - just the comfort level. The level of non-flashy-ness. Always with the collar. I like the polos, I do have some button-downs. I am a simple guy, it is a simple shirt. No designs on it. I have worn the black color, the blue color. Navy. Less patterns, less complicated. I am not that complicated of a person. What you see is what you get ... If I die tomorrow, don't bury me in a suit bury me in a navy-blue polo. That is what I have worn all of my life. That is what people see me as. I feel comfortable in it.

Luke has a strong identification with polo shirts. St. John's Bay is not a socially-visible brand, however, Luke does own several other polo shirts that do display socially-visible brands. Here, Luke focuses on the product's physical features (comfort, simplicity) rather than the expressive attributes. When he says, "If I die tomorrow, don't bury me in a suit, bury me in a navy-blue polo," he doesn't say, "bury me in a St. John's Bay polo." Luke is attached with the product, regardless of the socially-visible brand (or if there is a socially-visible brand) on the product.

Quadrants 3 and 4 created some unanticipated outcomes for this study. The consumer-brand relationships that fall into these quadrants display the prop metaphor of the product – not the socially-visible brand. The consumer is focusing on the product, and views this as a functional tool for his or her identity. In Quadrant 3, the level of attachment is low, and therefore the intentionality of the consumer using the product as a prop is perhaps low. But in Quadrant 4, the high levels of attachment suppose high levels of intentionality of using the product as a prop the actor uses to communicate his or her role to others. Therefore, the matrix in Figure 18 displays two categorizations of props: 1) socially-visible brands and 2) products.



## **Interview Summary**

Research questions one and two investigate the topic of socially-visible brands from a qualitative standpoint. Research question one dives into consumer culture, and documents the social phenomenon of socially-visible brands. Four socially-visible brand variables were categorized and discussed. These variables can be used by future researchers to study socially-visible brands: 1) brand frequency, 2) brand visibility, 3) brand distribution, and 4) brand abbreviation. Research question number two delved more into impression management theory and attempted to validate the prop metaphor. Several themes inductively arose out of the interview dialogue, and can also be used by future researchers to study consumer perceptions of socially-visible brands. These themes are: 1) utility, 2) attachment, and 3) trajectory. In addition, by juxtaposing the utility and the attachment themes, a matrix emerged where the prop metaphor emerged for socially-visible brands in Quadrants 1 and 2, and a prop metaphor also emerged for products in Quadrants 3 and 4. Overall, socially-visible brands are a new social phenomenon that can now be categorized and content analyzed from a visual standpoint, and discussed with the consumers who wear them through the lens of the prop metaphor from impression management theory.

## **CHAPTER 7: SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

The second research study conducted for this report consisted of a quantitative survey in order to begin the uncovering of driving mechanisms for consumers to engage in socially-visible brand use. An a priori estimation of these dynamics is that individual traits (demographics) precede daily, contextual individual states (consumer-brand perceptions and behavioral intentions). In other words, an individual exists as a male or female, young or old, rich or poor for a period of time before he or she makes a decision on what to wear on any given day or how he or she feels toward a certain brand. Therefore, demographics should provide insight on motivations for consumer-brand perceptions and behavioral intentions for socially-visible brands. Demographics are also a primary tool for market segmentation.

### **Research Questions**

The goal of the survey is to answer the following research questions:

**RQ3:** How are demographics related to socially-visible brand perceptions?

**RQ4:** How are demographics related to socially-visible brand behavioral intentions?

Survey items providing demographic information includes questions on each participant's sex, age, level of education, and personal income. These are several of the primary factors marketing and advertising practitioners use to develop market segmentation strategies (Solomon, 2009). For example, in terms of one's sex:

“Sexual identity is a very important component of a consumer's self-concept. People often conform to their culture's expectations about how those of their gender should act, dress, or speak. Of course, these guidelines change over time, and they differ radically across societies. It's unclear to what extent gender differences are innate versus culturally shaped – but they're certainly evident in many consumption situations.” (p. 183)

Then, in terms of age:

“The era in which you grow up bonds you with millions of others who come of age during the same time period. Obviously, your needs and preferences change as you grow older, often in concert with others of your own age (even though some of us don’t really believe we’ll ever get older). For this reason, our age is a big part of our identity. All things being equal, we are more likely to have things in common with others of our own age than with those younger or older.” (p. 548)

One could argue that education and personal income combine to indicate an individual’s socioeconomic status, or what social class he or she belongs to. Therefore, in terms of social class:

“We use the term social class more generally to describe the overall rank of people in society. People who belong to the same social class have approximately equal social standing in the community. They work in roughly similar occupations, and they tend to have similar lifestyles by virtue of their income levels and common tastes. These people tend to socialize with one another and share many ideas and values regarding the way life should be lived.” (p. 488)

In sum, demographics are a common tool for marketing and advertising practitioners to study their consumers and to segment out their strategic audiences for persuasive messages. Therefore, marketing and advertising scholars often use these variables to study consumers as well. In this study, sex, age, education and personal income are the demographic factors serving as the independent variables.

Dependent variables for the study include consumer-brand perceptions and behavioral intentions. From the literature review discussed above, numerous consumer-brand perception scales exist measuring the level of perceived attachment between the consumer and the brand he or she uses. Several consumer-brand perception scales were implemented in this survey, however, many more are available for future researchers. In addition, the behavioral intention manipulations set up for this study are based off of the themes that emerged from the author’s first pre-test. These are variables that describe

several decisions consumers makes in terms of how they use and wear socially-visible brands.

In order to pick a brand for consumers to answer consumer-brand perception scales, participants were given 100 brands grouped across five product categories, with 20 brands per category. These are popular brands in the marketplace according to current trade publications (Speer, 2010; Millward Brown Optimor, 2010; Standard & Poor's Industry Surveys, 2010a; Standard & Poor's Industry Surveys, 2010b). The five product categories are: 1) apparel/shoes, 2) luxury/designer, 3) automobiles, 4) high-technology (hi-tech), and 5) non-alcoholic beverages. From previous ethnographic fieldnotes (Schulz, 2009), it was documented that these product categories are common when people display socially-visible brands. Respondents were asked to pick one of the brands and answer questions on consumer-brand perceptions towards that brand. Survey participants also had the option of supplying a brand of their choice which does not reside on this list, but were asked to choose a brand from one of the five product categories listed above.

Survey items that provide information about consumer-brand perceptions included scales that measure consumer perceptions of brand personality (Aaker, 1997), brand extension fit (John, Loken, & Joiner, 1998), brand commitment (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000), brand involvement (Kirmani, Sood, & Bridges, 1999), and social value (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). The brand personality scales describe the symbolic and self-expression functions that consumers perceive a specific brand possesses. The five major brand personalities are: 1) competence, 2) excitement, 3) ruggedness, 4) sincerity, and 5) sophistication. The brand extension fit scale describes the perceived overlap of a brand's

image with the image of a parent company. Here, it has been adapted to assess the overlap of a brand's image with the consumer's self-image. The brand commitment scale measures the consumer's loyalty to a specific brand. Brand involvement describes the level of importance of a brand to the consumer. Finally, social value describes the consumer's perception that the use of a particular brand will enhance his or her social approval.

In addition, behavioral intentions were measured in relation to socially-visible brands. Participants were exposed to a series of photographs with consumer clothing items displaying socially-visible brands. Each set of pictures depicted a variable discovered in previous research (Schulz, 2009) - specifically, product gross brand frequency, brand visibility presence, brand visibility size, acronym brand abbreviation, and non-verbal brand abbreviation. Participants were asked to choose which item they would prefer to wear. For example, they were shown a shirt with a small socially-visible brand logo and another shirt showing a large socially-visible brand logo. The shirts are same color and display the same logo. This is to understand the variable brand visibility size. There were eight sets of photographs, and they were structured so that men and women were answering questions based off of their respective gender's clothing articles. Also, brands from a variety of price ranges were represented among the socially-visible brands displayed (e.g., Nike, Abercrombie & Fitch, Lacoste, and Armani Exchange). Therefore, the photographs of clothing items were taken from actual products from each company's Website. The full survey can be seen in Appendix 6.

## **Population Sampling**

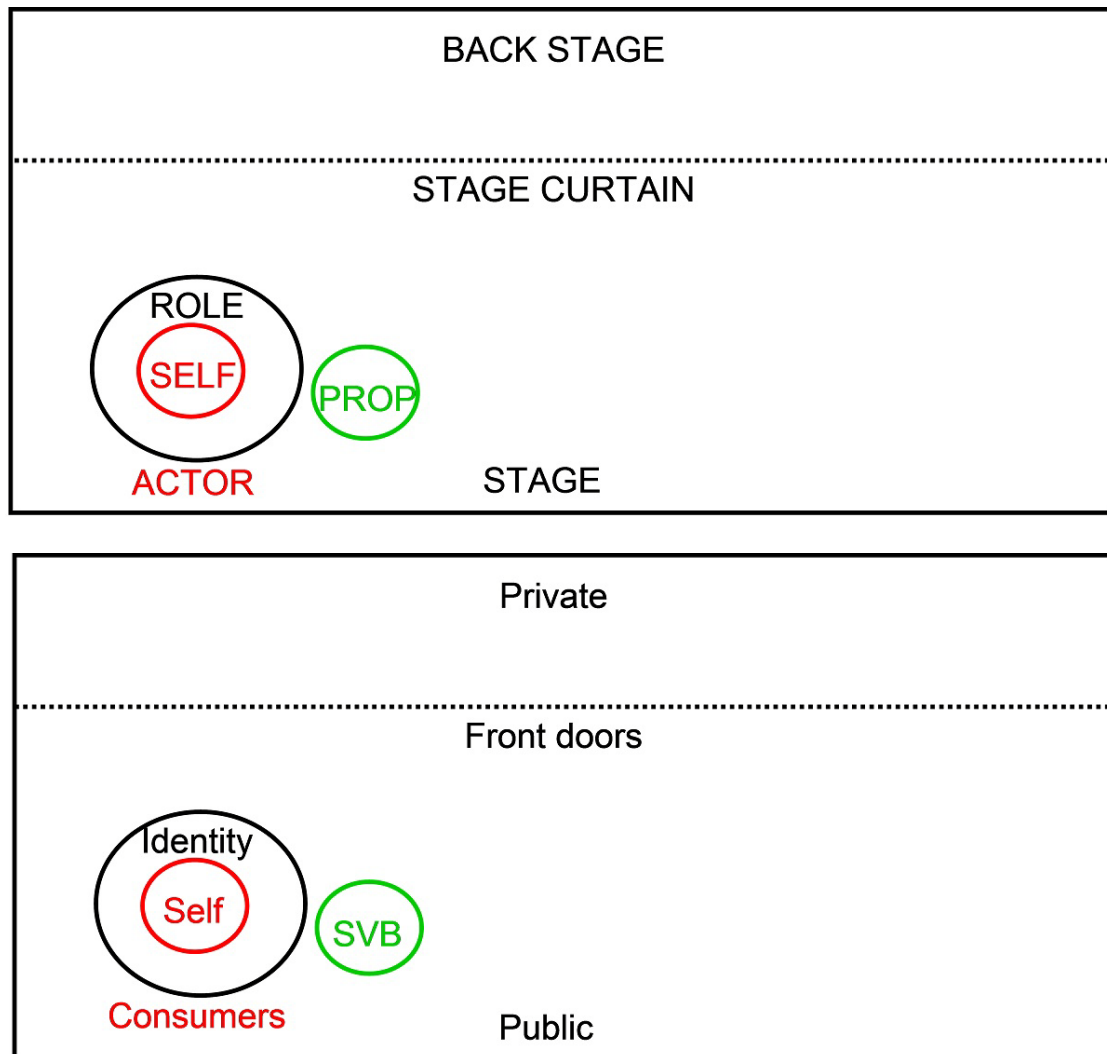
In terms of data for the survey, a sample size of 300 is argued to be sufficient to ensure both descriptive and predictive analysis. The goal was to collect data from participants ages 18 and over from a nationally representative sample. This sample was obtained through the use of a respondent panel from Authentic Response, a company that has a panel data base for researchers. The sample makeup is further discussed in the results section.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis for the survey consisted of primarily descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and correlations. Descriptive statistics such as central tendency (mean) as well as variability (standard deviation) revealed information about consumers' demographics, socially-visible brand perceptions, and behavioral intentions. Plus, cross-tabulations and measures of association revealed insight on how demographics, correlate to consumer-brand perceptions and behavioral intentions.

The results of research questions three and four are based off of the survey data and begin to uncover potential motivating factors for socially-visible brand use. Therefore, in terms of the dramaturgical organizing framework discussed above, research questions three and four provide insight on actor-self interactions with props, or consumer-self interactions with socially-visible brands (see Figure 19). Demographics supply the consumer with a sense of self and influence how the consumer will engage with socially-visible brand props.

**Figure 19: Research Questions 3 and 4 – Actor-self Interaction with Prop**



## **CHAPTER 8: SURVEY RESULTS**

The survey sample consisted of 300 participants. The participant demographics will first be discussed. Then brand perception scales and behavioral intention choices will be summarized. Finally, each research question will be specifically addressed.

### **Demographics**

Fifty-four percent of the respondents were female, and 46% of the respondents were male.

The average age of the respondents was 41.6 (SD = 14.71). The sample reflects a range of adults in their 20s through 50s; valuable age groups for many marketers. Four percent of the respondents are in their late teens, 22% are in their 20s, 21% are in their 30s, 22% are in their 40s, 19% are in their 50s, 10% are in their 60s, two percent are in their seventies, and one percent are in their eighties.

In terms of educational attainment, the sample reflected a fairly educated group. One percent disclose some high school education, 21% reported being high school graduates, 35% disclosed some college education, 28% reported being college graduates, four percent reported some graduate school, and 11% reported being graduate school graduates.

In terms of personal income, 21% reported making less than \$10,000, 11% reported making between \$10,000 and \$19,000, 14% reported making between \$20,000 and \$29,999, 16% reported making between \$30,000 and \$39,999, eight percent reported making between \$40,000 and \$49,999, seven percent reported making between \$50,000 and \$59,000, three percent reported making between \$60,000 and \$69,999, four percent reported making between \$70,000 and \$79,999, three percent reported making between



\$80,000 and \$89,999, four percent reported making between \$90,000 and \$99,999, three percent reported making between \$100,000 and \$109,999, one percent reported making between \$110,000 and \$119,999, one percent reported making between \$120,000 and \$129,999, one percent reported making between \$130,000 and \$139,999, two percent reported making between \$140,000 and \$149,999, and three percent reported making over \$150,000.

