

SENSE OF STYLE
CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY AND MANAGING
IMPRESSIONS ON LOOKBOOK.NU

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements & Declaration	3
Abstract	4
Introduction	5
<i>Fashion in an online community</i>	7
<i>A closer look at Lookbook</i>	
Research objectives	14
Delimitations	15
Methodology	17
Chapter 1: Contextualising Lookbook	20
<i>Identity and the male gaze</i>	21
<i>Social media, architectural structure and the gated community</i>	26
<i>Privacy</i>	29
<i>Style, fashion consumption and fashion blogging</i>	32
<i>Uses, gratifications and social capital</i>	35
<i>Multimodality and sign systems</i>	38
Chapter 2: Analysing UGC on Lookbook	42
<i>What is 'style'? What is 'identity'?</i>	44
<i>Defining yourself</i>	46
<i>Spaces of style</i>	47
<i>A club of exclusivity</i>	50
<i>A fashionable identity</i>	53
Chapter 3: Gamification on Lookbook	57
<i>What is gamification?</i>	58
<i>Notions of play</i>	59
<i>The influence of gamification on Lookbook</i>	
A social system	61
Objects of interest	62
Levelling up	66
Gamifying fashion bias	68
Conclusion	71
<i>Beyond Lookbook</i>	75
References	77
Addendums A-F	90

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Masters by Research Declaration

I, Zainab Slemang, declare that the Masters by Research exegesis entitled 'Sense of Style: Constructing Identity and Managing Impressions on Lookbook.nu' is no more than 25 000 words in length, including quotes and exclusive of appendices, references and footnotes. This exegesis contains no material that has previously been submitted, in whole or part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this exegesis is my own work.

Signed:

Date: 1 February 2016

SENSE OF STYLE: CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY AND MANAGING IMPRESSIONS ON LOOKBOOK.NU

Abstract

This dissertation aims to explore how user-generated fashion content within the specific online community of Lookbook.nu¹ is influenced by a set of underlying ideologies, such as beauty, power and gender to create specific and homogenous fashion identities in line with mainstream fashion trends, and which inform users' formation of identity within the structure of a community space. The aim of identifying the ideologies at play on the web site is to raise an awareness of how an individual's identity is influenced by others within his or her community space, even if that community happens to reside online. Furthermore, the means that inform the structures found on the community web site as well as the way in which the ideologies operate to maintain a certain criteria and level of fashion generated by users will be discussed in relation to identity formation. To determine how Lookbook users' perceive and portray identities on the site, semiology and multimodal discourse analysis were employed. It is important to keep in mind that while the media content in this thesis is as current as possible and while a great deal of content still exists on Lookbook, the platform is continuously evolving with new additions to its terms of use, mediums of access and overall design.

Keywords

Fashion, gamification, identity, multimodality, new media, online community, remediation, semiology, social media, style, user-generated content (UGC), uses and gratifications theory (UGT)

¹ Hereafter referred to as Lookbook.

Introduction

Fashion is the science of appearances, and it inspires one with the desire to seem rather than to be (Chapin, 1861).

When nineteenth century American preacher Dr Edward Hubbell Chapin first uttered these words, later published in a volume of his selected writings entitled *Living Words* (1861), clothing, then as it sometimes does now, performed the function of identifying an individual in public spaces. Various aspects of identity – from social status and religious affiliation to occupation and cultural or tribal association – can be expressed in the clothes one chooses to wear. Sociologist Diana Crane notes that in the nineteenth century, “[p]eople were often required to dress in a certain manner that indicates particular aspects of their social identities” (2000: 67). The types of clothing worn by individuals also have the capacity to influence how people identify and express themselves, as well as how they interact with others:

[s]tyles of clothing can be a straitjacket, constraining (literally) a person’s movements and manners, as was the case for women’s clothing during the Victorian era. For centuries, uniforms (military, police, religious) have been used to impose social identities on more or less willing subjects (Crane, 2000: 2).

Social identity, or more specifically institutionalised or group identity as maintained by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in his work on identity and representation, is grounded in the economic and cultural properties, as well as the group objectives, shared by individuals of a group or institution (1992: 224). These economic and cultural properties, it would seem, include the clothing worn by individuals aimed at “determining the (mental) representation that other people may form of these properties [i.e. the clothing] and their bearers” (Bourdieu, 1992: 223).

In the twenty-first century, clothing styles have retained a position as a means for individuals to identify and express themselves. Clothing and identity have become strongly intertwined in expressing an individual’s particular lifestyle choices, more so than in previous centuries where clothing primarily

functioned as a signifier of social, occupational and religious rank. Individuals can now combine their use of technology with their clothing choices to create and maintain their identities both in the real world and in virtual online spaces. The advent of and developments in technology in the twentieth century has meant there is a higher rate of interclass and intra-class mobility in Westernised societies, specifically the United States, Europe and Australasia. Technologies such as computer-mediated communication (CMC), specifically social media in the form of social networking sites² (SNS) and online communities, operate and adhere to the interests and needs of the participants within specific networks. User participation and contribution, however, remain a very necessary component to the success of any given social networking or online community platform. User-generated content (UGC) is therefore an integral part of social media and describes the different forms of media content available publicly and that can be created and/or modified by social media users. Following the definition of UGC as described by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Kaplan and Haenlein outline the three basic tenets of UGC:

first, it needs to be published either on a publicly accessible website or on a social networking site accessible to a selected group of people; second, it needs to show a certain amount of creative effort; and finally, it needs to have been created outside professional routes and practices (2010: 61).

Although the majority of users utilise SNS to maintain contact with their existing social circles of friends and acquaintances (boyd & Ellison, 2008), the wide reach of these web sites results in an individual's identity being accessible to people outside their real-world social circle, some of whom are only known via digital platforms. While the initial premise of this work focused only on reflexive self-identification signified by user-generated content illustrating their modes of dress, further research manifested much broader ramifications of online identity. In discerning whether user-generated content

² The term "social networking site" is often used interchangeably with the term "social network site". It is important to note that while the majority of social media offer opportunities for networking, it may not be the primary function or practice on a particular site. For the purposes of this study, the term "social networking site" will be employed.

within a specific online community is influenced by a set of hegemonic ideologies that are not readily evident, it is important to consider how social categorisation and users' own ideas of identity are influenced by discourses of power and knowledge, as well as the architectural framework wherein these discourses appear. In support of this larger hypothesis, a preliminary study on how gamification motivates participation and contribution on Lookbook was undertaken in 2013. The methodology and findings of this study are included here in chapter 3.

Fashion in an online community

Created and launched in San Francisco, USA, in 2008 by Yuri Lee and her partner Jason Su (Gardner, 2009), Lookbook offers an online community space for identity creation. The site was inspired by street style blogs that display photographs of ordinary people's everyday style (as opposed to celebrities and well-known personalities whose style is often documented in tabloids, blogs and other forms of media). However, unlike these blogs, Lookbook does not simply display images of anonymous members³ of society taken by the creators of the site. Instead, Lookbook was designed as an interactive space utilising functions found on forums, social networks and virtual games, and allows users to post images of their outfits. In short, Lookbook functions as a community where members are encouraged to post user-generated content, specifically of street style images, and interact with other active members in the online space.

The site, which boasts more than 50 000 registered members and receives more than one million unique users each month (lookbook.nu/faq, n.d.), also employs an array of game design elements to engage users. These game design elements include a points system called hype that is used to score the outfits uploaded by members and karma, which is the average number of total

³ When referring to Lookbook, the terms "users" and "members" are used to distinguish audiences, with the former indicating people who simply browse the site but have not registered as part of its community (users) while the latter denotes those who are registered to the site and participate in its user economy (members). "Member", in the broader sense and in this specific context, also refers to anyone who belongs to a particular group or society at large.

hypes a member has received, calculated by dividing the total number of looks posted by that member by the total number of hypes received across looks. In order to get more exposure on the site and thus increase their karma or average score, members are encouraged to post as many outfits as possible. The scoring system aims to help the member gain as much hype as possible for a particular look, which will then be displayed on one of numerous views on the site that include Hot, Top, New, Leaderboard and Collections. Looks displayed on the Hot view are chosen by the total number of hypes received and the time of posting. The Top view is archived by day, week, month and year, and displays the most popular looks within a certain time period, such as a day, based on the amount of hype the look has received. Up until late 2014, a device called the Karmic Filter⁴ was used on the New view page. The device allowed members with a higher karma (i.e. average) to be featured prominently, and provided that member with more exposure on the site than members with less karma. This helped members build or establish their “reputation” within the community.

The latest update to the web site now displays three types of new or recent looks posted by members: Spotlight, which are looks posted by experienced community members who have earned a high reputation; Up & Coming looks posted by members with an average or medium reputation; and First Look, which are looks posted by new members to the site. The Hot, New and Top pages all utilise geofilters, which allow members to record their current location or the location where a particular image was taken. Users can then choose to view looks from certain countries, continents or globally. In addition, the main Lookbook menu offers users a choice of various Streams, or filters, to view images that include Global, Location and Style. While both members and non-members can view Streams, only a subset of members is given permission to post to Streams. There is also an option to explore the site through other filters, such as Brands, Contests, Interviews and Discover. The Leaderboard, also found under the Explore tab, helps enhance members’ exposure by featuring a list of members who have gained the most karma

⁴ See Chapter 3, which discusses the Karmic Filter in more detail.

over a certain period of time. A menu bar on the right side of the page features links to Collections, sets of curated looks; People you may like, profiles or looks that are similar to looks the user has hyped before; Blog, which features posts by the site's creators and content producers; Styles; Countries; and Categories of specific clothing items.

Lookbook also incorporates a variety of elements often found on social networking sites, such as fan, add and love devices. The fan mechanism operates in a similar way to Twitter and Instagram's follow devices by allowing members to follow the activity of other Lookbook members: notifications and updates are used to inform an individual when a member they are a fan of has uploaded a new look. Members are also able to give "love", indicated by a pink heart (♥) symbol, to other members' outfit posts. These devices, as well as the ability to post comments on looks that are required to be positive and constructive in nature so as "to promote a diverse and open-minded community" (lookbook.nu/faq, n.d.), are only available to registered members who can then also utilise the devices on the Lookbook iPhone and Android applications. As with many other online communities, Lookbook features forums where its members are able to post fashion or site-related topics, leading to discussions with other members in the community.

Additionally, as with social networking sites such as Facebook, Lookbook provides its members with a profile page. However, unlike other SNS, Lookbook profile pages offer the bare minimum of personal information, such as name, location, links to the member's personal blog and other social networking sites, and contact details, most often in the form of an email address. Profile pages also display tabs that include Overview, a summary of that member's most recent looks and hypes given; archives of Looks and Collections, which are sets of looks made by that member; an archive of Comments made on the member's profile and looks; and lists of Fans of that member and the community members who s/he is following. A section also displays counters for the number of fans, looks, love, karma, following, topics and comments that member has, as well as the number of times the profile has been viewed and the date the profile was first activated. A new feature

added in early 2015 is a colour bar that appears at the bottom of each look when it is opened to full view on the web site. The bar displays various colours that correlate to the colours being worn in the clothing shown in the look. The user or member can then click on any of the colours in the bar, which automatically redirects to a search page of looks featuring that or a similar colour.

In order to promote quality posts by community members and prevent spam and promotional, offensive or inappropriate material, Lookbook members are expected to adhere to nine rules (lookbook.nu/rules#looks, n.d.), which are given here in full:

Looks

1. Full-outfit looks only

OK: Showing at least neck to mid-thigh between multiple views.

NOT OK: Showing less than neck to mid-thigh.

2. Your outfit must be clearly visible

OK: Editing photos for better visibility.

NOT OK: Over colorized, blurry, unfocused or poorly-lit looks.

NOT OK: An object, person or text is obstructing your outfit.

3. Only post looks of yourself

OK: Crowds in the background as long as they are not the focus of the photo.

NOT OK: You're not in the look or the look doesn't belong to you.

NOT OK: More than one person in the look.

4. Only one outfit per look

OK: Collages that display different views of the same outfit.

NOT OK: Multiple outfits in one look.

5. No more than 3 views in a look

OK: Uploading additional images of the look in the description using html.

NOT OK: Collaged look with more than 3 separate images.

General

1. No spam

2. No copyright infringing content

3. No nudity or offensive material

4. No photos of children (under the age of 13)

The rules cover, amongst other things, guidelines for the acceptable and appropriate formats for members' looks and a flagrant indication that all posts by a member should only feature that member.

Only registered members of the community have access to the hype device from their desktop computer, as well as on Lookbook's iPhone and Android applications, which operate in a similar manner to the site with views for Hot, New and Top, as well as an option to display looks by guys, girls or both. The app opens on the Hot tab, but a menu icon leads the user to a longer directory with options for Leaders, Streams, Invite, Search and Settings. The Leaders option displays the names of the most-hyped members of the community by day, week, month and year, while tapping on Invite allows the Lookbook application to open the user's email application on their phone to send invites to friends telling them to join the Lookbook community and use the app, and the Search option allows users to enter keywords in order to search for looks or people (i.e. registered members of the Lookbook community). This option also allows a user to narrow their search using filters, such as hype, time and gender. The Settings option gives the user an overview of what the community of Lookbook is and does, and also leads to a Feedback option where users can post comments about their experiences with the application. Looks on the application are displayed in the same way as on the web site and feature icons for hype and tags. Tapping on the image takes you to a separate view of the look, displaying the most recent comments the look has received and a button icon with a "+" that indicates the user can add that member to the list of members they follow. Tapping on the member's icon takes you to the member's page, while tapping on the tag icon brings up the list of items worn in the look the user has tagged. A further menu icon allows the user to zoom, email, save or share the image on Facebook, as well as view further information on the look. Users can also upload looks directly from their smartphone with the use of a camera icon.

Advertisers and marketers have realised the potential market within social media, such as online communities, that utilise user-generated content to encourage traffic and participation, and Lookbook is only one of

a wide variety of social media platforms [that] are providing the tools necessary for these influential and meaningful firm-customer exchanges (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011: 266).

Lookbook's community of influential trendsetting members, many who have personal fashion blogs where they showcase their style, already have a built-in potential audience – the other members of the community and audiences of their personal blogs. As such, well-known brands and institutions, such as Jeffrey Campbell, Clinique, Levi's and New York Fashion Week, have all advertised or run competitions aimed at the Lookbook community. The web site has also expanded to include a blog on fashion and lifestyle, social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest, as well as a spotlight showcase on the site called Interview, where individual members are featured and asked questions about their style. In 2013, an independently produced video series, *LOOKBOOK: The Series*, debuted on the site. The series was marketed as a pilot run comprising nine short episodes of five to eight minutes each, and ran online as webisodes, episodes “that may or may not have been telecast but can be viewed at a web site” (“Webisode, n”, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/webisode>, 2014). The series depicted the

creative and intimate relationship between a fashion blogger and her photographer using a dramatic urban fairytale told through the canvas of LOOKBOOK.nu and the LA fashion scene (Facebook.com/LOOKBOOKSeries, n.d.).

However, the official Facebook Fanpage of *LOOKBOOK: The Series* only received 1 328 Likes between 7 April 2013 and 7 March 2015 (Facebook.com/LOOKBOOKSeries/likes, n.d.), a number disproportionate to that of the total registered community members. *LOOKBOOK: The Series* was then replaced with LOOKBOOK TV, a dedicated page with embedded video that featured member-submitted videos each week, but this feature was discontinued as well.

In the following pages, various modes of analysis have been employed in an attempt to determine and understand the underlying ideologies present on the Lookbook website, as well as how these and the architectural framework (in

the technical and physical make-up of the site) within which they exist, provides community members with agency to create and purport specific fashion identities in line with the homogeneity of mainstream fashion.

Drawing on numerous concepts, the first chapter theorises the web site in relation to already established theories on identity, social media and user-generated content, before Chapter 2 enters into an analysis and discussion of a select sample of content found on Lookbook. In Chapter 3, an analysis of the site's architectural framework and its underlying principles is undertaken to address the notion that structures of online spaces reinforce either created or purported ideologies within social networking sites. The conclusion discusses all these findings and how they relate to each other as well as looks ahead at the possibility of further research around social media and identity formation through the practice of fashion.

A closer look at Lookbook

Research objectives

Initially designed as a three-fold investigation of Lookbook, an online community web site premised on street style fashion, the aim of this study was to consider whether the user-generated content uploaded by members is influenced by ideologies embedded in the architecture and social structure of the site, thus maintaining an unspoken criteria for members in the creation of their online identities. In order to yield significant findings about identity formation and impression management in online social spaces, it was deemed necessary to utilise various approaches.

To determine how the content on Lookbook differs or is typical of mass media and mainstream fashion, and therefore plays an integral role in members' formation of their online personas, the methodological frameworks of semiology, as developed by Ferdinand de Saussure (1983), multimodality and textual discourse analysis and, drawing on Roland Barthes' seminal works of fashion (1967), content analysis, were applied to a small purposive sample of UGC from the community. In order to derive the most recent and relevant information with regard to members whose style looks and profiles would be used in the analysis, as well as to keep up with the changing landscape of the web site, this section of the study has been conducted and updated multiple times since its inception. To indicate how the Lookbook platform reflects mainstream gender politics, the site's content is also viewed in relation to feminist theory, as propagated by Laura Mulvey (1975), Diana Fuss (1992) and others (Coyle, 1996; Sullivan, 1997; and Takayoshi, Huot & Huot, 1999).

In order to identify elements of game design that compose the architecture and structure of the site – such as leaderboards, rating systems and rewards – as well as observe and address the social nature in which these elements are used to motivate members of Lookbook to manage their online identities, and participate and contribute to the community, the methodologies of multimodality and textual discourse analysis were proposed as the best approaches (Fairclough, 2000). By utilising semiology and multimodality to

deconstruct the linguistic codes of fashion and website architecture found on Lookbook, further implied motives for members' continued participation on the site through impression management would be determined.

Thereafter, the theoretical perspective of Uses and Gratifications would be engaged to measure the motivations for users joining the community, participating in its online culture and contributing content to the site. The study intended to build on the initial tenets of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) – an active audience that is viewed as separate from mass communication and who understand their own needs and seek gratification in their use of media, which, in turn, competes for audience attention with other sources of need satisfaction (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973-4: 511) – by examining the reasons community members generate and supply content to the site. While it appears that impression management and identity creation are the main incentives for such practices within social media, UGT offers an opportunity to understand individual motivations for increased user engagement with tools of web 2.0, such as social networking sites and online communities that encourage UGC. As demonstrated by Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman in their study on understanding social media adoption, UGT provides “an advanced theoretical approach in the initial stage of each new mass communications medium when they were first introduced” (2011: 191) and has been applied to television (Rubin, 1983), magazines (Payne, Severn & Dozier, 1988), the Internet (Charney & Greenberg, 2002), marketing web sites (Ko, Cho & Roberts, 2005) and Internet news (Diddi & LaRose, 2006). Questionnaire instruments with a sample of community members from a specific location would be used to verify the possible meanings derived from the semiological analysis as well as measure the impressions the multimodal elements employed by the site have on members of the community.