### **Socially-visible Brand Choices**

As stated above, given 100 brands group across the five product categories, research participants picked one socially-visible brand and in turn answered the consumer-brand perception scales on this chosen brand. In terms of product categories, 27% of the respondents chose a non-alcoholic beverage brand, 25% chose an apparel/shoe brand, 25% chose an automobile brand, 17% chose a hi-tech brand, and six percent chose a luxury/designer brand. Table 5 displays the socially-visible brand chosen by the survey respondents. As one can see, Coca-cola was the most-picked brand (8.3%), followed by Apple (5.0%), Nike (4.7%), Ford (4.7%), Chevrolet (4.3%), Toyota (4.0%), and American Eagle Outfitters (4.0%). Like stated above, participants also had the option of supplying their own brand that belongs to one of these five product categories. Other brands chosen by respondents included Allen Edmunds, Calvin Klein, Clarks, Deer Park, Isuzu, Jaguar, Jeep, Jordans, L.L. Bean, and Vans.

**Table 5: Socially-visible Brand Choice**

<b>Apparel/shoes</b>	<b>Luxury/designer</b>	<b>Automobiles</b>	<b>Hi-tech</b>	<b>Non-alcoholic Beverages</b>
Abercrombie & Fitch (2.7%)	Chanel (1.0%)	Audi (0.0%)	Acer (0.0%)	Aquafina (0.7%)
Adidas (2.3%)	Christian Dior (0.3%)	BMW (1.0%)	Apple (5.0%)	Coca-cola (8.3%)
Aeropostale (1.7%)	Coach (0.7%)	Buick (0.0%)	AT&T (0.0%)	Contrex (0.0%)
American Eagle Outfitters (4.0%)	Dolce & Gabbana (0.7%)	Chevrolet (4.3%)	BlackBerry (0.0%)	Dasani (0.3%)
Bebe (0.0%)	Donna Karan (0.0%)	Chrysler (0.3%)	Dell (2.0%)	Diet Coke (2.3%)
Colombia Sportswear (0.3%)	Fendi (0.0%)	Dodge (2.0%)	Facebook (0.7%)	Diet Pepsi (2.0%)
Crocs (0.0%)	Giorgio Armani (0.3%)	Ford (4.7%)	Google (0.7%)	Dr. Pepper (2.0%)
Espirit (1.3%)	Givenchy (0.0%)	Honda (2.3%)	Hewlett-Packard (1.3%)	Evian (0.0%)
Fossil (0.0%)	Gucci (0.7%)	Hyundai (1.0%)	IBM (0.0%)	Fanta (1.0%)
IZOD (0.3%)	Guess? (0.3%)	Kia (0.0%)	Lenovo (0.0%)	Gatorade (0.7%)
Kswiss (1.0%)	Hermes (0.0%)	Lincoln-Mercury (0.3%)	Microsoft (1.3%)	Levissima (0.0%)
Levi Strauss (2.0%)	Louis Vuitton (0.3%)	Mazda (1.0%)	Motorola (0.7%)	Mountain Dew (2.3%)
Nike (4.7%)	Prada (0.0%)	Mercedes (1.3%)	Nokia (0.0%)	Pepsi (3.3%)
Puma (0.3%)	Ralph Lauren (0.7%)	Nissan (0.7%)	Samsung (1.0%)	Perrier (0.0%)
Quicksilver (0.0%)	Rolex (0.3%)	Pontiac (0.3%)	Sony (2.0%)	Poland Spring (0.7%)
The North Face (0.3%)	Tiffany & Co. (1.0%)	Porsche (0.3%)	Sprint Nextel (0.3%)	Pure Life (0.3%)
Timberland (0.3%)	Tommy Hilfiger (0.0%)	Renault (0.0%)	T-Mobil (1.0%)	Red Bull (0.3%)
True Religion Apparel (0.0%)	Van Cleef & Arpels (0.0%)	Saturn (0.0%)	Toshiba (0.3%)	Sprite (2.0%)
Under Armour (0.3%)	Versace (0.0%)	Toyota (4.0%)	US Cellular (0.0%)	Vittel (0.0%)
Volcom (0.3%)	Yves Saint Laurent (0.0%)	Volkswagen (0.0%)	Verizon Wireless (0.7%)	Volvic (0.0%)

**Consumer-brand Perceptions**

The brand personality construct consists of five separate scales. Each scale measures each one of the five brand personalities: 1) competence, 2) excitement, 3) ruggedness, 4) sophistication, and 5) sincerity. The means are: competence ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ), 3.95 (SD = 0.82); excitement ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ) 3.94 (SD = 0.76); ruggedness ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ) 3.16

(SD = 0.93); sophistication ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ) 3.56 (SD = 0.77); and sincerity ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ) 3.75 (SD = 0.76). Four other consumer-brand perception scales were assessed: 1) brand-extension fit, 2) brand commitment, 3) brand involvement, and 4) social value. The means are: brand-extension fit ( $\alpha = 0.61$ ) 3.65 (SD = 0.78); brand commitment ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ) 3.71 (SD = 0.93); brand involvement ( $\alpha = 0.73$ ) 3.81 (SD = 0.79); and social value ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ) 3.42 (SD = 0.86).

### **Behavioral Intentions**

In terms of brand visibility, the Lacoste example showed that participants preferred to wear the smaller logo (77%) compared to the larger logo (23%). For the Nike example, however, only 57% of the respondents preferred the smaller logo, while 43% preferred the larger logo. In terms of whether or not to wear socially-visible brands, the Lacoste example showed that 63% of the respondents chose the shirt without a socially-visible brand, while 37% chose the shirt with a socially-visible brand. But, the Armani example showed that 49% of the respondents chose the shirt without a socially-visible brand, while 51% chose the shirt with the socially-visible brand. In addition, the Abercrombie and Fitch example<sup>1</sup> showed that 51% of the respondents chose the shirt without the socially-visible brand, and 49% chose the shirt with the socially-visible brand. In terms of brand frequency, the Armani example showed that 85% of the respondents chose the shirt with only one socially-visible brand showing, while only 15% chose the shirt with three socially-visible brands showing. In terms of brand recognition, the Nike example showed that 68% of respondents chose the shirt with only the visual logo while 32% of respondents chose the shirt with the visual logo plus the brand name.

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<sup>1</sup> An error occurred where this Abercrombie and Fitch manipulation was supposed to be a second brand frequency manipulation.

Finally, the Abercrombie and Fitch example showed that 53% of respondents chose the shirt with the acronym of the brand name, while 47% chose the shirt with the full brand name.

### **Research Question #3: How are demographics related to socially-visible brand perceptions?**

The demographics being analyzed as independent variables for the survey are: 1) sex, 2) age, 3) education, and 4) personal income. The consumer-brand perception scales utilized as dependent variables for this survey are: 1) brand personality (competence, excitement, ruggedness, sophistication, sincerity), 2) brand-extension fit, 3) brand commitment, 4) brand involvement, and 5) social value. Correlations were run between age, education, and personal income in relation to all of the consumer-brand perception scales. Sex could not be evaluated with correlations due to the nature of the data.

Table 6 displays the correlation matrix of age, education and personal income correlated to the five brand personalities. Two significant correlations emerge. The first is between age and ruggedness,  $r(300) = 0.13$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Therefore, younger individuals are more likely to choose a socially-visible brand they rate low on ruggedness. There was also a significant correlation between personal income and ruggedness,  $r(300) = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Much like age, this relationship is positive, and therefore individuals reporting lower levels of personal income are more likely to choose a socially-visible brand that they rate lower on ruggedness. It is important to note that of all five of the brand personalities, ruggedness is the single brand personality scale that significantly correlated to demographic variables.

**Table 6: Age, Education, and Personal Income  
Correlated to Brand Personality Scales**

		Correlations							
		Age	Education	Personal Income	Competence	Excitement	Ruggedness	Sincerity	Sophistication
Age	Pearson Correlation	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)								
	N	300							
Education	Pearson Correlation	.044	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.451							
	N	300	300						
Personal Income	Pearson Correlation	.159**	.442**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.000						
	N	300	300	300					
Competence	Pearson Correlation	.052	.035	-.024	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.373	.546	.674					
	N	300	300	300	300				
Excitement	Pearson Correlation	-.055	.041	.015	.586**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.346	.475	.790	.000				
	N	300	300	300	300	300			
Ruggedness	Pearson Correlation	.125*	-.004	.218**	.333**	.263**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.951	.000	.000	.000			
	N	300	300	300	300	300	300		
Sincerity	Pearson Correlation	.091	-.036	.030	.668**	.645**	.509**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.116	.534	.604	.000	.000	.000		
	N	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	
Sophistication	Pearson Correlation	-.061	.035	.057	.473**	.730**	.363**	.657**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.295	.547	.329	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 displays the correlation matrix of age, education and personal income correlated to the other four consumer-brand perception scales. Only one significant correlation emerged from these data. It is between age and brand extension fit,  $r(300) = 0.14$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Older individuals are more likely to choose a socially-visible brand they perceive to overlap with their sense of self. Given that age supplies a consumer more time in the marketplace to encounter a variety of brands, as well as time for the consumer to get to know himself or herself, it is intuitive that older consumers know “who they are” and “what they want” out of a brand, and make the purchase decisions that reflect this.

**Table 7: Age, Education, and Personal Income  
Correlated to Consumer-brand Perception Scales**

		Correlations						
		Age	Education	Personal Income	Brand Extension Fit	Brand Commitment	Brand Involvement	Social Value
Age	Pearson Correlation	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)							
	N	300						
Education	Pearson Correlation	.044	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.451						
	N	300	300					
Personal Income	Pearson Correlation	.159**	.442**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.000					
	N	300	300	300				
Brand Extension Fit	Pearson Correlation	.137*	-.070	-.032	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018	.224	.577				
	N	300	300	300	300			
Brand Commitment	Pearson Correlation	-.020	.063	.015	.362**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.728	.273	.792	.000			
	N	300	300	300	300	300		
Brand Involvement	Pearson Correlation	.063	-.015	.049	.439**	.735**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.273	.798	.397	.000	.000		
	N	300	300	300	300	300	300	
Social Value	Pearson Correlation	-.064	.050	.096	.258**	.584**	.670**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.271	.384	.096	.000	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300	300	300	300	300

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

#### **Research Question #4: How are demographics related to socially-visible brand behavioral intentions?**

For research question four, the demographics analyzed as independent variables are: 1) sex, 2) age, 3) education, and 4) personal income. The behavioral intentions developed as dependent variables for this survey are: 1) brand visibility presence (Lacoste, Abercrombie & Fitch, Armani), 2) brand visibility size (Lacoste, Nike), 3) product gross brand frequency (Armani), 4) acronym brand abbreviation (Abercrombie & Fitch), and 5) non-verbal brand abbreviation (Nike). See Appendix 3 for the full list of survey items.

*Sex.* The first demographic – sex – was cross-tabulated with each of the behavioral intention responses. Therefore, the chi-square tests will be discussed for this section. The first set of cross-tabulations look at brand visibility presence. This variable

indicates who is more likely to wear socially-visible brands in general, and who is more likely *to not wear* socially-visible brands. Table 8 displays the Lacoste example of brand visibility presence, and it was not significantly cross-tabulated with sex,  $\chi^2(1, N = 300) = 0.00$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

**Table 8: Sex & Brand Visibility Presence Cross-tabulation (Lacoste)**

			Brand Visibility Presence		Total
			No	Yes	
Sex	Female	Count	102	60	162
		% within Sex	63.0%	37.0%	100.0%
		% within Brand Visibility Presence	54.0%	54.1%	54.0%
		% of Total	34.0%	20.0%	54.0%
	Male	Count	87	51	138
		% within Sex	63.0%	37.0%	100.0%
		% within Brand Visibility Presence	46.0%	45.9%	46.0%
		% of Total	29.0%	17.0%	46.0%
Total	Count		189	111	300
	% within Sex		63.0%	37.0%	100.0%
	% within Brand Visibility Presence		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total		63.0%	37.0%	100.0%

Table 9 displays the Abercrombie & Fitch example of brand visibility presence, and it did display a significantly cross-tabulation with sex,  $\chi^2(1, N = 300) = 80.54$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . As one can see, of the women, 77% of them indicated they would wear the shirt with the socially-visible brand, while only 23% of them indicated they would wear the shirt without the socially visible brand. But, for the men 75% of them indicated that they would wear the shirt without the socially-visible brand, and 25% indicated that they

would wear the shirt with the socially-visible brand. Therefore, this cross-tabulation indicates that women are more likely than men to wear socially-visible brands.

**Table 9: Sex & Brand Visibility Presence Cross-tabulation (Abercrombie & Fitch)**

			Brand Visibility Presence		Total
			No	Yes	
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Female</b>	Count	38	124	162
		% within Sex	23.5%	76.5%	100.0%
		% within Brand Visibility Presence	26.8%	78.5%	54.0%
		% of Total	12.7%	41.3%	54.0%
	<b>Male</b>	Count	104	34	138
		% within Sex	75.4%	24.6%	100.0%
		% within Brand Visibility Presence	73.2%	21.5%	46.0%
		% of Total	34.7%	11.3%	46.0%
<b>Total</b>	Count		142	158	300
	% within Sex		47.3%	52.7%	100.0%
	% within Brand Visibility Presence		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total		47.3%	52.7%	100.0%

Table 10 displays the Armani example of brand visibility presence, and it also display a significantly cross-tabulation with sex,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 300) = 67.57, p < 0.01$ . Like the previous Abercrombie & Fitch cross-tabulation, the majority of women indicated they would wear the shirt with the socially-visible brand (69%), while a minority of women indicated they would wear the shirt without the socially visible brand (31%). The same pattern occurred for the men as with the Abercrombie and Fitch example. The majority of the men (79%) indicated that they would wear the shirt without the socially-visible brand, and a minority indicated that they would wear the shirt with the socially-visible brand



(21%). Again, this suggests that women are more likely than men to wear socially-visible brands.