Delimitations

The initial sampling method included a combination of purposive and snowball sampling (Durrheim & Painter, 2011: 139). During a two-week period in August 2013, 25 Lookbook members were selected from the community's

database of public profiles. However, the sample yielded an unreliable response rate of one and therefore the framework of uses and gratifications was abandoned. The criteria for selection were based on two factors: members' regular activity and interactions on the site, and location, which had to be Cape Town, South Africa. Limiting the population sample to Cape Town meant that secondary interviews could then be conducted with participants and would also provide more insight into the reasons South African participate in the global Lookbook community. Sampling was reliant on responses from at least half of the members initially approached by email. Respondents were asked to grant consent to participate in the study, as well as to voluntarily nominate one other Lookbook member within their online network who resided in Cape Town. In exchange for participation in the study, a R500 shopping voucher was offered as an incentive, which would be won by one participant via a lucky draw to take place on the completion of the study. A weak response rate was anticipated given the size of the sample as well as the method to obtain it. The conclusion is that a better response rate would have been achieved had the sample been larger and more diversified, perhaps looking at members of the site who resided in locations other than Cape Town or South Africa.

In the event of a weak response rate, it was proposed that the study would revert to analyses of user-generated content and site architecture, specifically the game design elements employed by Lookbook, using the theoretical frameworks of multimodality and semiology. While this thesis does not allow for an extensive discussion on further research into uses and gratifications theory in particular, it must be noted that an amalgamation of ethnography and UGT would allow for non-invasive access to online communities of this nature. Although the majority of early UGT studies, as mentioned earlier, have primarily concentrated on survey answers that most often produce artificial or constrained statements, this method should not be disregarded completely. Instead, further areas of research into uses and gratifications of social media could be explored if questionnaire instruments were coupled with ethnographic studies.

Methodology

The uses and gratifications paradigm offers a flexible framework in which to explore new communicative tools and practices of works “designed to explain both the social and psychological needs to use media” (Soto-Sanfiel, 2012: 72). The existing research on online communities, especially those utilising the UGT perspective, is minimal. However, UGT’s underlying ideology presents clearly defined suppositions that act as a point of departure to this investigation of Lookbook.

Although UGT attempts to present a view of motivations for users’ consumption of media, it does not consider the user as having a role other than that of consumer, therefore disregarding how contemporary media operates and limiting its ability to provide accurate data. As a result, a process of methodological triangulation using critical discourse analysis (CDA) methods was deemed an appropriate approach to investigate the problem from multiple perspectives, “looking for convergent evidence from different sources” (Kelly, 2011: 380). Thus, the secondary theoretical frameworks of semiotic and textual discourse analysis of multimodal discourse were discerned to be suitable methods as it allowed for the interpretation of meanings present in the game design elements found in the architecture of Lookbook, which was surmised as being directly influential on users’ identity formation and impression management. Furthermore, it was planned that questions on these elements and the assumed meanings would be presented to the participants of the study to gain clarification of users’ motivations and supplementary assumed meanings, if any, of the elements utilised on the site.

The University of Cape Town’s ethical guidelines clearly delineate appropriate research methods for studies using human research participants. For this particular research, the use of survey instruments were deemed as non-invasive with little to no significant risk of harm to participants and the supervisors of both the pilot project and this dissertation was consulted to deliberate any dilemmas that could have arisen during the research period. As such, no ethical clearance forms were required. In order to obtain the correct permissions from questionnaire participants, an email was sent to each

participant (see below for further clarification). Additionally, although the Lookbook site is a public sphere, an email (Addendum C) was also sent to the listed contact email address on the site, hello[at]lookbook.nu, on 24 August 2013 to obtain permission from the site's administrators to analyse content found on the site. No response was received but given the open and public nature of the platform as an online community, the research was deemed appropriate to proceed.

In preparation for this larger dissertation, a pilot study was undertaken in August 2013. This involved a two-week period where the search function on Lookbook was used to locate members of the community who resided in Cape Town, South Africa. A group of 25 members were selected from the database of public profiles that appeared in the search, which was based on how often the members were active on the site as well as whether or not they interacted with other members of the community. An email invitation was then sent to the group of selected members asking them to participate in the study. The email included an information sheet (Addendum A), which detailed the specifics of the research, the role the participants would play and offered the incentive of a chance to win a R500 shopping voucher for participation in the study, and a consent form to be completed if the member agreed to participate (Addendum B). Participants were also asked to nominate one other member of the site who resided in Cape Town, South Africa, and who would then also be approached to participate in the research.

The intention was to send all respondents an email with a link to a survey containing questions on their use of, participation, contribution and motives for using Lookbook, and the ways in which their own identity on the site was formed or influenced by other members' posts, the social structure of the community and the architecture of the web site itself. Questions on the code (or those elements borrowed from game design) would also be included in the survey. Due to the poor response rate to the email invitation, this method was abandoned and the focus shifted instead to multimodal analyses of the game design elements used on the site and Lookbook members' looks.

In Chapter 1, in order to contextualise Lookbook within the current body of work that exists, theories of identity, gender, privacy, social capital, uses and gratifications, and multimodality and sign systems are considered. Chapter 2, which comprises an investigation of dominant ideologies surrounding beauty, power and gender roles as constructed on the site, entails examining looks by members of the community that appeared on the Hot by Recent and Top Daily pages within a two-week period. Due to the high volume of looks uploaded to the Lookbook community each day, it was determined that three looks in each category at a specific time of day would be analysed. Site documentation, such as the privacy policy, terms of use, frequently asked questions and the help function, were monitored for changes on a bi-weekly basis from the inception of the pilot study in August 2013. Additionally, news stories focusing on Lookbook found in both the mainstream and alternative press were also consulted to help inform various aspects of the research. Chapter 3, which concentrates on the game design elements within the architecture of the site, is a straightforward examination of objects found on Lookbook that are derived from game design. The assumption was that linear meanings would be found in the objects that most closely resemble and were modelled on elements found in games, and that this motivated users' to manage their online personas. The final chapter of this thesis concludes the research undertaken and looks towards further areas of research into identity formation on user-generated platforms.

Chapter 1: Contextualising Lookbook

The methodological approach of CDA that will be employed in this study is specifically concerned with the relationship between discourse and power, and “how discourse reproduces and maintains hegemonic and discriminatory social relations ... that contribute to, for instance, the dominance of one group over another” (Bishop & Jaworski, 2003: 246). In this regard, much literature considers the notion of cultural hegemony as being rooted in a history of the Other, where colonisers viewed the colonised as simultaneously exotic and savage, a part of the natural world (Said, 1978; Pham, 2011). This idea of world order “privileged whiteness as the quintessence of beauty, intelligence, and cultural and historical progress” (Yancy & Ryser, 2008: 732), and has been reiterated in media politics over the centuries with the dominant ideology of fashion modelled on the culture and modes of dress exhibited by upper-class white groups. Roland Barthes has emphasised this in his writings on clothing and fashion, stating that before the nineteenth century, “histories of fashion rarely consider anything but royal or aristocratic outfits” (Barthes, 1957-60/2006: 5).

In the 1950s and 1960s, the structuralist approach to the social sciences illustrated the way in which meanings were relational – a group of interpreters would assign meanings to concepts by contrasting them to concepts of commensurate measure (Holt, 1997: 328). Later, Roland Barthes (1968/1985) and Jean Baudrillard (1988) applied these analyses to their studies of popular culture and the consumption thereof. Post-structuralism, however, maintains that meanings do not simply exist in social life as fully formed entities. Instead, meanings attributed to objects or concepts are constructed via a process of intertextuality, whereby one text

is not an autonomous or unified object, but a set of relations with other texts. Its system of language, its grammar, its lexicon, drag along numerous bits and pieces—traces—of history so that the text resembles a Cultural Salvation Army Outlet with unaccountable collections of incompatible ideas, beliefs, and sources (Leitch, 1983: 59).

In an attempt to establish how identity is perceived and formed through cultural hegemony, the sections in this chapter first contemplate how these concepts relate to already established theories within the fields of sociology and media before leading into the next chapter to discuss a sample of user-generated content from Lookbook and how identities on this online community are constructed through intertextuality.

Identity and the male gaze

Most discussions of identity from the late twentieth century focus on self-identification, the susceptibility and fluidity of identity, and the fact that identity can only be understood through difference. In his work on categorisation, Richard Jenkins observes that the idea of self-identification is a modern trope centred round the amalgamation of these various aspects of identity:

[s]ocially and epistemologically, categorization involves the invocation of similarity within categories, as the basis for differentiation between them. Diversity is not everything. Difference does not make sense without similarity (any more than individual identity does without collective membership) (Jenkins, 2000: 22).

Both self-identification and classification of an individual by others are interdependent processes and is made not only via one's differences to others in a group, but also through one's similarities, as well as by an individual on him- or herself (internal) or on that person by others (external). Therefore all people are exposed to both self-identification and classification. This then leads to a distinction between groups and categories, with groups being collectives defined by their members, while categories are instituted by external forces through social observation of a group or collective's practices and are often not recognised by said group (Jenkins, 2000: 8).

As such, market research across the globe employs what is known as lifestyle typologies to

classify the population only in terms of categories based on social class, certain types of values, and, to some extent, age, they indicate

differences and similarities between major lifestyles within and across social classes (Crane, 2000: 11).