**Table 10: Sex & Brand Visibility Presence Cross-tabulation (Armani)**

			Brand Visibility Presence		Total
			No	Yes	
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Female</b>	Count	51	111	162
		% within Sex	31.5%	68.5%	100.0%
		% within Brand Visibility Presence	31.9%	79.3%	54.0%
		% of Total	17.0%	37.0%	54.0%
	<b>Male</b>	Count	109	29	138
		% within Sex	79.0%	21.0%	100.0%
		% within Brand Visibility Presence	68.1%	20.7%	46.0%
		% of Total	36.3%	9.7%	46.0%
<b>Total</b>	Count		160	140	300
	% within Sex		53.3%	46.7%	100.0%
	% within Brand Visibility Presence		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total		53.3%	46.7%	100.0%

Moving on to brand visibility size, Table 11 displays the Lacoste example. Sex shows a significant cross-tabulation with brand visibility size,  $\chi^2(1, N = 300) = 19.69$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . However, this cross-tabulation shows a different pattern than the brand visibility presence cross-tabulations discussed above. Here, the majority of both men (88%) and women (67%) indicated that they would wear the shirt with the smaller brand logo. In fact, the overwhelming majority of the entire sample (77%) choose the smaller brand logo. This does skew the data to some extent, but when one studies the participants who did indicate that they would wear the shirt with the larger socially-visible brand (23%), the majority of the participants were women (77%) versus men (23%). Therefore, this

cross-tabulation shows that the majority of both men and women prefer to wear clothes with smaller socially-visible brands, however, the majority of individuals who do choose to wear clothes with larger socially-visible brands are women.

**Table 11: Sex & Brand Visibility Size Cross-tabulation (Lacoste)**

			Brand Visibility Size		Total
			Small	Large	
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Female</b>	Count	108	54	162
		% within Sex	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within Brand Visibility Size	47.0%	77.1%	54.0%
		% of Total	36.0%	18.0%	54.0%
	<b>Male</b>	Count	122	16	138
		% within Sex	88.4%	11.6%	100.0%
		% within Brand Visibility Size	53.0%	22.9%	46.0%
		% of Total	40.7%	5.3%	46.0%
<b>Total</b>	Count		230	70	300
	% within Sex		76.7%	23.3%	100.0%
	% within Brand Visibility Size		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total		76.7%	23.3%	100.0%

Table 12 displays the Nike example for brand visibility size. Sex does shows a significant cross-tabulation with this variable,  $\chi^2(1, N = 300) = 52.31, p < 0.01$ . The majority of women indicated they would wear the shirt with the larger socially-visible brand (62%), while a minority of women indicated they would wear the shirt with the smaller socially visible brand (38%). The opposite pattern occurred for the men. The majority of the men (80%) indicated that they would wear the shirt with the smaller socially-visible brand, and a minority indicated that they would wear the shirt with the

larger socially-visible brand (20%). This indicates that women are more likely than men to wear larger socially-visible brands in terms of size.

**Table 12: Sex & Brand Visibility Size Cross-tabulation (Nike)**

			Brand Visibility Size		Total
			Small	Large	
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Female</b>	Count	62	100	162
		% within Sex	38.3%	61.7%	100.0%
		% within Brand Visibility Size	36.0%	78.1%	54.0%
		% of Total	20.7%	33.3%	54.0%
	<b>Male</b>	Count	110	28	138
		% within Sex	79.7%	20.3%	100.0%
		% within Brand Visibility Size	64.0%	21.9%	46.0%
		% of Total	36.7%	9.3%	46.0%
<b>Total</b>	Count		172	128	300
	% within Sex		57.3%	42.7%	100.0%
	% within Brand Visibility Size		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total		57.3%	42.7%	100.0%

Table 13 displays the Armani example for brand frequency. Sex is significantly cross-tabulated with brand frequency,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 300) = 14.41, p < 0.01$ . The majority of both men (94%) and women (78%) indicated that they would wear the shirt with one socially-visible brand, while only a minority of men (7%) and women (22%) indicated that they would wear the shirt with three socially-visible brands. The overwhelming majority of the entire sample (85%) choose the shirt with one socially-visible brand. This skews the data to a considerable extent. But studying the participants who did indicate that they would wear the shirt with three socially-visible brand (15%), the majority of the participants were women (80%) versus men (20%). Therefore, this cross-tabulation

shows that the majority of both men and women prefer to wear clothes with one socially-visible brand, however, the majority of individuals who do choose to wear clothes with more than one socially-visible brand are women.

**Table 13: Sex & Brand Frequency Cross-tabulation (Armani)**

			Brand Frequency		Total
			1 Brand	3 Brands	
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Female</b>	Count	126	36	162
		% within Sex	77.8%	22.2%	100.0%
		% within Brand Frequency	49.4%	80.0%	54.0%
		% of Total	42.0%	12.0%	54.0%
	<b>Male</b>	Count	129	9	138
		% within Sex	93.5%	6.5%	100.0%
		% within Brand Frequency	50.6%	20.0%	46.0%
		% of Total	43.0%	3.0%	46.0%
<b>Total</b>	Count		255	45	300
	% within Sex		85.0%	15.0%	100.0%
	% within Brand Frequency		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total		85.0%	15.0%	100.0%

Table 14 displays the Nike example of brand abbreviation non-verbal cross-tabulation with sex. It was not statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 300) = 1.13, p > 0.05$ .

**Table 14: Sex & Brand Abbreviation Non-verbal Cross-tabulation (Nike)**

			Abbreviation		Total
			Non-verbal Abb.	No Abb.	
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Female</b>	Count	115	47	162
		% within Sex	71.0%	29.0%	100.0%
		% within Abbreviation	56.1%	49.5%	54.0%
		% of Total	38.3%	15.7%	54.0%
	<b>Male</b>	Count	90	48	138
		% within Sex	65.2%	34.8%	100.0%
		% within Abbreviation	43.9%	50.5%	46.0%
		% of Total	30.0%	16.0%	46.0%
<b>Total</b>	Count		205	95	300
	% within Sex		68.3%	31.7%	100.0%
	% within Abbreviation		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total		68.3%	31.7%	100.0%

Table 15 displays the Abercrombie & Fitch example for brand abbreviation acronym cross-tabulation with sex. This does show a significant cross-tabulation,  $\chi^2(1, N = 300) = 108.41, p < 0.01$ . The majority of women indicated they would wear the shirt without the abbreviation (75%) (i.e., the full brand name), while a minority of women indicated they would wear the shirt with the abbreviated socially-visible brand (38%). The opposite pattern occurred for the men. The majority of the men (86%) indicated that they would wear the shirt with the abbreviated socially-visible brand, and a minority indicated that they would wear the shirt without the abbreviation (14%). Therefore women are more likely than men to wear socially-visible brands that display the full brand name, while men are more likely than women to wear socially-visible brands that display an abbreviation of that brand name.

**Table 15: Sex & Brand Abbreviation Acronym Cross-tabulation (A&F)**

			Abbreviation		Total
			Acronym Abb.	No Abb.	
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Female</b>	Count	41	121	162
		% within Sex	25.3%	74.7%	100.0%
		% within Abbreviation	25.8%	85.8%	54.0%
		% of Total	13.7%	40.3%	54.0%
	<b>Male</b>	Count	118	20	138
		% within Sex	85.5%	14.5%	100.0%
		% within Abbreviation	74.2%	14.2%	46.0%
		% of Total	39.3%	6.7%	46.0%
<b>Total</b>	Count		159	141	300
	% within Sex		53.0%	47.0%	100.0%
	% within Abbreviation		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total		53.0%	47.0%	100.0%

Table 16 displays the correlation matrix of age, education and personal income correlated to the behavioral intention manipulations. Five significant correlations emerged.

*Age.* Age did not significantly correlate with any of the behavioral intention survey items.

*Education.* Education significantly correlated with the Lacoste example of brand visibility size,  $r(300) = -0.15$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . This is a negative relationship. Therefore, individuals who reported lower levels of education indicated that they would choose to wear a shirt with a larger socially-visible brand.

*Personal income.* Personal income significantly correlated with five of the behavioral intention survey items. The first two correlations are the Lacoste,  $r(300) =$

-0.15,  $p < 0.05$ , and Nike,  $r(300) = -0.12$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , examples for brand visibility size.

This relationship is negative, and such that individuals who report lower levels of personal income were more likely to choose shirts with larger socially-visible brands in terms of their size. The next three correlations are the Lacoste,  $r(300) = 0.12$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , Abercrombie & Fitch,  $r(300) = -0.16$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , and Armani,  $r(300) = -0.26$ ,  $p < 0.01$  examples for brand visibility presence. For the Lacoste example, individuals who report higher levels of personal income were more likely to choose the shirt that did display a socially-visible brand. But, for the Abercrombie & Fitch and Armani examples, individuals who report higher levels of personal income were more likely to choose shirts that do not display socially-visible brands, while individuals who report lower levels of personal income were more likely to choose shirts that do display socially-visible brands.

**Table 16: Age, Education, and Personal Income  
Correlated to Behavioral Intentions**

		Correlations										
		Age	Education	Personal Income	Brand Visibility Presence (Lacoste)	Brand Visibility Presence (A&F)	Brand Visibility Presence (Armani)	Brand Visibility Size (Lacoste)	Brand Visibility Size (Nike)	Product Gross Brand Frequency (Armani)	Acronym Brand Abbreviation (A&F)	Non-verbal Brand Abbreviation (Nike)
Age	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 300										
Education	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.044 .451 300	1 300									
Personal Income	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.159** .006 300	.442** .000 300	1 300								
Brand Visibility Presence (Lacoste)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.079 .173 300	.100 .085 300	.124* .032 300	1 300							
Brand Visibility Presence (A&F)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.003 .960 300	.076 .191 300	-.164** .004 300	.146* .011 300	1 300						
Brand Visibility Presence (Armani)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.017 .769 300	.006 .915 300	-.259** .000 300	-.025 .667 300	.619** .000 300	1 300					
Brand Visibility Size (Lacoste)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.038 .510 300	-.152** .008 300	-.145* .012 300	.165* .004 300	.081 .162 300	.132* .023 300	1 300				
Brand Visibility Size (Nike)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.026 .651 300	.037 .523 300	-.119* .040 300	.065 .263 300	.332** .000 300	.395** .000 300	.082 .158 300	1 300			
Product Gross Brand Frequency (Armani)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.077 .183 300	.009 .879 300	-.071 .218 300	.103 .074 300	.080 .165 300	.019 .747 300	.121* .036 300	.072 .215 300	1 300		
Acronym Brand Abbreviation (A&F)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.004 .951 300	.063 .279 300	.032 .580 300	.137* .017 300	.154** .007 300	-.065 .262 300	.108 .062 300	-.008 .896 300	.270** .000 300	1 300	
Non-verbal Brand Abbreviation (Nike)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.090 .120 300	-.059 .309 300	-.064 .268 300	.146* .011 300	-.044 .453 300	-.091 .116 300	.133* .021 300	-.095 .102 300	.055 .341 300	.148* .010 300	1 300

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## **Summary**

The survey data collected here indicate that demographics such as sex, age, education, and personal income do impact consumers' perceptions and behavioral intentions towards socially-visible brands. For example, effects of sex indicate women were more likely to report behavioral intentions of wearing socially-visible brands, wearing larger socially-visible brands, socially-visible brands that display the full brand name, while men were more likely to report behavioral intentions of not wearing socially-visible brands in general, but if they would wear socially-visible brands, they would wear smaller socially-visible brands, and abbreviated socially-visible brands. In terms of age, it correlated with the consumer-brand perceptions of the brand personality ruggedness and brand-extension fit. Age did not significantly correlate with any of the behavioral intention survey items. The single significant correlation for education was with brand visibility size. Finally, personal income correlated with the consumer-brand perception scale for the ruggedness brand personality. Personal income also correlated to the brand visibility size and brand visibility presence behavioral intentions.



## CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION

Socially-visible brands were the topic of interest for this study. However, the research participants also included many items in their outfits that had brands that were not socially-visible. These brands were still a part of the actor's costume, but the brand itself was not or could not be utilized as a specific prop for role communication to others. Sometimes these items had other visual cues that may hint the brand to others "in the know." Berger and Ward (2010) described this social phenomenon as inconspicuous consumption. It is important to remember that consumers may hold strong attachments to brands while still not feeling the need to display this brand as they use it. William gave an example of this with his Stafford button-down shirts:

To me it is formal. Office-type. If I see somebody, even without seeing the actual brand, I can probably see a shirt and say, "That is probably a Stafford brand." To me it creates a sense of being serious, that you are serious about what you are doing, you are serious about the event that you are going to, and you are serious about where you are intending to go.

All of the research respondents in this study were asked about non-socially-visible brand attachments, and many of them supplied comments that were similar to William's. The look, quality, and design of a Stafford shirt communicates a sense of seriousness for William. Therefore, future consumer research can also examine the products that actors use as props to communicate their role in an inconspicuous manner.

In addition, the notion of "knock-off brands" arose in the results of the interview respondents. Often these products will display a very similar brand to the original in a socially-visible manner. This is often seen with accessory consumer items such as knock-off Chanel sunglasses, Louis Vuitton handbags, or Rolex watches. Two of the interview respondents in this study disclosed that one of their brands that was socially-visible on

their outfit was a knock-off. Gabriel told the investigator that one of his belts was a knock-off Gucci; Elizabeth reported that one of her handbags was a knock-off Prada:

Okay, so my boyfriend actually bought that for me, and it is totally fake – I don't know if I am supposed to say that. (laughs) Come to think of it, I haven't worn it for a while because the zipper broke (laughs) which is a good test if it is fake.

Knock-off items are of particular concern for the brands in a product category because they dilute the integrity of the brand. These knock-off items send “mixed signals” to others because from the surface it appears that the consumer is in possession of the authentic brand. Only upon closer inspection – or sometimes only under admission by the owner – is it clear that the consumer owns a cheaper, inauthentic version.

In terms of impression management theory, Goffman (1959) discussed this with the notion of a masked actor. Since the actor is unable to portray his or her role fully just using his or her own actions or emotions, the actor may don a mask to aid in the role portrayal. But, there is a sense of shame for the actor for not being able to fully portray the role on his or her own. Therefore, if the actor is unmasked in front of the audience, it can cause a sense of embarrassment for the actor. In terms of knock-off brands, when the consumer has been found out by others, one could argue that a similar unmasking occurs, and a similar sense of embarrassment is felt by the consumer for trying to portray a role his or she does not have full ownership over yet. Luke, when discussing his J. Crew shirt, explains the uneasiness the actor may feel concerning the risk of being found out, or determined a phony:

J. Crew is one of those that is right outside the financial boundary for me. I think it was a birthday present from the girlfriend. That is one that I feel a little more special inside when I am wearing that. That brand. Maybe because I am getting out of my common element. My polos and stuff. Stepping out of my boundary zone and stepping into a class of people that I want to aspire to be like, as far as financial terms go. I know people with more money are going to wear those

shirts...I wonder how many people notice, like when I wear it that if I seem uncomfortable at any moment. I may not appear it. By comparison I would wear my polo 50 times and wear that shirt eight times. It feels different. Do I twitch more? Who knows.

From the above discussion, Luke as a person feels more comfortable in Ralph Lauren or St. John's Bay polo shirts. He is beginning to enter the consumer segment as an owner of more expensive button-down shirts from J. Crew, Banana Republic, etc. However, he seems a bit hesitant at the moment to fully embrace this role. This uneasiness seems to increase as he goes out on stage in front of an audience. Actor role transition is a topic that could also be of great interest to consumer researchers in the future. The developmental psychology literature describes many of the life stages and new roles individuals take on throughout their lifespan. This coincides with new consumption behaviors and new consumer-brand relationships throughout one's life. If marketing and advertising practitioners were able to ease consumers' fears and anxieties about taking on new consumer-brand relationships, it might accelerate consumer involvement with that brand.

Finally, reference groups have long been central to the understanding of consumer behavior. Future analysis on teams through the impression management lens could supply the literature with new ways of looking at social psychology – or the self in relation to the other. One example of an actor's disharmony with a team of other actors came from Ethan when he was discussing his work outfit:

I went on a job interview awhile back for a marketing job, and what I had when I was dressed up was SO DIFFERENT because I was wearing khakis with a brown jacket with a red tie and a blue shirt. I was wearing all of this stuff, and everyone else was wearing, like, the business school look. Black suit. White shirt. Power tie. And I was like, "I don't look like you. I look like myself. You guys all look the same." I couldn't tell if that was a good thing or a bad thing. I didn't get the job, which was fine with me.

The chorus of black suits, white shirts, and power ties made Ethan the actor stand out like a sore thumb. He was not meshing with the other actors on stage, and therefore a slightly antagonistic relationship between Ethan and the team emerged. His individuality was more important to him than fitting in with this social group. This was communicated, in part, through the costumes these actors were portraying. Other in-group/out-group dynamics could be assessed using the theatric metaphors discussed above.

Goffman's (1959) impression management theory was a groundbreaking and seminal theory for social psychology. However, dramaturgy has been around since the beginning of theater and plays. Therefore, other dramaturgical frameworks can be implemented in the future to analyze other areas and aspects of consumer behavior. For example, Bentley (1965) developed four major types of dramatic situations: 1) tragedy, 2) comedy, 3) melodrama, and 4) farce. A more detailed categorization – with 36 categories – was crafted by Polti (1921/1977). Actors as well as advertisements could be analyzed to see which drama is being communicated. Sarbin and Allen (1968) developed a framework for analyzing the individual actor's role portrayal: 1) role expectations, 2) role location, 3) role demands, 4) role skills, and 5) self-role congruence. They also mention the importance of studying the multiple roles the actor puts on in a given play. Hare (1972) described four major social interactions between two actors: 1) upward vs. downward, 2) positive vs. negative, 3) serious vs. expressive, 4) conforming vs. anti-conforming. Finally, Hare and Blumberg (1988) described an interesting notion of "role fatigue":

Barbour and Moreno (1980:187) quote Laurence Olivier as having advised aspiring actors: 'Never perform longer than six months in one role, it's death.' They observe that in many every situations people may be called upon to relate to

others in roles that are no longer satisfactory. They identify this condition as one of role fatigue and define it as a loss of energy available for a role because of continued unproductive role performance. It is accompanied by a sense of physical, emotional, and intellectual exhaustion. Popularly referred to as “burnout,” the phenomenon has been observed especially in the helping professions, which seem to require a person to give until they have no more to give. Physiological symptoms include extreme fatigue, tension, sleeplessness, low-back pain, headaches, and numerous minor ailments. Emotional symptoms include cynicism, irritability, nervousness, loss of enthusiasm, helplessness, frustration, rigidity, and suspiciousness. Behaviorally it is marked by lowered performance, lost initiative, overindulgence, boredom, absenteeism, and alienation. (p. 87)

Here, one might conclude that role stability is a somewhat less than desirable goal over a long period of time. In terms of impression management, one could argue that it is important for the individual’s identity to continually shift and grow. If one wants to stay vibrant, one should not be the same person in all areas five years from now as one is currently. The lifelong learning initiatives by many educational institutions make a similar argument. It is important to continue to grow and change as a person. Therefore, one could argue that the sometimes fickle nature of consumers and their somewhat surprising leaps from being brand loyal to Brand A this year and being brand loyal to Brand B next year is something that should be encouraged in the marketplace so as to prevent role fatigue.

Finally, the branding literature and the consumer behavior literature have obvious areas of overlap. However, more research needs to be done trying to connect these dots. By studying brands as an item, rather than the business strategy behind the logo, one is more able to see it from the consumers’ point of view. Penaloza and Cayla (2006) made a similar argument:

Further work is also necessary to establish the importance of studying consumption artifacts. Material consumption artifacts include product logos, designs, packages, advertisements, Websites, to name but a few. Probably

because we have given emphasis to consumer *behavior* in our field, artifacts tend to be viewed as props to the main event, that is, what consumers *do* with them. We suggest that the field would benefit from putting consumption artifacts more fully under the research gaze as ends in themselves, going well beyond content analyses to document their characteristic dimensions and properties. (p. 284-285, authors' emphasis)

Socially-visible brands were studied here as consumption artifacts. Other artifacts related to consumer behavior has yet to be assessed by consumer researches.

In addition, Rook (2006) supplied some interesting techniques used by psychologists as a way of projecting a client's subconscious onto external world: 1) word association, 2) sentence completion, 3) symbol meaning, 4) cartoon tests, 5) object personification, 6) shopping list analysis, 7) picture drawing, 8) auto-driving, 9) thematic storytelling, 10) dream exercises, and 11) collage construction. One could argue that several of these projective techniques were utilized in this research study (e.g., symbol meaning, object personification, thematic storytelling, collage construction). Future use of these techniques could supply an element of richness and cultural understanding to consumer behavior.

Furthermore, the survey data from the current research project shows that other researchers may be able to uncover other predictive factors that contribute to the social phenomenon of socially-visible brands. Here, demographics displayed several connections with behavioral intentions related to socially-visible brand use, while psychographics connected more strongly with brand perceptions related to socially-visible brand use. Other demographic and psychographic items could be assessed in the future.

It is important to point out that an individual's socially-visible brands do not "define" this person. They are not giving the consumer his or her identity. But, by

wearing socially-visible brands out in public, other individuals (especially strangers) will make inferences about “who” this person is based off of the socially-visible brands that person is wearing. Plus, the issue of “intentionality” and “conscious effort” of consumers when they choose which socially-visible brands they purchase and wear on any given day should also be a consideration. For some, the intentionality may be high, while for others it may be extremely low, or non-existent. Even Goffman (1959) admitted that the actor’s portrayal during the impression management process can include many unintentional elements:

Sometimes the individual will be calculating in his activity but be relatively unaware that this is the case. Sometimes he will intentionally and consciously express himself in a particular way, but chiefly because the tradition of this group or social status require this kind of expression and not because of any particular response (other than vague acceptance or approval) that is likely to be evoked from those impressed by the expression. Sometimes the traditions of an individual’s role will lead him to give a well-designed impression of a particular kind and yet he may be neither consciously nor unconsciously disposed to create such an impression. (p. 6)

However, intentionality, automaticity, and conscientiousness of socially-visible branded behavior are not the focus of the current study. First it is important to understand this phenomenon in terms of how it is naturally occurring. Subsequent research studies can gain a better understanding of the motivations and/or intentions underlying this behavior.

In terms of managerial implications for the results of the current research study, it is argued that the descriptive data generated from this dissertation report helps advertising and marketing practitioners gain insight into consumers’ post-purchase behaviors. In other words, how consumers wear and identify with socially-visible brands. Understanding this phenomenon can also help advertising agencies craft better messages because they will tap into the consumer’s need to express themselves. Looking at this

post-purchase behavior may also give insight to marketing practitioners as to how they are developing the products which display socially-visible brands. Explicitly and implicitly, identity negotiations are continuously occurring between the individual and other, between the self and society, between the actor and the audience. Looking at this process through the lens of socially-visible brands one can see how individual consumers are using brands as building blocks for their identity.



## CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

Socially-visible brands exist as communicative signals that share information about the individual's identity. They are a tool the consumer uses to manage his or her impression to others. Or, in a more theatric sense, they are a prop that the actor uses onstage in order to portray his or her role in a play to an audience. Adapting a theatric metaphor from social psychology to consumer behavior enriched the analysis. Several themes of socially-visible brands were explored in this study using photographic data of outfits created by participants and through interview dialogue. From the survey, demographics such as sex and personal income displayed connections to socially-visible brand behavioral intentions, showing that a consumer's gender identity influences the way that they interact with brands. Personal income showed that as income levels went up, the likelihood of engaging with socially-visible brands decreased. Overall, it is argued here that the investigation of socially-visible brands as an area of consumer behavior has furthered the academic literature in the area of consumer culture:

In standard brand management textbooks, **brands** are generally understood as devices that help companies achieve competitive advantages by offering added values to its customers. From this perspective, studying brands becomes a matter of analyzing and systematizing the strategies through which the brand was created and exploring the ways in which these strategies have the intended effects on consumers. **In contrast to this conventional way of doing brand research, there are other approaches that see to capture the cultural richness of brand meanings in contemporary consumer culture.** (Bengtsson & Ostberg, 2006, p. 83, emphasis added)

Future study of consumer behavior using consumer culture theory in conjunction with impression management theory holds promise for a better understanding of consumer identity projects.

## **APPENDIX 1: NATURALISTIC RESEARCH SUMMARY**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed 14 major characteristics of naturalistic research. They are based on the five separating axioms between positivism and post-positivism described above. In essence they are: 1) natural setting, 2) human instrument, 3) utilization of tacit knowledge, 4) qualitative methods, 5) purposive sampling, 6) inductive data analysis, 7) grounded theory, 8) emergent design, 9) negotiated outcomes, 10) case study reporting mode, 11) idiographic interpretation, 12) tentative application, 13) focus-determined boundaries, and 14) special criteria for trustworthiness.

First of all, naturalistic research requires a natural setting. For this study, by going into research participant's homes for the interviews upholds the naturalistic setting for collecting data. The opposite of this, for example, would be to bring research participants into a scientific laboratory for data collection. This technique is well-suited for more experimental and quantitative data collections because the goal is to minimize external influences and maintain consistency in the data collection setting. But naturalistic research demands that the researcher who is collecting data to enter the research participant's sphere of reality because of the importance of contextual surroundings. To strip the research participant of their contextual surroundings greatly minimizes the researcher's ability to understand the multiple, subjective realities surrounding any given social phenomenon.

Second, naturalistic research utilizes a human instrument. This human instrument is the researcher him- or herself. Rather than employing machines or other non-human measuring instruments, naturalistic research argues that the data collection techniques of the human is uniquely able to understand, appreciate, and aggregate the wonderful

variability that qualitative data supplies. There is nothing wrong with using non-human instruments as a complement to the human instrument, but one cannot solely employ non-human instruments and still claim to undertake a naturalistic research study. For this study, the author was the primary instrument for collecting data during the interviews. The use of a camera and a digital audio recorder supplemented the efforts of the human instrument, but the human instrument was still the predominant collector of data. As a side note, Lincoln and Guba (1985) even point out several advantages a human instrument possess. They are: 1) responsiveness, 2) adaptability, 3) holistic emphasis, 4) knowledge base expansion, 5) processual immediacy, 6) opportunities for clarifications and summarization, and 7) opportunity to explore atypical or idiosyncratic responses.

Thirdly, naturalistic research allows and even “argues for the legitimization” (Lincoln & Guba, p. 40) of tacit knowledge. This knowledge that the researcher intuitively “knows” is necessary to conducting naturalistic research. One cannot begin a research project without some level of familiarity with the phenomenon they intend to study. Otherwise, they will have no idea how to find it, and what they are looking (or listening to). In addition, tacit knowledge is acknowledging the benefits of experiential understanding: non-verbal familiarization with a topic. Tacit knowledge cannot overwhelm the focus of the research study. There are checks and balances for the prevention of personal bias by the researcher (see characteristics seven, nine, and 14), but the values of the researcher are integral to the development and implementation of any naturalistic research study design. They cannot be fully separated. For this study, the author’s tacit knowledge of the phenomenon of socially-visible brands helped to guide the set up of the current study’s methodology design. As can be seen in the pre-tests

discussed above, the author already intuitively knows a little bit about this topic. It is not a completely new area of interest for her. However, the data collected in this study supplied the author with a plethora of new information and better understanding of the post-purchase consumption practices surrounding socially-visible brand use.

Characteristic four is fairly straightforward. For naturalistic research, the collection of data through qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and ethnography is a more productive endeavor. Quantitative data is allowed, but is somewhat of a miss-match for the overall naturalistic study design. This is because the levels of aggregation allowed with quantitative data (i.e., the numeric abstractions) chips away at the natural and multiple realities surrounding the topic of interest. For this study, the implementation of interviews was intentionally designed as a way to collect qualitative data.

The fifth characteristic is purposive sampling. Here, Lincoln and Guba (1985) summarize the importance of purposive sampling for naturalistic research studies:

In naturalistic investigations, which are tied to intimately to contextual factors, the purpose of sampling will most often be to include as much information as possible, in all of its various ramifications and constructions; hence, maximum variation sampling will usually be the sampling mode of choice. The object of the game is not to focus on the similarities that can be developed into generalizations, but to detail the many specifics that give the context its unique flavor. (p. 201)

In order to obtain the depth that naturalistic research thrives on, purposive sampling is a technique to gather the cultural complexity from a small pool of participants. Lincoln and Guba describe six types of purposive sampling: 1) sampling extreme or deviant cases, 2) sampling typical cases, 3) maximum variation sampling, 4) sampling critical cases, 5) sampling politically important or sensitive cases, and 6) convenience sampling. The sampling technique that was used for this study was a combination of maximum variation

sampling and convenience sampling. Within 20 participants, the author was intentional to include roughly the same amount of men and women while striving for a maximum variability in age, occupation, income, ethnicity, and education. However, for more convenient purposes, the recruitment of participants occurred through a snowball sampling method. While the author did not interview anyone in her immediate family or her immediate friends and co-workers, she did interview extended family members, workplace acquaintances and social acquaintances. She then asked these participants to pass her contact information on to other people they may know who would be interested in participating in this study. Therefore, some of the research participants were strangers to the author at the time of data collection, but were introduced through a network of personal associations.