However, given the fragmented and universal nature of the Internet, it is difficult to discern a set of distinct lifestyle typologies as various regions across the world use different systems, such as the Vals 2 in the United States and the South African Audience Research Foundation's LSM (Living Standards Measure) descriptors, used by South Africa's official stats bodies and incorporated in the country's national census (G. Dudley, personal communication, 2014, June 2). The State's Val 2 system comes close to defining the lifestyle typologies on US-based Lookbook – it segments the population into Fulfilleds, Believers, Makers, Strugglers, Actualizers, Achievers, Experiencers and Strivers (Waldrop, 1994: 22-32), with middle-class Experiencers and working-class Strivers more likely to be younger, image-conscious and interested in clothing consumption. As Crane notes,

[t]hese categories suggest that younger and more affluent groups are concerned with identity and have postmodernist attitudes towards the use of consumption to manipulate the presentation of identity, while older and generally less affluent groups have more traditional attitudes toward identity and lifestyle (2000: 12).

According to Bruce Horovitz (2012), “marketers take nothing for granted” and generational differences, such as age and the period in which an individual was born, are often used to categorise the population. Generation Y, those individuals “born in or after 1982” and also dubbed Millennials by authors and business partners Neil Howe and William Strauss (2000: 4), display characteristics that are congruent with those displayed by the Experiencers and Strivers as defined by the Vals 2. While this much is true, it should be noted that other factors besides birth year distinguish individuals as Millennials. Reeves and Oh (2012: 297) maintain that this includes “the self-perception of membership within a generation”, the attitudes and behaviours displayed by an individual and “that categorize a generation”, and significant historical events “that occur during a generation's formative years”, as well as an individual's socio-economic circumstances, level of education, race and culture. Many of these individuals are at a transitioning stage of their lives,

whether it be making the move from high school to college or from college to their first job and, in the process, are searching for ways in which to identify themselves.

Today, society has become more fragmented, and those categorised as belonging to the Millennial generation display varying special and individual interests within their different social classes. “This suggests that social class is becoming less important in the formation of a person’s self-image” (Crane, 2000: 9) and, as such, standards of culture, whether institutionalised or not, cannot be defined by a single distinctive feature or characteristic as Bourdieu proposes. Holt (1997) suggests that these diversities or cultural frameworks can be explained as “lifestyle categories” that are able to change and evolve over time, and where individuals can move from one to another as a particular lifestyle becomes more prominent. Typically, individuals are categorised within a particular lifestyle category or collective by others’ interpretation of their individual tastes, but these tastes “are a messy and fuzzy amalgam of numerous interpenetrating implicit cultural frameworks” (Holt, 1997: 341), which in themselves change over time and across populations, most often generationally, but also according to “social, political, cultural, economic, and technological changes” (Holt, 1997: 342). According to Horovitz,

traditional generational cutoffs [*sic*] occur about every 20 years. But with the pace of cultural and technological change accelerating ... it’s possible that generational shifts are occurring in half the time (2012: para. 18).

This is especially significant in studies concerning the formation of identity, as the aspects of lifestyle typologies, including that of gender and class inequality, driven by global capitalism, remain markers of identity and categorisation.

In a 1975 essay, Laura Mulvey argued that classical Hollywood cinema produced gendered representations portraying “the image of woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man” (1975: 17). While Mulvey’s theory was later criticised by feminist critics who noted that the

conventions she indicated were undermined in various films, much literature still agrees that media forms representing women as the object of the male gaze result in women internalising objectification as a form of acceptance and appreciation by others (Sullivan, 1997; Takayoshi, Huot & Huot, 1999). This then contributes to women's notions of self-image where their sense of identity is only understood in terms of others' opinions of who they are:

Issues of identity and body image are foregrounded in such a way that a girl's identity is intricately linked to her physical appearance and compliant behavior. Mainstream culture, found in messages in school as well as out-of-school contexts, "instructs" girls on the "approved" ways to become women (Sanford, 2005: 305).

Sullivan points out that CMC continues the trope of women's objectification and looks to the work of Karen Coyle (1996), who describes "the way that computer culture is coded as male through, for example, its advertisements, which presume male, heterosexual readers" (Sullivan, 1997: 192). However, although still predominantly male, audiences of online texts and participants in cyberspace have become much more diversified since Coyle and Sullivan's research, and now also include females. In this context, the images on display may be consumed in ways other than that which reflects heterosexual desire, as demonstrated by Diana Fuss in her work on the homospectatorial look in women's fashion magazines where she also concludes that "the desire to be *like* can itself be motivated and sustained by the desire to *possess*" (1992: 737). Thus, the arena of SNS and online communities offer individuals the opportunity to emulate desired looks seen within these digital spaces. Consequently, existing theories that have been labelled post-feminism suggest that a redefinition of the male gaze within the media – where women are also the audience of cultural texts that display females as the object of desire – acts as a cultural pedagogy of self-improvement, focusing on ideals of beauty engendered in race, culture, fashion and the like (Kellner & Share, 2005; Wohlwend & Medina, 2012).

Takayoshi, Huot and Huot (1999) argue that although the majority of media depictions characterise women as victims and/or objects, this definition is

vastly limiting. Instead, the authors identify and focus on “grrl-power sites” (Takayoshi, Huot & Huot, 1999: 89) and the resulting strengths and cultural empowerment such sites beget women. Similarly, social networking sites and online communities allow women to draw on the objectification practices of a largely male audience and empower themselves by acknowledging the use of the male gaze in media texts and their understanding of it in the commodification of their own images (Sullivan, 1997: 201–202), as is evident in fashion blogs maintained by minorities, such as males, non-whites, and Asian-American and British Asian bloggers (Pham, 2011; V, 2014). While fashion in the nineteenth century was the domain of males and the upper-class, with lower and middle-class women often unable to afford clothing or not having a reason to purchase new clothes as they did not venture or work outside of the home, fashion blogs in the twentieth century have been largely established as the domain of the white female (Crane, 2000; Pham, 2011: 1–4).

Having said that, in recent years, particularly with the attention afforded to blogs produced by males, such as *Clothes Make the Man*, *lipstickeater* (Pham, 2011) and Scott Schuman’s *The Sartorialist*, as well as the spotlight on men’s fashion, hegemonic notions surrounding the perception of fashion and style bloggers have been disputed. The boundaries of identity, gender and socially acceptable behaviour for both the consumption and manufacture of fashion and fashion texts have been destabilised:

As understandings of men and women have changed, so too have the lifestyles that express these understandings in the realm of consumption: gender boundaries for clothing were subverted in the 1970s (remember Diane Keaton?), now androgyny is often haute couture (Davis, 1992), and ironic statements about traditional femininity mark the avant-garde (witness the rise of baby-doll dresses in youth culture today) (Holt, 1997: 341).

Nowhere is this more prevalent than online, where discourses surrounding identity are often fluid and independent of real, offline personas.

Social media, architectural structure and the gated community

While identity formation is not a new concept, the establishment of new digital-based electronic media forms throughout the 1980s and into the 2000s has drastically changed the way individuals construct their own and others' perspectives of them. Social media, specifically, has become highly influential in identity formation among individuals who make use of the Internet for social and business purposes, and who utilise social media platforms "to create, modify, share and discuss Internet content" (Kietzmann et al., 2011: 241). Kaplan and Haenlein define social media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content (2010: 61). The interactive model of Web 2.0, which has refined the first era of the World Wide Web – the passive Web 1.0 – where users merely expended content from the Internet, is only able to operate due to various functionalities, some of which include:

Adobe Flash (a popular method for adding animation, interactivity, and audio/video streams to web pages), RSS (Really Simple Syndication, a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated content, such as blog entries or news headlines, in a standardized format), and AJAX (Asynchronous Java Script, a technique to retrieve data from web servers asynchronously, allowing the update of web content without interfering with the display and behavior [*sic*] of the whole page) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010: 61).

Thus, social networking sites, blogs, collaborative projects, online content-sharing communities⁵, and virtual game and social worlds can all be described as types of social media. Kaplan and Haenlein go on to differentiate between SNS and online communities, with online communities being a space where media content can be shared between users who are not expected or required to create a personal profile page (2010: 63). Various other definitions of "online content community" exists, with the majority of scholars agreeing that these communities subsist through the exchange of information on

⁵ While Kaplan and Haenlein identify an online content-sharing community as a "content community" (2010: 63), the more widely-used term "online community" will be utilised in this dissertation, especially in reference to the interactive, participatory model of Lookbook.

special interests that, in turn, benefit community members by offering them support, knowledge, collaboration and promotion of resources on a specific topic (Rheingold, 1994; Sproull & Faraj, 1997; Preece, 2001). Social networking sites, on the other hand, are organised around people and allow users to create public or semi-public profiles within a structured system where they are also able to connect to others within the system (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; boyd & Ellison, 2008).

However, networking with individuals is often not the goal, but rather simply an organisational feature of the majority of SNS, as is an individual's visibility on a specific site. This egocentric structure of SNS is parallel to that of real-world or offline social structures where, as Wellman notes, "the world is composed of networks, not groups" (1988: 37). As such, the focal point of most literature about social networking sites has been on self-presentation and impression management (boyd & Heer, 2006; Donath & boyd, 2004). It is important to keep in mind that social media entities are often comprised of more than one type, as is the case with Lookbook, which utilises features of SNS, online communities, blogs and virtual gaming, although the site is marketed and referred to as an online community.

In the early nineties, Rheingold's seminal work *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (1993) suggested that belonging to an online – or virtual – community held potential benefits for both the wellbeing of an individual and society. However, as Wilson and Peterson (2002) rightly indicate, various factors – race, class and gender (and one can include culture, age and socioeconomic status here as well) – have impeded equal access to online technology. Whether an individual is a member of an online community or not, that person already exists within an offline community and may simultaneously be a part of other communities grouped around social activities, culture, or other personal or public interests. Rheingold (1993) suggested that online communities were replacing public spaces where social interaction occurs. While this may be true in certain instances, such as Castells' embodiment of a "network society" where users "switch to another network" (2000: 11) and that can be likened to a user

switching between different online communities or moving from an offline community to the realm of an online community, twenty-first century users of virtual communities use these spaces not as a substitute for a public social space, but rather in a way that supports their activities in the real community, integrating their online practices with their daily offline activities.