Hand-in-hand with qualitative research methods, characteristic seven – inductive data analysis – is fairly straightforward when it comes to naturalistic research. Just as positivistic research lends itself more to deductive data analysis for hypothesis testing, the inductive coding and categorization of naturalistic research is the most beneficial way to “making sense of field data” (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 202). The data for the interviews in this research study were inductively coded.

Characteristic eight discusses emergent design. This describes the flow to conducting naturalistic research. Although a preliminary protocol can be developed (for example an interview protocol with a list of topics to discuss and a list of questions to potentially ask), there are just some points of data that cannot be “known” ahead of time. Therefore, when the time comes for the interviewer and interviewee to actually sit down and execute the data collection process, the discussion that unfolds and the patterns of

discussion across participants will emerge in an semi-organic fashion. In this study, the researcher did develop an interview protocol with a list of questions, but as she conducted her interviews one-by-one, some of the questions were given more or less focus, and even new questions would spontaneously emerged as she interacted with each participant. A level of structure existed, but the flow of the data collection evolved with time.

The negotiated outcomes of characteristic nine is one aspect that makes naturalistic research fairly distinctive from more positivistic research. This is because at some level the researcher must submit to the interpretations of his or her research participants when it comes to making sense of the reality surrounding a social phenomenon. Now, the control is not solely in the research participants' hands, but on an informal and sometimes formal basis the researcher continuously negotiates with the participants about the data that is being collected. For this study, a negotiated outcome was often formally brought to attention when research participants were asked to put together their five outfits. They were each given the same guidelines for each outfit (e.g., a typical workday, an evening out with friends, etc.), but some participants would openly negotiate with the researcher about the interpretation of some of the guidelines. For example, one of the biggest negotiating topics was the fourth outfit: "It is a weekend, and you are getting ready to meet your family at a restaurant for an evening meal." Some research participants would put this outfit together without asking a question, while others would ask the author if this scenario should be interpreted as a meal with their parents versus a meal with their own children. Some would also ask if they should expect to go to a restaurant that was formal or a more casual. For both sets of questions, the author would tell the participants that they were free to interpret the guidelines however

they wanted. They could plan on going out to eat with their parents and/or their children, and they could put an outfit together for a formal or a more casual restaurant. As one can see, the author was the one who set up the initial guideline, but she then negotiated with some research participants on the interpretation of the guideline in order for them to supply their perspective on the reality surrounding this social situation.

Characteristic 10 describes the case study method of reporting data. The biggest advantage of case studies is that they allow a “thick description” (Lincoln & Guba, p. 214) of single cases, and when cases are presented one by one, a fuller picture is presented where the multiple realities around a phenomenon are laid out one by one. Characteristic 11 - idiographic interpretation - is connected to the case study method. This is because the context for each individual is what drives the particular realities for each person.

Characteristic 12 argues that naturalistic researchers use tentative applications of their results. Generalizations and transferability are not inherent goals of naturalistic research. These are more amenable to the predictive goals of positivistic research. Instead, the idiographic and contextual understanding of a phenomenon are goals better suited to naturalistic research. The results of the interviews for this study are not meant to be applied to consumers outside of this small sample. Instead, the information obtained from these participants supplies a contextualized understanding of a social phenomenon from people who are intimately connected to its reality.

The focus-determined boundaries of characteristic 13 describe the refocusing that occurs as the researcher engages in an emergent study design in addition to negotiated outcomes with research participants. As the themes emerge from the data in a grounded

and inductive fashion, the researcher begins to understand the boundaries of interpretations allowed for the topic of interest. These boundaries are another check-and-balance that prevent the researcher's preconceptions from intruding the analysis process.

Finally, the special criteria for trustworthiness is of particular interest for naturalistic research studies. Because naturalistic research is not positivistic, the criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity cannot be applied with the traditional expectations. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed parallel criteria that can be applied to naturalistic research. They are: 1) truth value, 2) applicability, 3) consistency, and 4) neutrality.

In terms of truth value, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue:

In order to demonstrate "truth value," the naturalist must show that he or she has *represented those multiple constructions adequately*, that is, that the reconstructions (for the findings and interpretations are also constructions, it should never be forgotten) that have been arrived at via the inquiry are *credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities*. (p. 295-296, authors' emphasis)

In order to ensure the credibility and truth value of one's data the authors recommend that naturalistic researchers engage in three processes when collecting and analyzing data.

The first is prolonged engagement. This allows the researcher to learn more about the culture or phenomena they are studying. Prolonged engagement also allows the research participants to build up a level of trust with the researcher. The second recommended process is persistent observation. The continuity of observation allows the researcher to reach a level of information saturation, which in turn prevents anecdotal evidence from taking center stage. Although the idiosyncrasies of naturalistic data are accepted and even celebrated, they cannot be allowed to distort the researcher's view of the main themes emerging from the data. Finally, one well-established process that is encouraged by many



qualitative research experts is triangulation. Denzin (1978) coined this term, and Lincoln and Guba cite his guidelines to this process, “Denzin (1978) has suggested that four different modes of triangulation exist: the use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories” (p. 305). Other truth value activities that naturalistic researchers can pursue are peer debriefing (“a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind,” p. 308), negative case analysis (“a ‘process of revising hypotheses with hindsight.’ The object of the game is continuously to refine a hypothesis until it *accounts for all known cases without exception*,” p. 309), referential adequacy (“when resources and inclinations permit, the storage of some portion of the raw data in archives for later recall and comparison,” p. 314), and member checks (“whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected,” p. 314).

In terms of applicability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that naturalistic researchers are not required to shoulder this burden of proof, especially during their first wave of data collection. This is due to the nature of context - both in time and space. In other words, since naturalistic researchers do not intend to generalize their findings to populations outside of their sample, they should not feel obligated to prove the external validity of their findings.

In terms of consistency with naturalistic data collection and analysis, the authors “concede what might be called ‘instrumental’ unreliability ... Humans do become careless; there is ‘instrumental decay’ such as fatigue; the human mind is tentative and

groping and it makes mistakes” (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 299). But, they argue that overlapping methods of data collection and analysis via triangulation helps to build dependable, reliable, and more consistent results.

Finally, with neutrality the authors suggest the researcher leave an “audit trail” (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 319) with their data where the research project can be audited by other parties. The audit trail is, “a residue of records stemming from the inquiry, just as a fiscal audit cannot be conducted without a residue of records from the business transactions involved. Six types of naturalistic records are beneficial for an inquiry audit: 1) raw data, 2) data reduction and analysis products (write-ups, fieldnotes, summaries), 3) data reconstruction and synthesis products (themes, definitions), 4) process notes (procedure, design, strategy, rationale), 5) materials relating to intentions and dispositions (reflexive notes), and 6) instrument development information (pilot studies).

## **APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

### **Individual Identity**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
  - a. Who is \_\_\_\_\_(participant's name)\_\_\_\_\_?
  - b. Where did you grow up?
  - c. Can you tell me a little about your life growing up?
  - d. Where did you go to high school?
  - e. Where did you go to college? (if college educated)
  - f. How did you meet your significant other? (if married)
  - g. What is/was it like to raise your kids? (if they have kids)
2. What do you like to do in your free time?
  - a. What are some of your hobbies?
3. What are some of your favorite TV shows?
  - a. Do you watch any TV shows online?
    - i. If so, which ones?
4. What are some of your favorite movies?
  - a. Or movies that are in theaters now that you would like to see?
5. Who are some of your favorite musical groups right now?
6. Do you follow any sports teams? If so, who are some of your favorite sports teams?
7. What is one major accomplishment you have achieved in your life that you are really proud of?
  - a. Or more, if you have more than one you would like to talk about.
8. When you were little, who was your favorite super hero or role model and why?
9. Who is a hero or role model of yours today and why?
  - a. (a parent, a celebrity, an influential person in one's life)

### **Social Identity**

10. What is your occupation?
  - a. Where do you work?
  - b. What is your professional title?
  - c. What are some of your job tasks?
  - d. How did you get interested in this field?
  - e. Can you tell me a little about your career path through the years?
  - f. What are some of your previous jobs, titles, organizations?
11. Do you belong to any professional organizations or social groups?
  - a. Volunteer work, church group, book club, online community, etc.
12. What do you and your friends/family usually like to do during your free time together?
  - a. Where do you go?

### **Top-of-Mind Brand Awareness**

13. Okay, now I would like to switch topics a little bit. Can you tell me about some of your favorite brands?

- a. Off the top of your head, what are some brands you enjoy purchasing or owning?
- 14. What are some brands you aspire to purchase?

### **Socially-visible Brands on Costumes Created by the Participant**

- 15. Next, I am going to give you several scenarios, and based off of the items you own, I would like you to put together an outfit for each scenario. I don't want you to put the outfit on, just arrange the items together, and I would like to take a picture of the outfit. All of these scenarios are for when you leave your house, so I would like you to include everything you would take with you as you walk out the front door (cell phone, jacket, purse, sunglasses, etc.). Also, for each outfit I am going to write down the brands, and we will discuss the brands in the next section.
  - a. Scenario 1: Put together your favorite outfit. It can be for any occasion.
    - i. What do you like about this outfit?
    - ii. What does this outfit say about you?/How does this outfit express "you"?
    - iii. What is this outfit for? (what social context)
  - b. Scenario 2: It is a weekday, and you are getting ready to go into work
  - c. Scenario 3: It is a weekend, and you are getting ready to go out with some friends
  - d. Scenario 4: It is a weekend, and you are getting ready to meet your family at a restaurant for an evening meal
  - e. Scenario 5: It is the weekend and you are getting ready for a date (or "date night")
- 16. Let's walk through each brand. Can you tell me what you think about this brand? (tell the story of the brand – how they first came to start buying it)
  - a. How would you describe this brand's personality?
    - i. Do you feel that this personality is similar to your own?
  - b. Why did you purchase this brand over its competitors?
    - i. Can you tell me about a competitor brand?
      - 1. What is that brand's personality?
  - c. How would you summarize this brand using three adjectives?

### **Goffman's (1959) Theatrical Metaphor**

- 21. Okay, now imagine that you are an actor who is putting on a performance in front of a live audience. Each outfit is a costume for the role you are portraying in each scenario (employee, friend, date, etc.), and each socially-visible brand is a prop that you utilize in order to communicate your role to others. How would you describe this prop? What image comes to mind? If you can't think of anything, don't worry about it.

### **BrandAsset Valuator Archetypes**

- 22. Looking at the figure here, please pick one of the archetypes to describe the role you are portraying when you are wearing each costume. It is okay to pick the same one for more than one scenario. Also, if you think of one that is not on this chart, feel free to mention that as well.

- a. Favorite outfit archetype: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Employee archetype: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Friend archetype: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Family archetype: \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Date archetype: \_\_\_\_\_

**Socially-visible Brand Inventory**

- 17. Now, can you walk me through some of the items in your closet?
- 18. Can I take pictures of other items with visible brands?

### APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT SUMMARIES

1. **Hannah** grew up in the South. Both of her parents taught at high schools – her mother taught speech, debate, and journalism, and her father taught history and coached athletics. She is the youngest, and has an older sister and an older brother. In her free time, Hannah enjoys spending time with her friends. Some of her favorite TV shows include *House*, *Monk*, *Burn Notice*, and *Psych*. Some of her favorite movies include *Pride and Prejudice*, *Transformers*, the Harry Potter series, and the Pirates of the Caribbean series. For music, Hannah likes to listen to Josh Abbot and Taylor Swift. Top-of-mind brands for Katie include Forever 21 and American Eagle. Aspirational brands for Hannah are North Face, Coach, and Gucci.
2. **Elizabeth** was born in New York, but primarily grew up in Texas. Her mother is a psychiatrist, and her father is a business entrepreneur. She has an older brother who is in the Navy. In her free time, Elizabeth enjoys taking dance classes, reading, and watching contemporary and jazz dance videos. Some of her favorite TV shows include *So You Think You Can Dance*, *Gossip Girl*, *90210*, and *Desperate Housewives*. Some of her favorite movies include *He's Just Not That Into You* and *The Departed*. In terms of music, she likes to listen to *Incubus*, *Coldplay*, Jack Johnson, and *311*. Top-of-mind brands for Elizabeth include Forever 21, Express, and Nike. Aspirational brands for Elizabeth include BCBG and Bebe.
3. **Brooke** grew up in the South-central U.S. As a child, she “went from three to 45 overnight,” as she was forced to handle several difficult family situations including divorce, cancer, alcoholism, and dementia. After completing her undergraduate degree, she worked for Hewlett-Packard computer company. Currently, she is a

graduate student in advertising. In her free time, Brooke knits, paints, and spends time with friends. Some of her favorite TV shows include *Mercy*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Private Practice*, *ER*, and *Desperate Housewives*. Some of her favorite movies include *Black Swann*, *10 Things I Hate About You*, *Troop Beverly Hills*, and *Coyote Ugly*. Some of Brooke's favorite musicians include *Rascal Flatts*, Gary Allen, and Martina McBride. One of Brooke's top-of-mind brands is Adidas.

4. **Ashley** is an only child. Her mother lives in the South and works as a counselor in Job Corps while getting her Ph.D. Her father is a band director at a high school in California. Ashley is breaking into the public relations industry, and has already attended national red carpets and worked with professional athletes, musicians, and fashion designers. In her free time, she enjoys singing, dancing, and shopping. Some of Ashley's favorite TV shows include *Basketball Wives*, *The Hills*, *Laguna Beach*, *Maury Povich*, *Secret Life of the American Teenager*, *Make It or Break It*, *Pretty Little Liars*, *Sex and the City*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, and *Martin*. She also likes Tyler Perry movies as well as the *Scream* trilogy. In terms of music, Ashley enjoys *Xscape*, *En Vogue*, *112*, *SWV*, Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears, T.I., Jay-Z, Lil' Wayne, and Drake. She is also a fan of the Dallas Cowboys. As a child, Ashley saw Janet Jackson as one of her role models:

Janet Jackson. Huge fan. I just loved her moves. I loved the fact that she was just a beautiful person. She was a sweetheart. I have never met her, but if I did – oh my gosh – I would die. She just seemed very personable, very humble. But she is a superstar. She has inspired so many artists of our generation. I have just always loved her songs, her moves. I mean, that woman can dance.

Some top-of-mind brands for Ashley include Zoomba, Charlotte Russe, Jessica Simpson, Blackberry, and the Twilight series. Two aspirational brands are Mazarati and Louis Vuitton.

5. **Maya** grew up in the South. Her mother teaches biology and botany at a junior college. Her father is an animal nutrition researcher for a university. After attending college in the Northeast, Maya traveled to Tanzania and parts of east Africa as a volunteer for a microfinance non-profit organization. During her free time, Maya likes to read fiction – currently she is reading *Little Bee* by Chris Cleave. She also enjoys watching *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*, *30 Rock*, *Modern Family*, *Dexter*, and *Weeds* on TV. Currently, one of her favorite movies is *Black Swann*. For music, Maya likes to listen to *Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings*, *The Nationals*, and *The Black Keys*. Some of Maya's top-of-mind brands include H&M (Hennes & Mauritz), Gap, Banana Republic, Anthropology, Urban Outfitters, Zara, and Forever 21. Some aspirational brands for Maya include Chanel, Gucci, and Armani.
6. **Lauren's** parents are from El Salvador. Her father works as a maintenance employee at a university, while her mom is a janitorial office manager. Lauren is currently a graduate student, and she completed her undergraduate degree at a university in upstate New York. In her free time she likes to try new restaurants with friends, train for marathons, and take ballet lessons. Some of her favorite TV shows include *True Blood*, *The Simpsons*, *30 Rock*, *Dexter*, and *Anderson Cooper 360*. Some of her favorite movies include *Centerstage*, *Black Swann*, *Red Shoes*, and *Shakespeare in Love*. She enjoys listening to music by John Legend, Lady Gaga, and Britney Spears. She also roots for the Barcelona soccer team at the World Cup. Her role models are



her parents and her older sister. Lauren's top-of-mind brands include Fossil, BCBG, Under Armour, Nike, and Banana Republic.

7. **Leah** moved around a lot growing up. Her father was a Navel officer, and so she has spent parts of her life living in Virginia, California, and Iowa. Currently she is a graduate student interested in studying social media business strategy. In her free time, Leah and her husband attend rock 'n' roll, jam band, and bluegrass concerts. Some of her favorite TV shows are *True Blood* and *30 Rock*, and one of her favorite movies is *True Grit*. One of her favorite musical groups is *The Radiators*. Leah is also a fan of the Chicago Cubs. Some of her top-of-mind brands include Banana Republic, J. Crew, and REI (Recreational Equipment, Inc.).
8. **Madison** grew up in the South. After her parents' divorce, she moved to Oklahoma with her siblings, her mother, and her step-father. On weekends, and during the summer, she would visit her father. Madison is the oldest child and has four younger siblings – three boys and one girl. Her mother is a high school science teacher, her father is an attorney, and her step-father has had jobs in accounting, computer drafting, and engineering. Madison worked at a law firm after completing her undergraduate degree. This is where she met her husband. She is finishing up her graduate degree to be a copywriter at an advertising agency. During her free time, Madison enjoys exercising, playing on team sports like flag football, and writing children's stories. Some of her favorite TV shows are *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, *League*, *Lost*, *Fringe*, *House*, *Breaking Bad*, and *Dexter*, while some of her favorite movies include *Year One*, *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*, *Pan's Labyrinth*, and *The Orphanage*. Madison's favorite musical groups include

*Radiohead, The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Eric Clapton, Aerosmith, and Stevie Wonder.* Madison is a fan of the Houston Texans, the Indianapolis Colts, and the Baltimore Ravens. As a child, one super hero that she identified with was Shira because, "...she was tough but pretty. She had a skirt, she got to fight in a skirt (laughs)." Her mother was also a major role model in her life. Some of Madison's top-of-mind brands include Apple and Target. Someday, Madison would like to purchase an Accura automobile.

9. **Samantha** grew up in the Midwest. Her father is a superintendent for the department of roads for the state, and her mother is a property tax appraiser. Samantha is a twin, and her twin sister is in the Air Force. She is married, and has two children. In her free time, she likes going to parks, going for walks, and shopping. Some of her favorite TV shows include *Brothers and Sisters* and *Army Wives*. Some of her favorite musical groups include Keith Urban, Taylor Swift, *U2*, *Journey*, and *Aerosmith*. One top-of-mind brand for Samantha is Lee.
10. **Claire** grew up the youngest child of five siblings – three older sisters and an older brother. Her father was a meat inspector, and her mother was a housewife. She has shifted careers over the years, and has worked at meat-packing plants, manufacturing, a bar and lounge, and currently she works at a bank. She is married and has two teenaged kids – one in high school and one in middle school. In her free time, Claire likes to shop, exercise, and watch sports – especially the University of Nebraska Cornhuskers. She also likes to watch TV shows like *The Bachelor* and *The Biggest Loser* and movies such as *A Walk to Remember*, *The Notebook*, and *Nights in Rodanthe*. Some of her favorite musicians include *Steel Magnolias*, *Lady Antebellum*,

Bon Jovi, and *Poison*. Some of Claire's top-of-mind brands include Victoria's Secret and Cathy Van Zeeland.

11. **Allison** grew up in the rural countryside of the Midwest. Her father and mother were farmers. She is a middle child with an older brother and a younger brother. She has been married over 30 years, and has two kids. She has a degree in accounting and works in a small office building. Before this, she worked 20 years in the banking industry. She is also a public notary. In her free time, Allison likes to read, cross-stitch, and quilt. She enjoys watching comedic TV and movies such as *Despicable Me*. Her favorite musician is Brad Paisley. As a child, one of her role models was Samantha Stevens from the TV show *Bewitched* because "...she could twitch her nose and make anything happen. Growing up, that was awesome." Some of Allison's top-of-mind brands include Nike, Adidas, and St. John's Bay. Some aspirational brands for Allison include Yonkers and Dillards.

12. **Benjamin** grew up in the South. His father is an engineer, and his mother is a teacher. He has an older sister and brother. In his free time, Benjamin watches movies, plays video games, plays the guitar, and sings. Some of his favorite TV shows include *Seinfeld*, *Breaking Bad*, *Fringe*, and *SpongeBob Squarepants*. Some of his favorite movies are *The Shawshank Redemption*, *Star Wars*, and *Requiem for a Dream*. Some of his favorite musical groups include *Opeth*, *In Flames*, *Mastodon*, *The Sword*, and *Led Zeppelin*. As a child, one of his role models was the creator of the Star Wars series: George Lucas. Top-of-mind brands for Benjamin include Vans, Hot Topic, Axe, Old Spice, and Microsoft. One aspirational brand is to own a Bose home stereo system.

13. **Gabriel** is the youngest child. He has an older brother and an older sister. His parents are divorced, and his mother works as a schoolteacher. During his free time, he enjoys hanging out with friends and playing team sports like basketball. Some of Gabriel's favorite TV shows are *Two and a Half Men*, *The Bachelor*, and *Jersey Shore*. Some of Gabriel's favorite movies include *Coach Carter*, *The Fast and the Furious*, and *Bad Boys 2*. Gabriel also enjoys listening to music by Lil' Wayne and Kanye West. Top-of-mind brands for Gabriel include Express, Armani Exchange, and American Eagle. Aspirational brands include Gucci and Louis Vuitton.
14. **Ryan** is adopted. He was born in the Southwest. His adoptive parents were born in the North and East, but were raised in southern California. His father was a paramedic and a fireman for 25 years, and is now retired. His mother is a housewife. Ryan spent his childhood years in New Mexico, but his middle school and high school years in Colorado. Ryan is driven towards film, photography, graphic design, and media production. He hopes to get a job at an advertising agency as an art director. In his free time, he also likes to read. He is currently reading a lot of David Sedaris – *The Santaland Diaries*, *Me Talk Pretty One Day*, etc. Some of his favorite TV shows are *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*, *House Hunters*, *House Hunters International*, *Selling New York*, *Modern Family*, *30 Rock*, *American Idol*, *Amazing Race*, and *True Blood*. Some of Ryan's favorite movies are *Star Wars*, *Singing in the Rain*, *Moulin Rouge*, *The Bodyguard*, and *My Best Friend's Wedding*. He enjoys listening to music by Brandi Carlile, Corinne Bailey Rae, *The Beatles*, *Passion Pit*, and Lada Gaga. Ryan roots for the Denver Broncos and the Colorado Rockies. His parents have always been role models during his life. Some of Ryan's top-of-mind brands include

Apple, Panasonic, and Diesel. Some day, he would like to own a Lexus or a Mercedes vehicle and a Rolex watch.

15. **Luke** grew up on a farm in Nebraska. His father is a cattle feeder and farmer. His mother is a teacher's aid for the elementary school system. He is a middle child with an older sister and brother and younger brother. Growing up, Luke was fascinated by the broadcast of sporting events, and worked at the local radio station before college. Today, his is the one reporting on local sporting events. He is also an amateur golfer. Some of Luke's favorite TV shows include *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Bachelor*, *The Office*, *Around the Horn*, *South Park*, and *Men of a Certain Age*. Currently, some of his favorite movies include *Groundhog Day*, *Julia & Julie*, *Slapshot*, and *True Grit*. In terms of music, some of his favorite groups include *Mumford & Sons*, *Shine Down*, *Breaking Benjamin*, *Metallica*, and *Boston*. He is also a fan of the Kansas City Chiefs, the Nebraska Cornhuskers, the Florida Marlins, the Arizona Wildcats, and the Miami Hurricanes. Luke is close to his parents, but he is especially close to his father:

Just the way he presented himself around town. I remember asking my dad one time - I was probably five or six - I was like, 'Dad, how do you know everyone in town?' Granted we were from a town of 3,500. But when I thought about it more, I was like, 'How does everyone like him so much?' I guess that is probably one of the biggest things. How easily personable he was. He is the most congenial guy I think I will ever know. I pattern myself after him. I'm not afraid to meet anyone. As honest as you can be. Kind of a family guy to other people too. Asking how they are doing, not a selfish person.

One top-of-mind brand for Luke is St. John's Bay, and some aspirational brands are Apple and Gucci.

16. **Jacob** grew up in Alabama. An only child, both of Jacob's parents have had business executive careers at Fortune 500 companies. In his free time, he plays the saxophone

and the piano, exercises, and plays video games. He also does some freelance writing. Some of his favorite TV shows include *The Office*, *Outsourced*, *30 Rock*, *Community*, and *Family Guy*. Some of his favorite movies include *Robin Hood*, *Salt*, *The A-Team*, and *The Hangover*. Jacob is also a fan of the Alabama Crimson Tide, the Texas Longhorns, the Pittsburgh Steelers, the Baltimore Ravens, and the Boston Celtics. Some top-of-mind brands for Jacob include Ralph Lauren Polo, Calvin Klein, Adidas, Levi's, Gap, and Saucony.

17. **William** was born and raised in Tanzania. He came to the United States to pursue higher education. His father was a pilot, and his mother is an administrative assistant. William is the oldest child, and he has seven younger siblings – two sisters and five brothers. Most of his immediate family still lives in east Africa, but he currently has a brother going to college in the U.S. William is married and has two, elementary school-aged children. He and his wife just purchased their first home. During his free time, William enjoys watching sports, especially the Los Angeles Lakers, the Indianapolis Colts, and the University of Nebraska Cornhuskers. He also enjoys watching *CSI* and *24* on TV, but also comedic movies such as *Cheaper by the Dozen*. In terms of music, William prefers *The Black Eye Peas*, *Usher*, and *Neo*. As a child, one of his super heroes was Arnold Schwarzenegger:

I loved his movies. I can remember taking a big piece of paper and drawing his picture and saying, 'Yeah, that is who I want to be.' Why did I like him? I don't know, mostly probably because in most of his movies it would show someone who would go out and help people. Get people out of trouble. Just this big guy that can go out there and that is pretty gentle that is not a bad guy.

Some top-of-mind brands for William include Nike and Adidas.

18. **Michael** grew up in Los Angeles. He is the youngest child in a blended family. He has a half-brother with his mom, a half-sister with his dad, and an older sister. With a shifting familial environment at times, Michael attached to television because it was a constant in his life. In particular, as a child he loved the 30 and 60-second stories told through commercials. At times, television communicated to Michael social lessons and social cues as guiding factors for his behavior. Currently, Michael is in the process of fulfilling his dream of teaching as a career by getting his Ph.D. His research studies the intersection of race and culture with consumer behavior. One of Michael's passions is music. He is especially fond of *Radiohead*, Tracy Chapman, Prince, Terence Trent D'arby, *Massive Attack*, and *Daft Punk*. Some of his favorite TV shows include *True Blood*, *The Office*, *30 Rock*, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, *Property Virgins*, *House Hunters*, and *House Hunters International*. Some of his favorite movies include *Black Swann*, *Tron*, and *The Matrix*. Michael is also a fan of the Los Angeles Lakers, the Indianapolis Colts, and the New Orleans Saints. As a child, one of Michael's favorite super heroes was The Incredible Hulk:

I can remember when I was very young love, love, loving The Incredible Hulk, and wanting to be The Incredible Hulk. Pretending to be The Incredible Hulk. Wearing the shirt, doing the muscle thing. I guess because I had always felt so vulnerable in my household. I thought, 'Well, if I could just turn into The Incredible Hulk whenever I wanted to, I couldn't get hurt. I could save myself.' So I definitely identified with this little, weakly guy that had this thing inside of him that could save him. This rage, too, could come out, because I was very angry at times at the situation. So I definitely identified with that character.

Some of Michael's top-of-mind brands include Seventh Generation, Method, and Ubiquity, and one day he would like to own a Tesla electric sports car.

19. **Ethan** grew up in Wisconsin. His father is a dentist, and his mother was a speech therapist in a special education school – she is now retired. He is adopted, and has an older brother who is a doctor. Ethan has produced artwork for years now – paintings, sculpture, and graphic design. He excelled at art school, in part because of his ability to put things into perspective:

They offered me a scholarship, and I went to Art Center and I loved it. At the same time, it felt a little bit like an excuse for what I could do, because I was really good at it. I excelled at it. It did feel like, ‘Well, this isn’t real - because it is just bullshit.’ That is what is kind of funny. I did it for a long time, like 15 years, and the whole time I thought, ‘This is kind of bourgeois nonsense’ (laughs). I could do projects that were better than most people’s, and they were just stuff I just did. I understood very early on how when you are an artist ... I think the biggest leap for people to make is that they think there is a right way of doing things, and there is no right way of doing things. There’s having an awareness of history and understanding your context, but once you understand those things you are the author. You are the person that writes it. You make the rules. So I can do whatever the hell I want, and if you ask me about it I say, ‘Well, I don’t know, I hadn’t considered that.’ Art interpretation as well as creation – reception and inception – are so subjective. There is no right answer.