From an anthropological viewpoint, online communities are also sites where individual and collective identities are constructed (Wilson & Peterson 2002: 450), and where various communication and social practices emerge. Wilson and Peterson note that “identities are negotiated, reproduced, and indexed in a variety of ways in online interactions, and these often cannot be understood without considering the offline context” (2002: 457). Thus, online identities can also be centred on offline identities⁶, existing in a predetermined and shared online space, although these online identities may not always purport to be the same as the user’s offline or real identity.

While SNS and online communities are primarily recognised as sites for individual representation, their application as a space for the creation, modification and exhibition of identity establishes them as performance spaces as well, indicating the move of Web 2.0 to an interactive model that is also participatory (Mazali, 2011). Donath and boyd (2004) argue that online social connections are in themselves public displays of an individual’s identity, helping to validate that individual’s self-representation. Thus, an individual’s connections on a specific SNS are related to the way in which that individual chooses to portray him or herself, whether they are aware of it or not.

Relevant research also suggests that the way in which self-representation on social networking sites occur is simultaneously influenced by user behaviour and the architectural elements that comprise an SNS (boyd & Heer, 2006; Donath & boyd, 2004; Donath, 2007; Papacharassi, 2009). Papacharassi

⁶ This dissertation does not allow for further detail into existing literature on online ethnographic studies. However, there is a need for a more ethnographic approach to the study of social media and online communities, particularly with regard to identity formation within these spaces. The challenges drawn from the literature and the research undertaken here are elaborated in the conclusion.

defines social networking site architecture as a “composite result of structure, design and organization” (2009: 205), but notes that while the architecture is suggestive of the online culture being established on a particular site, it is not “inherently limiting” (Papacharassi, 2009: 203).

Despite this, there remains some limitations in the extent to which certain social media operate as private communities, with many of them, according to Hargittai (2007), as quoted in Papacharassi, containing “built-in demographic bias” (2009: 204). This is in contrast to the view of the Internet as a liberating platform and a public sphere where everyone is equal, especially with regard to networks where an individual's offline existence – gender, class, ethnicity, culture and physical disability – influences or characterises that individual's online identity.

Although a large number of SNS are, in most regards, considered “gated communities”, the level of access granted to outsiders (i.e. individuals who browse web site homepages or find user profiles via a web search using search engine sites such as Google or Bing) indicates that SNS users' information is still largely open to the public. As a result, the majority of SNS employ varying degrees of privacy settings and policies to protect not only user identities, but also the degrees to which others – both the users' connections within a network and people not registered to the network but who have access to certain web pages of the network – can access members' profile pages and information.

Privacy

There subsists divergent concerns regarding privacy, but no more so than in the age of technology where individuals freely sign up for online services and reveal intimate details about their lives. Many scholars and lawmakers have put forth different theories on the topic; however, a definitive conception of privacy still does not exist. As law scholar Daniel J. Solove notes, “many existing theories of privacy view it as a unitary concept with a uniform value that is unvarying across different situations” (2008: 8). These theories include

concepts of privacy as the right to be left alone, first argued for by Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis (1890); secrecy; limited access to the self whereby an individual determines to what extent his private matters should be available to the public; concealment of information where an individual has the right to hide reprehensible information about themselves; control over personal information; intimacy; and personhood, which entails “the protection of the integrity of personality” (Solove, 2008: 8). Writing long before the developments of SNS and online communities as they are known today, Alan F. Westin proposed a definition of privacy that sought to allow

the claim of individuals, groups, or institutions to determine for themselves when, how and to what extent information about them is communicated to others (1967: 7),

while Altman suggested that privacy is “the selective control of access to the self” regulated by an individual’s social interactions (1975: 24).

With regard to privacy within mediated spaces, specifically the SNS Facebook, boyd and Ellison summarise various potential threats to privacy in these contexts and suggest that a legal conception of privacy on SNS “hinges on users’ expectation of privacy and whether or not Facebook profiles are considered public or private” (2008: 222). Solove proposes a more pluralistic theory of privacy that is both conscious of context while still universal. This type of taxonomy, specifically with regard to the way in which information is processed, disseminated and increasingly accessible, is of import to a discussion on SNS and online communities.

Information communication technologies (ICT) have the capacity to store, retrieve, collect and collate, distribute, capture, and utilise data about individuals from different sources. In so doing, an individual’s personal information, freely supplied for one specific purpose, may end up in the hands of a third party or be aggregated with other information provided for a different purpose without the individual’s knowledge. Houghton and Joinson (2010) indicate that individuals and organisations are able to disseminate and search for data much more easily on the Internet, allowing both physical bodily and

psychological privacy violations to occur more frequently and easily. In addition, when users of social media upload information about themselves to the Internet, they are also complicit in this erosion of privacy, in particular through the use of SNS to share personal information with peers and marketing organizations (Houghton & Joinson, 2010: 77).

The majority of literature about online privacy concerns has centred on e-commerce, specifically credit card fraud, customer identification and vendors' use of customers' personal information (Miyazaki & Fernandez, 2000; Houghton & Joinson, 2010). However, the proliferation of user-generated sites, in particular SNS and online communities, has meant that individuals willingly post their personal information to web sites as a means of "sharing" with other members of the site who form a part of their online network. These sites also utilise third-party platforms and applications that request access to user data. Users are often not aware of third-party applications or accept the terms of use without fully understanding the threat to their private information on the hosting site (Shin, 2010). Furthermore, users are also often not aware of a site's privacy settings and their ability to customise their privacy preferences, such as who (other users and third-party platforms, for example) to share their personal profile information with and the number of people their information is disclosed to if their preferences have not been set. The majority of SNS and online community sites also have a default setting of unrestricted access, a detail that is often unknown or ignored by users, many of whom do not perceive privacy settings as particularly important, a fact noted by Solove who observes that privacy is "a fading expectation and value that people increasingly find to be of little concern or consequence" (2008: 82). In sharing their personal information and through their inability to control social spheres within their online networks (knowingly or otherwise), users open themselves up to identity fraud, phishing, cyberbullying, information leaking, spam and stalking (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007; Houghton & Joinson, 2010; Shin, 2010).

Owing to liberal or non-existent privacy settings, SNS and online communities, such as Lookbook, are open and are meant to be this way to

encourage user participation and social interaction within the platform. As such, these spaces have become sites where imitation – in the ways individuals present themselves by their choice of colloquialisms, online slang, consumption and fashion – is rife. In particular, as noted by Bollier and Racine, both the fashion industry and the realm of digital culture are open and transformative environments “known for its embrace of appropriation, derivation and imitation” (2005: 5). By combining fashion with the social and dynamic nature of digital culture, Lookbook has become a space of creative appropriation, referencing, homage and modification that blurs the line of privacy and becomes “a bricolage model of creativity” (Bollier & Racine, 2005: 30) where fashion enthusiasts can contribute and share their innovative imitations of style.

Style, fashion consumption and fashion blogging

As previously acknowledged, styles of clothing in the nineteenth century determined an individual's social status, defining the ways in which one could express themselves and interact with others in society. From the early twentieth century, fragmentation began to occur within and across social classes, and fashion organisations increasingly found a need to make profits with other consumer products in addition to clothing, leading to the development of three distinctive categories of fashion – luxury designer fashion, industrial or commercial fashion, and street style fashion – that are all interconnected:

[S]treet fashion has some influence on luxury fashion, and vice versa ... and both have some influence on industrial fashion. Huge clothing manufacturers play major roles that conform to the bottom-up model of fashion diffusion, co-opting innovations from working-class and other subcultures and studying consumer tastes in order to market styles that will reflect the preferences of consumers. These styles are most likely to be adopted first by the young and only later by older cohorts (Crane, 2000: 166).

Although this dissemination of fashion consumption habits is accurate, the ways in which styles are adopted within specific lifestyle typologies is not as clear-cut. Fashion in the early twentieth century was largely used as a means

to differentiate an individual from his peers, but towards the end of the century, styles became similar even as the fashion industry itself burgeoned. Not only were the fashion organisations imitating one another's products, but for the majority of consumers, many of who make use of digital media across various electronic personal computing devices, the styles of clothing they opt to consume are influenced by other members of their social groups, pop culture role models (including fashion bloggers) found in mass media, and marketing campaigns by clothing manufacturers and fashion organisations. Most major fashion campaigns by large corporations also utilise the pulling power of Hollywood and other popular culture stars, whose large fan bases would willingly purchase any product worn or used by their icons. Imitation therefore became an embedded component of fashion consumption even as fashion is seen as a medium where one is able to express one's individuality. Writing on this phenomenon as early as 1957, Simmel mentions that imitation transfers

not only the demand for creative activity, but also the responsibility for the action from ourselves to another. Thus the individual is freed from the worry of choosing and appears simply as a creature of the group (1957: 543).

Consequently, imitation of style is directly related to identity – both individual and as representative of a group or category – and its social meaning is only one of many meanings that fashion as a consumer object conveys. Social meaning itself serves “to represent and thus demarcate social categories such as gender, class, and race” (Holt, 1997: 328). When fashion is consumed by an individual, the style, cut and colour preferences all contribute to the meaning and social categorisation of that individual. This then feeds into what Solomon and Assael, as quoted by Holt, describes as “consumption constellations”, whereby

members of a collectivity — for example, yuppies, punks, and manual labourers — are assumed to consume an ideal-typical assortment of consumption objects that express their identity (Holt, 1997: 328).

But objects themselves are not solely responsible for identifying individuals as belonging to a particular collective. The practice or use of an object, and the behaviours demonstrated by an individual utilising the object, plays a more crucial role than the object itself in determining whether an individual belongs to a specific group. Indeed, the object is able to signify various meanings depending on the context in which it is used.