Some of Ethan’s favorite TV shows include *Tales of the Golden Monkey*, *Breaking Bad*, *The Walking Dead*, *Mad Men*, *Deadliest Catch*, *Ax Men*, *Swamp People*, and *Ghost Adventures*. Some of his favorite movies are *Star Wars*, *True Grit*, and *After Last Season*. In terms of music, Ethan enjoys listening to *Arcade Fire*, *Wolf Parade*, *Pandora*, Nick Cave, Rocky Erikson, and *Beach House*. He is also a fan of the Green Bay Packers and the Minnesota Twins. As a child, one of Ethan’s super heroes was Indiana Jones. Top-of-mind brands for Ethan include Patagonia, Subaru, Danon, Kava, Coke Zero, Vitamin Water, Gatorade, Apple, and North Face. Aspirational brands for Ethan are Herman Miller and Noël – two mid-century, modern furniture designers.



20. **Aaron** grew up in the 1960s and attended high school in the 1970s in a small town in the Midwest. His father worked as an electrician, while his mom was a housewife. He is the youngest child, and has three older sisters and one older brother. Upon graduation from high school, Aaron worked at a beef processing plant for about 30 years. Currently, he works at a farm supply store. He is married, and has two children. Both of his kids have college and graduate degrees, and now work as certified public accountants (CPAs). Aaron is on the verge of retirement, and he is looking towards being a grandfather in the future. In his free time, he enjoys woodworking, carpentry, and yard maintenance around his home – which he built from scratch. Also during his leisure time, he enjoys watching TV shows on the Discovery or History channel, watching comedy movies, listening to *Aerosmith* and *Metallica*, and rooting for the Kansas City Chiefs and Kansas City Royals. As a child, two of his role models were George Brett and Frank White. Some of his top-of-mind brands include SureFine and Menard's. One aspirational brand for Aaron is to one day own a Chevy car again.

#### APPENDIX 4: SOCIALLY-VISIBLE BRANDS FOR EACH PARTICIPANT

#	First Name	Socially-visible Brands
1	Hannah	Nautica
		Fossil
		Nike
		Unicef
2	Elizabeth	Abercrombie & Fitch
		American Eagle
		Express
		Guess
		Prada (fake)
		Puma
		Rue 21
3	Brooke	Adidas
		Georgia Pacific
		Hard Rock Café
		Hewlett Packard
		Joe Boxer
		Quilted Northern
		Race for the Cure
		Ralph Lauren Polo
		Union Bay
4	Ashley	Apple Bottoms
		Jessica Simpson
		Nike
5	Maya	Daniela Moda
		Diana von Furstenberg
		Forever 21
		Hollister
		Paige
		Puma
		The North Face
6	Lauren	Converse
		Fossil
		Lacoste
		New Balance
		Nike
		Puma
		Tom's
		Under Armour
7	Leah	Columbia
		Harley Davidson
		Kerrville Folk Festival
		Merrell
		Robert Plant and the Band of Joy
		Simple
8	Madison	Adidas

		Converse
		Express
		Houston Astros
		Houston Texans
		Levi's
		Mossimo
		Nike
		Sketchers
		X2
9	Samantha	Old Navy
		Aeropostale
		Cathy Van Zeeland
		Mauriece's
		Nike
		Rumors
		Silvertab
		Sketchers
10	Claire	Tommy Hilfiger
		Cherokee
		Cross Trekkers
		Lee
		Nebraska Cornhuskers
		New Balance
		Nutrient Advisors LLC
		Riders
		St. Jude Children's Hospital
11	Allison	Worlds of Fun
		Afterglow
		Avatar
		Claiborne by John Bartlett
		Converse
		Dave and Buster's
		Hellboy II
		Iron Maiden
		Kreed
		Mastadon
		Megadeath
		Mickey Mouse
		Mortal Kombat
		Ocean Pacific
		Rocky
		Sammy Hagar
		Serenity
		Snakes on a Plane
		Star Wars
		Stone Temple Pilots
		Symphony
12	Benjamin	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

		The Sword
		T-Pain
		U.S. Polo Association
		Vans
		Watchmen
		X-ray
13	Gabriel	Armani Exchange
		Express
		Gucci (fake)
		Hollister
		Ralph Lauren Polo
14	Ryan	American Spirit
		Apple
		Archaic
		Ben Sherman
		Bic
		Coach
		Cole Haan
		CVS
		Disel
		Fred Perry
		Gap
		Goldfish
		Jagger
		Justin Bieber
		Micros
		Moleskin
		Nike
		Parcel
		Paul Frank
		Puma
		Ramones
		Safeway
		Seasame Street
		Smack
		Star Wars
		Starbucks
		Stride
		Tony Hawke
15	Luke	Adidas
		Ahead
		Alltel
		Antigua
		Arizona
		Army
		Big Dogs
		Billabong
		ChapBlock

		Docker's
		Jagermeister
		Kuya
		Lucky
		Old Navy
		Ralph Lauren
		Sketchers
		Tommy Hilfiger
16	Jacob	Adidas
		Calvin Klein
		Converse
		Dockers
		Donna Karan New York
		Izod
		Levi's
		New Balance
		Pierre Cardin
		Ralph Lauren Chaps
		Saucony
		Sperry
17	William	Adidas
		Arizona
		Brahma
		New Balance
		Nike
		Recruits Unlimited
		Reebok
		Russell
		Timkin
18	Michael	Adidas
		Antiballas
		Bose
		California State Polynoma University
		Converse
		Etines
		Fossil
		K-Swiss
		Lakers
		Levi's
		NBA
		New Balance
		Nike
		Roar
		Sketchers
		Stars
		Thievery
18	Michael	T-mobile
19	Ethan	NFL

		Nike
		Patagonia
		Red Wing
		Reebok
		Russell
		The North Face
20	Aaron	Big Dogs
		Bomgaars
		Camp David
		Dickies
		Lee
		New Balance
		Old Navy
		Pepsi
		Plugg
		Reebok
		St. John's Bay
		Worlds of Fun
		Wranglers

## APPENDIX 5: SOCIALLY-VISIBLE BRANDS FOR OUTFIT #1

#	First Name	Outfit #1 - Head	Outfit #1 - Torso	Outfit #1 - Hands	Outfit #1 - Legs	Outfit #1 - Feet	# of SVB
1	Hannah	NA	Fruit of the Loom t-shirt	Fossil purse	Xai skirt	Charlotte Russe boots	1
			Tulle jacket				
2	Elizabeth	jewelry	Express top	Express purse	Rue 21 jeans	Bakers shoes	1
3	Brooke	NA	Mossimo shirt	NA	Acess jeans	Adidas shoes	1
			Old Navy vest				
4	Ashley	jewelry	Charlotte Russe blazer	NA	Aphrodite jeans	Charlotte Russe shoes	0
			Charlotte Russe tank top - gold				
			Charlotte Russe tank top - black				
			jewelry				
5	Maya	NA	Gap sweater	purse	Gap jeans	Steve Madden boots	0
			Kimchi Blue tank top				
6	Lauren	NA	Fossil sweater	leather bracelets	NA	Corral Roots boots	0
			Lush dress				
7	Leah	NA	Ann Taylor sweater	purse	American Eagle jeans	MaxStudio boots	1
			Gap tank top				
8	Madison	NA	Faded Glory tank top	NA	American Eagle shorts	Morona flip flops	0
9	Samantha	NA	East 5th top	NA	Daisy Fuentes dress slacks	Fioni shoes	0
10	Claire	NA	Maurice's sweater	Maurice's handbag	Silvertab jeans	Connie boots	1
			Speechless shirt				
			jewelry				
11	Allison	jewelry	Cherokee sweatshirt	jewelry	Riders jeans	New Balance shoes	3
			Ocean Pacific sweatshirt			socks	
12	Benjamin	Kreed sunglasses	Afterglow t-shirt	NA	U.S. Polo Association jeans	Vans shoes	5
13	Gabriel	NA	Express sweater	NA	Express jeans	Ralph Lauren Polo shoes	4
			Express t-shirt				
14	Ryan	sunglasses	KR3W t-shirt	NA	Diesel jeans	Ben Sherman shoes	3
			Haggar Imperial jacket				
15	Luke	NA	Blue Generation polo shirt	keys	Arizona jeans	Doc Marten's shoes	3
				ChapBlock chapstick			
				Alltel cell phone			
16	Jacob	NA	Ralph Lauren polo shirt	NA	Izod khakis	Sperry shoes	2
17	William	NA	Stafford Performance button-down shirt	NA	dress slacks	Stacy Adams shoes	0
			J. Ferrar jacket				
18	Michael	Kirkland sunglasses	Thievery t-shirt	Fossil bag	Gap jeans	Converse shoes	4
			Roar jacket				
19	Ethan	NA	Patagonia button-down shirt	NA	Gap dress slacks	Red Wing shoes	1
20	Aaron	NA	University of Nebraska Kearney polo shirt	NA	Lee jeans	New Balance shoes	3

(Note: The bolded brands are the socially-visible brands on that outfit.)

## APPENDIX 5 (Continued): Socially-visible Brands for Outfit #2

#	First Name	Outfit #2 - Head	Outfit #2 - Torso	Outfit #2 - Hands	Outfit #2 - Legs	Outfit #2 - Feet	# of SVB
1	Hannah	NA	B-wear blazer	Fossil purse	Tracy Evans dress slacks	Dexter shoes	1
			She Said tank top				
2	Elizabeth	jewelry	Express top	Express purse	Express dress slacks	Bandolino boots	0
3	Brooke	NA	Agenda blouse	Franklin Covey purse			
4	Ashley	jewelry	Harve Benard button-down shirt	NA	Cato dress slacks	Jessica Simpson shoes	0
			jewelry				
5	Maya	NA	Banana Republic dress	Daniela Moda purse	NA	Aldo shoes	1
			Tulle jacket				
6	Lauren	NA	Fossil leather jacket	NA	Fossil jeans	Fossil shoes	2
7	Leah	NA	Club Monaco sweater				
8	Madison	NA	J. Crew sweater	purse	White House Black Market jeans	MaxStudio boots	0
			Mossimo sweater				
9	Samantha	NA	Express tank top	NA	X2 jeans	Mudd boots	1
10	Claire	NA	Briggs New York top				
11	Allison	jewelry	Professional Image blazer	NA	Professional Image dress slacks	Hush Puppies shoes	0
			Christopher & Banks shell				
12	Benjamin	NA	jewelry	NA	Lee dress slacks	Predictions shoes	0
13	Benjamin	NA	East 5th shirt				
14	Benjamin	NA	X-ray jacket	NA	U.S. Polo Association jeans	Converse shoes	3
15	Benjamin	NA	t-shirt				
16	Gabriel	NA	Counter Intelligence sweatshirt	NA	Hollister shorts	Puma shoes	3
17	Gabriel	NA	Express t-shirt				
18	Ryan	NA	Banana Republic shirt	NA	Diesel jeans	Alfani shoes	1
19	Ryan	NA	keys				
20	Luke	NA	ChapBlock chapstick	NA	Dockers khakis	Doc Martens shoes	3
21	Luke	NA	St. John's bay polo shirt				
22	Jacob	NA	Alltel cell phone	NA	Calvin Klein jeans	Adidas shoes	3
23	Jacob	NA	Ralph Lauren polo shirt				
24	William	NA	Timken top	NA	Red Kap dress slacks	Brahma boots	2
25	William	NA	Thievery t-shirt				
26	Michael	Kirkland sunglasses	Roar jacket	Fossil bag	Gap jeans	Converse shoes	4
27	Michael	Kirkland sunglasses	Patagonia button-down shirt				
28	Ethan	NA	Bomgarrs sweatshirt	NA	Gap dress slacks	Red Wing shoes	1
29	Aaron	NA	Patagonia button-down shirt				
30	Aaron	NA	Bomgarrs sweatshirt	NA	Sandy River jeans	New Balance shoes	2
31	Aaron	NA	Patagonia button-down shirt				



## APPENDIX 5 (Continued): Socially-visible Brands for Outfit #3

#	First Name	Outfit #3 - Head	Outfit #3 - Torso	Outfit #3 - Hands	Outfit #3 - Legs	Outfit #3 - Feet	# of SVB
1	Hannah	jewelry	I♥H81 dress	jewelry	NA	Fioni shoes	0
			belt				
2	Elizabeth	jewelry	Express vest	Prada purse (knock-off)	Express jeans	boots	2
			Decree top	jewelry			
3	Brooke	NA	Bally tank top	NA	Canyon River blues skirt	Union Bay shoes	1
4	Ashley	jewelry	Easel blouse	jewelry	Just My Size leggings	Jessica Simpson shoes	0
5	Maya	NA	dress	purse	NA	shoes	0
6	Lauren	NA	Fossil leather jacket				
			Fossil dress	NA	NA	Fossil shoes	0
7	Leah	NA	Papaya blouse				
			scarf	purse	J. Crew jeans	boots	0
				purse			
8	Madison	NA	Xhilaration dress	bracelet	NA	X appeal shoes	0
9	Samantha	NA	A New Approach (a.n.a.) shirt				
			St. John's Bay sweater	NA	Lee jeans	St. John's Bay boots	0
			Christopher & Banks jacket				
10	Claire	NA	B-wear tank top	Rumors watch	Maurice's jeans	Xhilaration shoes	2
11	Allison	NA	St. John's Bay button-down shirt	jewelry	Lee jeans	Predictions shoes	1
12	Benjamin	NA	Chalc button-down shirt	NA	U.S. Polo Association jeans	Converse shoes	2
13	Gabriel	NA	Express sweater	Gucci belt (knock-off)	Express jeans	Ralph Lauren Polo shoes	4
			Hanes t-shirt				
			Ramones t-shirt				
14	Ryan	NA	Banana Republic jacket	NA	Diesel jeans	Puma shoes	3
				keys			
				ChapBlock chapstick			
15	Luke	NA	Lucky button-down shirt	Altel cell phone	Savane shorts	Dexter sandals	3
16	Jacob	NA	Calvin Klein button-down shirt	NA	Levi's Silvertab jeans	Sperry shoes	2
17	William	NA	Grand Slam shirt	NA	Arizona jeans	Reebok shoes	2
		Bose headphones	Gilden t-shirt				
		sunglasses					
18	Michael	hat	Apt. 9 jacket	T-mobile cell phone	Levi's jeans	K-Swiss shoes	4
19	Ethan	NA	Patagonia button-down shirt	NA	Gap dress slacks	Red Wing shoes	1
20	Aaron	NA	Joseph Abboud button-down shirt	NA	Plugg dress slacks	Original Rugged Outback shoes	1

## APPENDIX 5 (Continued): Socially-visible Brands for Outfit #4

#	First Name	Outfit #4 - Head	Outfit #4 - Torso	Outfit #4 - Hands	Outfit #4 - Legs	Outfit #4 - Feet	# of SVB
1	Hannah	NA	Unicef t-shirt	Fossil purse	American Eagle jeans	Urban Outfitters shoes	2
2	Elizabeth	jewelry	Paisley & Ivy sweater	Guess purse	Forever 21 leggings	Jessica Simpson shoes	1
3	Brooke	NA	Gianni Pini dress	NA	NA	Westlies boots	0
4	Ashley	NA	Pashmina scarf	NA	Aphrodite jeans	Jessica Simpson shoes	0
			Ginger G shirt				
			Bozzolio tank top - purple				
			Mind Code tank top - black				
			jewelry				
5	Maya	NA	Plenty dress	Daniela Moda purse	NA	Bandolino shoes	1
			Ann Taylor sweater				
6	Lauren	NA	XXI dress	NA	NA	Ann Taylor shoes	0
			scarf				
7	Leah	NA	J. Crew button-down shirt	purse	American Eagle jeans	boots	1
8	Madison	NA	Express sweater	NA	Mossimo jeans	Sketchers shoes	1
9	Samantha	NA	Worthington sweater	NA	Lee jeans	St. John's Bay boots	0
			Maurice's vest				
10	Claire	NA	White Stag long-sleeved shirt	Rumors watch	Maurice's jeans	Sketchers shoes	3
11	Allison	NA	East 5th blouse	jewelry	Lee dress slacks	shoes	0
12	Benjamin	NA	Mossimo jacket	NA	Claiborne by John Bartlett khakis	Vans shoes	3
			University of Texas t-shirt				
			Armani Exchange sweater				
13	Gabriel	NA	Hanes t-shirt	NA	Express jeans	Ralph Lauren Polo shoes	2
			Micros button-down shirt				
14	Ryan	NA	Surplus Apparel Military Academy Parts jacket	NA	Diesel jeans	Cole Haan	3
				keys			
15	Luke	NA	Ralph Lauren Chaps button-down shirt	ChapBlock chapstick	Lucky jeans	Sketchers shoes	5
				Alltel cell phone			
16	Jacob	NA	Two a.m. button-down shirt	NA	Dockers khakis	Dockers shoes	1
17	William	NA	Van Heusen button-down shirt	NA	Stafford pants	Stacy Adams shoes	0
18	Michael	NA	Express Design Studio button-down shirt	NA	Levi's jeans	Sketchers shoes	1
			Gap jacket				
			Banana Republic button-down shirt				
19	Ethan	NA	Banana Republic jacket	NA	Gap dress slacks	Red Wing boots	0
20	Aaron	NA	Haggar Forever New button-down shirt	NA	Lee jeans	Original Rugged Outback shoes	0

## APPENDIX 5 (Continued): Socially-visible Brands for Outfit #5

#	First Name	Outfit #5 - Head	Outfit #5 - Torso	Outfit #5 - Hands	Outfit #5 - Legs	Outfit #5 - Feet	# of SVB
1	Hannah	NA	Lush dress	Fossil purse	NA	Fioni shoes	1
				jewelry			
2	Elizabeth	jewelry	Ophelia dress	purse	NA	Jessica Simpson shoes	0
3	Brooke	NA	Nolita dress	jewelry	NA	Splash shoes	0
			Vamp blazer	NA			
4	Ashley	jewelry	Alythea tank top	purse	Lane Bryant leggings	Charlotte Russe boots	0
			dress	jewelry			
5	Maya	NA	H&M coat	purse	NA	NA	0
6	Lauren	NA	BCBG top	leather bracelets	Lacoste Jeans	Steve Madden shoes	1
			Banana Republic dress				
7	Leah	jewelry	J. Crew belt	purse	hosiery	Glnt shoes	0
			Classiques Entier sweater				
8	Madison	NA	Trissen dress	purse	NA	Liz Claiborne shoes	0
9	Samantha	NA	East 5th shirt	NA	Daisy Fuentes dress slacks	Fioni dress shoes	0
10	Claire	NA	Tiara sweater	Cathy Van Zeeland purse	Silvertab jeans	Connie boots	2
11	Allison	jewelry	Worthington blouse	jewelry	East 5th skirt	Liz Baker shoes	0
			X-ray jacket				
12	Benjamin	NA	t-shirt	NA	U.S. Polo Association jeans	Converse shoes	3
13	Gabriel	NA	Express button-down shirt	NA	Express jeans	Ralph Lauren Polo shoes	2
			Banana Republic shirt				
14	Ryan	NA	Surplus Apparel Military Academy Parts jacket	NA	Diesel jeans	Ben Sherman shoes	2
				keys			
15	Luke	NA	J. Crew button-down shirt	ChapBlock chapstick	Dockers khakis	Doc Marten's shoes	3
				Alltel cell phone			
16	Jacob	NA	Calvin Klein button-down shirt	NA	Dockers khakis	Sperry shoes	2
			Van Heusen shirt				
17	William	NA	Warren Sewell jacket	NA	Stafford dress slacks	Stacy Adams shoes	0
			Gangotri shirt				
18	Michael	NA	necklace	NA	Mossimo dress slacks	Converse shoes	1
			Banana Republic button-down shirt				
19	Ethan	NA	Banana Republic jacket	NA	Gap dress slacks	Red Wing boots	0
20	Aaron	NA	Joseph Abboud button-down shirt	NA	Authentic Laundred Khakis (ALK)	shoes	0

## APPENDIX 6: SURVEY PROTOCOL

**Thank you for your participation in this online survey. There are four parts to this survey.**

**To fully participate, you need to complete all four parts during one session. This should take no more than 30 minutes of your time.**

### **Part 1 Instructions:**

**Look at the list of brands below. There are 20 brands for five product categories.**

**Please pick one of the following brands for the next section. You will answer a set of questions about this brand. If you do not see a brand you prefer, you are free to choose another brand, but please make sure it falls under one of the product categories listed here.**

	<b>Apparel/shoes</b>	<b>Luxury/designer</b>	<b>Automobiles</b>	<b>Hi-tech</b>	<b>Non-alcoholic beverages</b>
1	Abercrombie & Fitch	Chanel	Audi	Acer	Aquafina
2	Adidas	Christian Dior	BMW	Apple	Coca-cola
3	Aerostale	Coach	Buick	AT&T	Contrex
4	American Eagle Outfitters	Dolce & Gabbana	Chevrolet	BlackBerry	Dasani
5	Bebe	Donna Karan	Chrysler	Dell	Diet Coke
6	Colombia Sportswear	Fendi	Dodge	Facebook	Diet Pepsi
7	Crocs	Giorgio Armani	Ford	Google	Dr. Pepper
8	Espirit	Givenchy	Honda	Hewlett-Packard	Evian
9	Fossil	Gucci	Hyundai	IBM	Fanta
10	IZOD	Guess?	Kia	Lenovo	Gatorade
11	Kswiss	Hermes	Lincoln-Mercury	Microsoft	Levissima
12	Levi Strauss	Louis Vuitton	Mazda	Motorola	Mountain Dew
13	Nike	Prada	Mercedes	Nokia	Pepsi
14	Puma	Ralph Lauren	Nissan	Samsung	Perrier
15	Quicksilver	Rolex	Pontiac	Sony	Poland Spring
16	The North Face	Tiffany & Co.	Porsche	Sprint Nextel	Pure Life
17	Timberland	Tommy Hilfiger	Renault	T-Mobil	Red Bull
18	True Religion Apparel	Van Cleef & Arpels	Saturn	Toshiba	Sprite
19	Under Armour	Versace	Toyota	US Cellular	Vittel
20	Volcom	Yves Saint Laurent	Volkswagen	Verizon Wireless	Volvic

I choose the brand: \_\_\_\_\_ for product category: \_\_\_\_\_.

Now, please answer the following questions about \_\_\_\_ (brand) \_\_\_\_\_.

**Check the number on the scale that most clearly reflects your feelings about this brand.**

\_\_\_\_ (Brand) \_\_\_\_ is:

Bad	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Good
	1		2		3		4		5	
Poor Quality	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	High Quality
	1		2		3		4		5	
Satisfactory	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Dislikable
	1		2		3		4		5	
Beneficial	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Harmful
	1		2		3		4		5	
Unfavorable	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Favorable
	1		2		3		4		5	
Common	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Distinctive
	1		2		3		4		5	
Likable	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Dislikable
	1		2		3		4		5	
Positive	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Negative
	1		2		3		4		5	
Unattractive	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Attractive
	1		2		3		4		5	
Unenjoyable	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Enjoyable
	1		2		3		4		5	
Useful	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Useless
	1		2		3		4		5	
Desirable	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Undesirable
	1		2		3		4		5	
Awful	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Nice
	1		2		3		4		5	
Unimportant	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Important
	1		2		3		4		5	
Valuable	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Worthless
	1		2		3		4		5	
Unique	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Not Unique
	1		2		3		4		5	
Expensive	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Inexpensive
	1		2		3		4		5	
Needed	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Not Needed

	1	2	3	4	5	
Inferior	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Superior
	1	2	3	4	5	
Boring	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Interesting
	1	2	3	4	5	
Tasteful	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Tasteless
	1	2	3	4	5	
Weak	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Strong
	1	2	3	4	5	
Uninvolving	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Involving
	1	2	3	4	5	

**Continue to answer the following questions about \_\_\_\_ (brand) \_\_\_\_.**

\_\_\_\_ (Brand) \_\_\_\_ is:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

Reliable  
 Hard-working  
 Secure  
 Intelligent  
 Technical  
 Corporate  
 Successful  
 Leader  
 Confident  
 Daring  
 Trendy  
 Exciting  
 Spirited  
 Cool  
 Young  
 Imaginative  
 Unique  
 Up-to-date  
 Independent  
 Contemporary  
 Outdoorsy  
 Masculine  
 Western  
 Tough

Rugged  
 Down-to-earth  
 Family-oriented  
 Small-town  
 Honest  
 Sincere  
 Real  
 Wholesome  
 Original  
 Cheerful  
 Sentimental  
 Friendly  
 Upper class  
 Glamorous  
 Good looking  
 Charming  
 Feminine  
 Smooth

**Using the phrases below, please indicate how you think \_\_\_(brand)\_\_\_ compares to the image of yourself.**

Consistent	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Inconsistent
	1		2		3		4		5	
Similar	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Different
	1		2		3		4		5	
Representative	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Unrepresentative
	1		2		3		4		5	
Typical	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	Atypical
	1		2		3		4		5	

**Continue to answer the following questions about \_\_\_(brand)\_\_\_\_\_.**

1 = Strongly Disagree  
 2 = Disagree  
 3 = Neutral  
 4 = Agree  
 5 = Strongly Agree

I consider myself to be loyal to \_\_\_(brand)\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_(Brand)\_\_\_\_\_ would be my first choice.

I would not buy other brands if \_\_\_\_ (brand) \_\_\_\_ is available at the store.

I relate to \_\_\_\_ (brand) \_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_ (Brand) \_\_\_\_ is important to me.

\_\_\_\_ (Brand) \_\_\_\_ would help me feel acceptable.

\_\_\_\_ (Brand) \_\_\_\_ would improve the way I am perceived.

\_\_\_\_ (Brand) \_\_\_\_ would make a good impression on other people.

\_\_\_\_ (Brand) \_\_\_\_ would give its owner social approval.

## **Part 2**

### **Instructions:**

**In this section, you will be shown eight sets of photographs displaying clothing articles. Please pick which article you would be more likely to wear.**

**You first need to answer a question determining your sex in order to show the proper clothing items.**

What is your sex?

\_\_\_\_ Male

\_\_\_\_ Female

1. Brand Visibility Presence (Lacoste example)

Choice A = no logo

Choice B = logo

2. Brand Visibility Presence (Abercrombie & Fitch example)

Choice A = no logo

Choice B = logo

3. Brand Visibility Presence (Armani example)

Choice A = no logo

Choice B = logo

4. Brand Visibility Size (Lacoste example)

Choice A = small logo

Choice B = large logo

5. Brand Visibility Size (Nike example)

Choice A = small logo

Choice B = large logo



6. Product Gross Brand Frequency (Armani example)

Choice A = 1 logos

Choice B = 3 logo

7. Acronym Brand Abbreviation (Abercrombie & Fitch example)

Choice A = abbreviated logo

Choice B = unabbreviated logo

8. Non-verbal Brand Abbreviation (Nike example)

Choice A = abbreviated logo

Choice B = unabbreviated logo

### **Part 3 Instructions:**

**Please answer the following demographic questions.**

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your current level of education?

\_\_\_\_ Some high school

\_\_\_\_ High school graduate

\_\_\_\_ Some college

\_\_\_\_ Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ College graduate

\_\_\_\_ Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Some graduate school

\_\_\_\_ Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Graduate school graduate

\_\_\_\_ Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_

What is your current annual income?

\_\_\_\_ Under \$10,000

\_\_\_\_ \$10,000 - \$19,999

\_\_\_\_ \$20,000 - \$29,999

\_\_\_\_ \$30,000 - \$39,999

\_\_\_\_ \$40,000 - \$49,999

\_\_\_\_ \$50,000 - \$59,999

\_\_\_\_ \$60,000 - \$69,999

\_\_\_\_ \$70,000 - \$79,999

\_\_\_\_ \$80,000 - \$89,999

\_\_\_\_ \$90,000 - \$99,999

\_\_\_\_ \$100,000 - \$109,999

\_\_\_\_ \$110,000 - \$119,999

\_\_\_\_ \$120,000 - \$129,999  
\_\_\_\_ \$130,000 - \$139,999  
\_\_\_\_ \$140,000 - \$149,999  
\_\_\_\_ Over \$150,000

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