Thus, similar to the offline, physical world where an individual carefully chooses the clothing to be worn to convey a specific identity to others when that individual leaves their home, the images of an individual in an online space are carefully chosen as well. In online spaces where fashion and style play a vital role, such as on the Lookbook site, the image of an individual is carefully curated through choice of clothing, accessories, shoes, location, pose and expression to illustrate a specific mood and identity. This projected self-image can be likened to *TV Buddha* (1986), an art installation by Nam June Paik, which Garoian and Gaudelius use to explain the pedagogy of assemblage (2008: 97). In the work, a Buddha statue faces a television and a video camera placed directly behind the television. The camera films the Buddha, conveying the statue's image on to the screen, and effectively producing a scene where the Buddha is watching and being watched simultaneously (Media Art Net, n.d.). Online spaces therefore allow the individual to "sit in front of a screen that ostensibly projects our self-images" (Liao, 2011: 104).

The notion of a projected self-image is not a new one and Lookbook, amongst other social media, can be viewed as an extension of another type of CMC: the fashion blog. Over and above celebrating and critiquing the fashion industry and its commodities as well as the "aesthetic, cultural, political, and economic style or mode by which fashion forms are produced, expressed and circulated" (Pham, 2011: 11), the majority of fashion blogs are often commercial vehicles for promotion and marketing of both the blogger and various fashion designers and organisations (Liao, 2011; Pham, 2011), and feature links to fashion sites often embedded within text posts, but also alongside photographs and video posts. Writing on the practices of fashion

bloggers in the virtual reality world of the *Second Life* game, Liao points out that many bloggers engage in a trade exchange where fashion organisations and designers provide *gratis* products for review (2011: 107). Likewise, online fashion communities allow bloggers to both link their personal blogs to their community accounts, with badges available to display on their homepages as well as on their profiles in the community, and to promote the items of clothing worn in their images by tagging them with a designer or fashion company's name.

In one instance, new media – which includes SNS, online communities, blogs, collaborative projects, virtual games and social worlds – can be viewed as the next wave of the democratisation of fashion, with blogging the digital instigator of this process that allows fashion to be available to anyone with access to a computer and an Internet connection (Gabelmann, 2009). But, as previously noted in the discussion on social media and gated communities, the medium of fashion itself as well as the heterogeneous digital forms that make it so widely available can also be a deterrent to some individuals, particularly those without access to computer-mediated communications and technology, and those who are grouped or categorised as belonging to a demographic other than the prevailing one found in the online spaces dedicated to the interest of fashion.

Uses, gratifications and social capital

The theoretical perspective of uses and gratifications is derived from 1940s functionalist research on mass media concerned with the effects of radio programmes on listeners and conducted by Herta Herzog (Eighmey & McCord, 1998: 188). Thus, uses and gratifications theory seeks to understand how specific media influences behaviour and satisfies the needs of users of that media. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1973–4) identify five elements that predicate the uses and gratifications model: (1) a perceived active audience, (2) the notion that media choice and need for gratification comes from the audience member, (3) the concept that the media in question competes with other sources of “need satisfaction” (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973–4: 511),

(4) the awareness by people of their own interests and (5) the need to investigate an audience as a separate entity from mass communication.

It must be noted that numerous criticisms have been levelled at early UGT studies focused on media functions and that used open-ended frameworks (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973–4: 509). These criticisms include a lack of consistency, broad-based assumptions of media selections made by users that drive them towards specific content, and perceived expectations of social, environmental and individual factors (Ruggiero, 2000: 11–12). Writing in the seventies, theorists were unable to conceive that in the 21st century, active audience members would create media in addition to consuming it, although a shift from media exposure towards media use with “a multidimensional view of audience activity” (Ruggiero, 2000: 10) – wherein studies concentrated both on gratifications sought (GS) and gratifications obtained (GO) – took place in the 1980s and 1990s (Ruggiero, 2000). Nonetheless, although early UGT theory considered audience consumption of media (Ruggiero, 2000: 10), later studies incorporated notions of interactivity, demassification where the medium is controlled by the individual, and asynchronicity, which “refers to the concept that messages may be staggered in time” (Ruggiero, 2000: 15–16).

While both Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch’s (1973–4) outline of the initial tenets of UGT and the theoretical models explored in the nineties with the emergence and proliferation of new telecommunication technologies are still relevant to research of audience needs and satisfaction of media, Soto-Sanfiel (2012) proposed that further research utilising UGT should be extended to audience engagement with their chosen media and the theoretical frameworks applied to instances of media use and user motivations within specific social and mediated contexts, as in the case of Lookbook. Additionally, I would like to propose that future studies incorporating the framework of UGT should be mindful of the contexts in which media are used. Most relevant is that these contexts should be theorised in relation to notions of power that audiences of particular media and the developers of said media hold, the influence of social structures, age, race and gender – only touched upon in early research (Ruggiero, 2000: 18) –

and the commercialised profit-seeking aspects of media and its by-products. A study as recent as 2008, which investigated uses and gratifications in the online social networking sites Facebook and MySpace, broached these tenets and surmised that gender and age are integral in the use of SNS spaces with females “more likely to engage in online communication to maintain personal connections with family, friends and co-workers”, and young adults more partial to the comfortable use of online forms of communication (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008: 169).

The uses and satisfaction derived from CMC, such as SNS and online communities, can be linked to the impression or conception of social capital, defined as actual or virtual resources accumulated by an individual through relationships of association (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007: 1145). Social capital itself has been noted by Adler and Kwon (2002) as operating under different definitions in numerous fields, with social capital resources differing depending on the context and type of relationship within a specific social structure, but having positive outcomes in various industries, including business, public health and entrepreneurship. Sociologist Erving Goffman (1959), who was preoccupied with the presentation of self by individuals in everyday life, argued for a dual self-image comprised of the “self-as-performer” and “self-as-character” (1997). Employing Goffman’s theory of the dual self-image to discuss the notion of the online self-image, it can be asserted that by means of text, image and video representations of an individual online, the self-as-character becomes a social product that is “performed outwardly” in the online space (Whitty, 2008: 1709). This thereby amasses social capital by means of two forms: “bonding”, which foregrounds internal relationship ties within groups or collectives and where resources are often considered as expected for mutual benefit, and “bridging” that focuses on relationship ties of social obligation, such as via colleagues or friends that return favours (Adler & Kwon, 2002: 19).

The current structure of SNS helps articulate existing connections as well as enables the creation of new connections, thus increasing an individual’s social capital. In turn, this growth in social capital “increases commitment to a

community and the ability to mobilise collective actions, among other benefits” (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007: 1145). Although this discussion largely considers the beneficial qualities of amassing social capital, it must be observed that social capital can also be used for negative purposes (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004). Burt (2003), who himself addresses only networks within organisations and amongst managers, has indicated that the literature on social capital is “little more than loosely-formed opinion about social capital as a metaphor” (346), with more recent studies concentrating on defining social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002) and looking to mediums where social capital is formed and maintained (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). In this dissertation, I touch upon, but do not elaborate (as the limits of this research do not permit me to do so), on the criteria for gaining social capital within the online mediated space. Specifically, I address the issue of how reputation, and thus social capital, is gained on Lookbook then discuss this concept in terms of how it shapes the construction and meanings of identity on the site.

Multimodality and sign systems

Coinciding with the previously mentioned notion of users’ enjoyment of their experiences with the media they consume, there exists a need for developers of CMC, and SNS and online communities in particular, to encourage users to return to their sites as well as to attract new users. One such method is the modification of existing tools borrowed from other computer-mediated mediums, such as gaming, that creates an effective praxis for users to both obtain satisfaction from the site as well as make continuous use of it (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011).

By enforcing structural codes that are driven by rewards, on the online community web site of Lookbook, for example, members of that community are provided with a sense of accomplishment (in having learnt the code or system of the site). Additionally, appropriating from theories surrounding the gift economy, members are also provided “with goals, and therefore a sense of purpose, together with criteria for judging success or failure” (Cheal, 1988: 121). The applied codes and systems also often act as links between the

various members of the community, ultimately ensuring the community's survival. Soto-Sanfiel, writing on a community based around a virtual game, regards the survival of the community as "the result of its members observing standards" (2012: 76–77), and while this conclusion was based on the observation of codes of behaviour, the adherence to behavioural rules can also be applied to the literacy codes established within online community web sites.

These systems of codes can be situated in the methodological framework of semiotics or semiology, the study of signs and sign systems established in the nineteenth century. American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce and Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure are regarded as the "two initiators of the modern 'science of signs'" (Bouissac, 2004: 15) with Saussure acknowledging the existence of numerous semiological systems. However, Saussure's concern was predominantly linguistics, which he observed as serving "as a model for the whole of semiology" (1972/1983: 101/68). He defined the linguistic sign as a link "between a concept and sound pattern", with the concept a "signification" or "signified" and the sound pattern acting as the "signal" (Saussure, 1972/1983: 98–100/66–67), and noted four important aspects to consider in the study of the ways in which signs communicate: (1) through codes and conventions, (2) via knowledge of codes and conventions within specific cultures, (3) through "systems of difference" where a sign only derives meaning when viewed in relation to other signs, and (4) by denotation and connotation. Lookbook's use of interactive elements derived from game design, and mostly consisting of iconic and indexical signs as defined by Peirce (1902), is thus an established code within its community and can be dissected using Saussure's semiological framework.

The means of using certain codes is determined by context and adaptation, such as that

once two or more people have mastered the same code ... they would be able to connect the same meanings to the same sounds or graphic patterns and hence be able to understand each other (Jewitt & Oyama, 2000: 134).

This assimilation is best illustrated by short message service (SMS) communication for mobile phones where abbreviations, paralinguistic restitutions and non-standard spellings of English words are employed to convey meaning (bearing in mind that this practice is not confined to English and can include the use of more than one language) (Deumert & Masiyana, 2008: 117). Forms of expression such as these have been labelled “Weblish”, “Netspeak” and “SMS-lingo”, amongst others (Thurlow, 2006). On Lookbook, new members are expected to learn the unspoken code of the community in order to integrate better within it and thus be able to connect to other members or partake in community activities.

In addition, the majority of CMC is multimodal by design, employing several modes of media – textual, visual, spatial, aural, linguistic – to establish an end product that in turn influences user behaviour on a particular site. Semiotic research by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen (2008) and van Leeuwen (2005) explore multimodality as it applies to printed texts that contain images and, later, to other artifacts, such as film, that combine more than one mode. The digital technologies available today, however, offer new possibilities of integrating modalities in texts (Palmeri, 2007: 5). Via the conspicuous hypertextuality present on Lookbook, members are provided with the ability to display themselves through both textual and visual means, even though the parameters of the site advances the visual more in its aesthetic. Chittenden notes this capability as a “postmodern aesthetic” (2010: 517), which Creeber describes as “indulging in increased levels of intertextuality, generic hybridity, self-reflexivity, pastiche, parody, recycling and sampling” (2009: 17).

The use of multimodality – in Lookbook’s combination of textual and visual media modes, and materiality by means of its smartphone applications – advances the immediacy and intertextuality of the community. The Lookbook applications perform the exact same functions as its web site counterpart; however, members are able to access and upload content while on the move, directly from a smartphone. This allows members more portability as well as the ability to always access the site. In this way, the Lookbook app progresses

the transitory nature already defined by the web site, which is updated constantly so users are introduced to an endless stream of new looks: if users are able to upload looks as soon as they have completed the action of creating them within a photographic image, the time lapse between uploads is much less. This, in turn, strengthens intra-group relations as the act of participating within the online community of Lookbook, and allows members more recognition and support from other members. As Turner (1982) – who wrote on intra-group relations in the early 1980s before online media such as blogs and social networking sites were established – acknowledges, the social practice of being included in a group is equivalent to high social capital, which reinforces positive self-identity on the part of the individual.

With the increasing interconnectedness of the world, Hull (2003: 230) views individuals as “becoming increasingly aware of our own identities as multiple, and increasingly able to participate in the imagined realities of others” even as differences within and between groups become ever more salient. Thus, Lookbook’s use of multimodal apparatus cements new media’s role in identity creation, specifically via its generative capabilities.

This chapter has looked at various literature on the construction of identity, the assumed and actual readers of images that contain different identities, the structure and purpose of social media and how many social networking sites that purport to be public spheres of equal access act as gated communities, privacy around shared identities on social media, the role of style and fashion in creating identity, and how an individual’s use and participation of social networking sites not only gratify the individual but also offer them social capital in both the virtual and real worlds. The next chapter takes a closer look at content found on Lookbook and unpacks the prevailing ideologies found within the online community through the application of the theoretical frameworks discussed here.

Chapter 2: Analysing UGC on Lookbook

Over a period of 15 days in July 2014, the Lookbook web site's Hot by Recent and Top Daily pages were consulted at a predetermined time. The three top looks from each page were then chosen to be included in the analysis. The overall number of 90 looks was divided equally across both categories and analysed according to the expression stratum, which O'Halloran (2008:450-1) describes as relating to colour, perspective and framing. In the instance of Lookbook, and as it applies to the research here – where both the visual and textual elements are significant in determining the popularity of a look – this stratum has been adapted to style (types of clothing worn), geographical location and brand affinity (the clothing brands and designers that appear frequently).

Within the Hot by Recent category, three of the 45 looks were by males while three looks – all by female Lookbook members – remained in the top three for two consecutive days. Seventeen of the looks were posted by members residing in the United States; the total number of US members in the Hot by Recent category sample were six (two males and four females) with an average of 2.83 looks posted by each one. The remainder of the looks originated mostly in Europe: Greece=5§, where '§' indicates different looks posted by the same member, Sweden=4§, Canada=4, Australia=3§, Brazil=3, Russian Federation=2, Turkey=1, Germany=1, Ukraine=1, Ireland=1, Poland=1, Italy=1, and one unspecified location. Within the 45 looks, 20 brand names of luxury designers and commercial labels were tagged, with commercial high street retailers and brands most prominent: H&M appears four times; Zara thrice; Jeffrey Campbell, Asos, Urban Outfitters and chic wish all appear twice; and luxury designer label Chanel appears twice.

Of the 45 looks in the Top Daily category, 19 appeared in the Hot by Recent category on the same or consecutive day it appeared in Top Daily, and only one look was posted by a male whose location was listed as United States. As with the Hot by Recent category, members of the United States dominated

the top three in this category with 13 looks, of which 8§ and 3§; followed by Sweden=7, of which 5§; Brazil=6, of which 5§; Greece=5; Australia=2; Poland=2; and Germany=2. Ukraine=1, Canada=1, Portugal=1, Turkey=1, Mexico=1, Italy=1, Ireland=1; and the United Kingdom=1 made up the remaining looks. A similar number of brands (=19) as those that appeared in the Hot by Recent category were tagged, with commercial high street retailers being tagged more than luxury designer brands: H&M, Zara, Urban Outfitters, Mango and Sheinside all appear twice, while the remaining brands tagged (Levi's, Asos, Topshop, American Apparel, chic wish, Choies, Diesel, Romwe, Cheap Monday, Misguided and dolce vita) all appear once. Three luxury designer brands – Louis Vuitton, Proenzer Schouler and Giorgio Armani – all appear once as well.

Lookbook members located in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand are most prominent in both categories, as are the brands and retailers originating from these locations. Additionally, only three of the members from the 23 whose looks appear in the Hot by Recent category, self-describe as being anything other than a blogger (model, fashion editor and chemist) with one member describing herself as a student, model and blogger, and another remaining unspecified. The Top Daily category is also predominantly composed of bloggers, with only four members self-describing with a different occupation (fashion producer and blogger, graphic fashion designer, student and designer, and modelographer).

All of the looks in the sample contained summer clothing garments. Dresses, shorts and jeans appeared most prominently, numbering 32, 29 and 24 respectively across the two categories. Only 18 skirts – 12 mid to full-length and 6 short – were recorded. Although all the looks were representative of summer attire, jackets=36 – that included lightweight, bomber, blazers and leather jackets – and boots=42 were included in the majority of looks. Additionally, cover-ups other than jackets, in the form of kimonos, cardigans and lightweight coats, made 24 appearances across the looks. Accessories

also ranked highly with 89 recordings of accessories⁷, 86 bags (encompassing all types), 59 sunglasses, 35 hats, beanies and caps (all grouped together) and only 6 belts.

It must be emphasised that the sample under scrutiny was selected during the month of July when it is summer for the majority of countries in the northern hemisphere, and that most Lookbook members reside in these countries, as is evidenced both by this sample and the hyperlinks to popular countries displayed on the web site. Thus, this could be one reason for the proliferation of summer garments, such as shorts and dresses, on the site at the time. However, a scroll through past Looks on both the Hot by Recent and Top Daily pages points to modes of fashion that are often dominant on the site within specific timeframes, indicative of the seasonal nature of fashion and hence fashion consumption. It also indicates that the global north sets trends according to the season they are currently experiencing.

What is 'style'? What is 'identity'?

The world of fashion is a hub of social interaction. Lookbook exemplifies this in its members' use of the imagery they choose to upload, the choice of words they utilise to title and describe these images, and the tools – provided by the site – to engage with other users. Identity is thus created by means of fashion seen as trendy and stylish within the culture of Lookbook, which, in some instances, is similar to the perceived notions of trendy and stylish as portrayed in the mass media.

However, to fully understand the role fashion plays in shaping identity, it is important to delineate the concept of “fashion” from that of “style”.

Anthropologist Ted Polhemus writes: “In contemporary Western society the term ‘fashion’ is often used as a synonym of the terms ‘adornment’, ‘style’ and ‘dress [sic]’ (2011: 17), and goes on to differentiate between “fashion” as a

⁷ Due to the varied and large volume of accessories across the looks, rings, watches, necklaces, bangles, bracelets, headchains and headpieces were all grouped in this category and multiple appearances of any of these items in one look was recorded as =1.

form of dress that is constantly changing and “style” or “anti-fashion” as a form that is more fixed, changing slowly over time (2011: 29–30).

As such, the looks found on Lookbook are often an amalgamation of the two; although it should be noted that fashion plays a more pivotal role. By encouraging members to showcase their style in images similar to those found in mainstream magazine editorials and tagging their images with the names of the designers or brands worn in their looks, Lookbook promotes the hegemonic ideals of beauty and knowledge of fashion promulgated in the media and noted by Crane in her analysis of editorial and advertising fashion photographs:

(1) hegemonic femininity: sexuality/pornography, (2) hegemonic poses as interpreted by Goffman: ritualization of subordination and licensed withdrawal, (3) violations of traditional norms of feminine demeanor (traditional hegemonic femininity): frontal gaze and eye contact, nudity, and androgyny and gender ambiguity, as well as subjects who conformed to these norms (e.g., exaggerated smiles) (Crane, 2000: 212).

This is evident in figures 1–4⁸: Figure 1, taken from the site’s Hot by Recent page in July 2014, depicts a collaged post of two images featuring a petite blonde in an off-the-shoulder dress, her hair loosely pinned back. This image is quite similar to the image of Kiernan Shipka that appeared in *Vanity Fair* magazine a mere two months earlier (Figure 2), portraying the child actress with her blonde hair pinned back and sporting a similar off-the-shoulder designer frock. The poses in both looks conform to the types of hegemonic poses Crane (2000) describes as “licensed withdrawal”. Another collaged post (Figure 3), consisting of two images, depicts another blonde Lookbook member in a spiked leather jacket and holey T-shirt, her hair in unkempt waves. While the background in this Lookbooker’s⁹ image portrays wire fencing and a parking lot that appears to be behind a gas station, the clothing seems to be a reimagining of a three-year-old fashion spread (Figure 4)

8 For all images referred to in this section, please consult Addendum D.

9 Members of Lookbook are often referred to as Lookbookers while the community itself has been shortened to an acronym: LB.

wherein well-known Brazilian supermodel Gisele Bündchen wears a similar outfit of a leather jacket and T-shirt sporting holes. In addition, Figures 2 and 3 are also examples of the third hegemonic ideal as described by Crane, with the women in a frontal gaze, making eye contact with the camera and thus with the viewer of the image.

Defining yourself

While the sartorial choices of Lookbook's users reflect hegemonic fashion choices as seen in mass media, specifically magazines such as *Vogue*, *Elle* and *Marie Claire* – which have a wider distribution and thus reach – users modify the styles to an extent where they become signifiers of social groups outside of the hetero-normative norms of mainstream fashion. One such example can be seen in Figure 5, where the Lookbooker has assimilated a current fashion trend – that of cut-off overalls or dungarees – into a distinctly grunge aesthetic. The grunge style, as defined by Polhemus, is a low-maintenance, dressed-down look:

The Seattle-based style which came to be known as 'Grunge' [*sic*] can be seen as Indie Kid style translated into the idiom of the rugged outdoor lumberjacking workwear of north-west Americana. Both looks share the same obsessive nonchalance, the same penchant for the calculatedly unkempt (Polhemus, 2010: 183–4).

In the same vein, the male Lookbook member in Figure 6 sports a jacket with a distinct floral print, one that is often associated with femininity. This indicates that even the perspectives of marginal social groups seek acceptance for clothing behaviour that is deviant from the dominant status or gender roles that certain types of clothing are meant to convey. While these perspectives are seen as “trendy” or “new” within the community, it also gives both the member and the audience of that member's looks the power to convey alternative meanings that would not generally be accepted on another platform such as a magazine or on the catwalk. Instead, the assimilation of garments, fabric or patterns viewed as “feminine” in an outfit worn by a male becomes acceptable within the Lookbook community, and at once also gives the broader community outside the platform power within the community of

fashion lovers. As the look is disseminated via other media channels, such as Twitter, tumblr, Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram, over time “the social impact of [each] discourse shifts as social and economic changes create a more or less favourable environment for it” (Crane, 2000: 100), thus enabling it to return to the mainstream fashion industry, albeit in a different guise, as is the case for floral prints on male garments (Jones, 2015).

Identity on Lookbook also helps to elicit reputation and superiority within the site’s community, and provides members with a higher karma score more opportunities to be showcased across the platform. This visibility via the fashion images they post – the poses they use, the clothing they choose to wear and tag, and the titles they give to their looks – allow visitors and other Lookbook members to assume an identity or personality for them, even though the other members may not know them in a personal capacity offline. It also allows for users and members to assume the top-ranked looks as the ideal type of style for this platform. As Crane notes:

The model as a physical presence and as a personality serve[d] both as the channel for the transmission of fashion ideals, along with whatever hegemony that might have entailed (Crane, 2000: 224).

Spaces of style

As is evidenced by Lookbook, contemporary society, and specifically the way in which societies view and consume fashion, has been hugely impacted by electronic media, which has redefined both public and private space. Thus, electronic media has rendered society susceptible to a range of external influences – economic, cultural, social and global. Crane (2000: 248) writes that the spaces once used by groups to sway decisions in the public sphere have now been replaced with electronic media, which has led to the democratisation of various industries, including fashion:

The democratization thesis proposes that class differences were eliminated by the standardization of clothing, whereas the diffusion theory implies that class differences were maintained by the continual appearance of new styles created for elites (Crane, 2000: 249).

In its wide reach of community members from across predominantly the global north, Lookbook exemplifies a combination of these two theories: in certain regions of the world, Internet access is freely available and the majority of members are able to access the site. Even in regions where broadband Internet is expensive, Lookbook's smartphone application is freely available with many of the same functions, provided the user has a smartphone and enough airtime or data. With technology being available more easily and at a reduced cost, many people who do not have broadband Internet access can now use their smartphone to connect to the Internet and partake in the Lookbook community.

In the same way, clothing designs and styles, while originating on the catwalks of Paris, New York and Milan, quickly filters down into the mainstream via various means, including the Internet and big department stores that often copy catwalk creations and produce large quantities of clothing for a reduced price (Crane, 2000). Thus Lookbook members from various social classes are given access to the clothing they feel portray their lifestyle class and are able to depict this within the online community. It is interesting to note that those who are ranked highly on the site's leaderboard do not necessarily own designer luxury fashion seen as elite, but rather their clothing – as listed underneath the uploaded look – is often from high street department stores that have poached¹⁰ the styles from designer pieces. A few users also mix mainstream department store clothing items with designer items: in Figure 7, Lookbook member Anouska P pairs a T-shirt from high-street store Topshop with sunglasses from designer Giorgio Armani. Thus, fashion on Lookbook has become democratised to a certain extent.

As with fashion blogs, the images posted to Lookbook are characterised by full-length portrait shots, most often in situ and with the fashion or style of the

10 According to Diana Crane (2000), poaching is the act of interpreting certain clothing to suit the interests and needs, such as price point, of an individual or group.

subject being its central element. Berry, in his analysis of street style fashion photography blogs, notes that while blog images

continue to portray fashion and consumerism as desirable in the same way as traditional fashion photography, the urban setting and the diversity of sitters suggests an everyday element that is more akin to the realism of a social document (2010: 13).

Lookbook images, although often stylised in the manner of mainstream fashion editorials, present fashion as an attainable commodity that can easily be implemented into the offline lifestyles of members' and users' (those who simply view images on the web site without being part of the community or partaking in its shared activities of posting, hyping, loving and commenting).

In addition to posting images of looks, Lookbookers are also motivated to comment on other members' looks in order to increase their own visibility or encourage reciprocity from established members in the form of hypes and love. The comments found on Lookbook are often of a homogenous nature, positive in tone and often only one word or phrase, such as 'Awesome!' and 'This goes beyond classy!' (Figure 8). This is in stark contrast to the comments found on fashion blogs, which often provide a variety of disparate views and interpretations of the same image. Scott Schuman of The Sartorialist observes the following on the comments on his street style photography blog: 'The audience interaction made me realize the variety of interpretations the same look can provoke' (Schuman, 2009: 5). Berry also notes that these interpretive opinions and analyses of image, captions and other texts by the users of fashion blogs are considered as acts of a *flâneur*, 'a male rambler of nineteenth century Parisian streets ... conceived as poet, painter and dandy by Baudelaire' (Berry, 2010: 1). Interestingly, recent scholarship has suggested that the action of *flânerie* is not gender-specific and thus more reflective of a place (Hsiao-yen, 2010; Tester, 1994; Wilson, 2002). In the space of Lookbook, the site's community members, both male and female, can be considered *flâneurs* in both the creation of their images as well as their reading of the images posted by fellow members. However, unlike fashion blog commentators, who have the liberty of posting both

negative and positive feedback, Lookbookers are limited by the rules outlined by the community: “There is no down-voting (or negative hyping) because Lookbook is here to promote a diverse and open-minded community” (Lookbook.nu/faq, n.d.). While this rule does not explicitly include comments, the implication that negative or divergent comments are unacceptable is reinforced by the homogenous feedback provided in the comments sections of members’ posts. While Lookbook allows individuals from diverse backgrounds the power to become contributors in the fashion system, its strict implementation of its community rules also appears to remove some of the agency UGC platforms offer users.

A club of exclusivity

The creators of Lookbook have never advocated that their site was inclusive of all demographics. Nevertheless, the notion of CMC as an all-inclusive medium where an individual’s offline existence – such as race, class, socio-economic status and so forth – was not of import has been deterred by varying factors (Wilson & Peterson, 2002), such as infrastructure and accessibility, and thus demarcates Lookbook as a type of gated community, an SNS only available to an elite few. Although the site is now accessible to anyone, privileges, such as the ability to hype and comment on members’ profiles and looks, are only made available to registered members of the site.

Originally conceived as a private, invite-only community before becoming accessible to the public (Lee, 2010), the site’s design ensures that it is still a gated community of exclusivity in the sense that it promotes a particular culture, behaviours and presentation of identity. Outsiders, such as those who do not readily fall into the predominant demographic – thin, pretty, and white or Asian – found on the site, are viewed with caution or ostracized (V, 2010). Lookbook appears to be an open forum for fashion lovers, but the site’s architecture is typical of that of a gated-access community: other than having to register and log in to participate, the site also requires members to make connections with already established members in order to gain credibility within the community of users (lookbook.nu/faq). While this helps to facilitate

trust and build reputation within the community, it also ensures that outsiders or new members are kept on the outskirts of the online space until deemed acceptable by the majority or the dominant community members.

Bearing this in mind, the hegemonic notion of white as an ideal of beauty (Pham, 2011) is reinforced and stands in stark contrast to the belief that the majority of top Lookbook members are only Asian or white, a belief propagated by bloggers, such as V, who believes that sites of this nature are “all a grand façade for the perpetuation of essentially one standard of beauty” (2010). V continues:

you don't have to be LBGTQ [author's note: LGBTQ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (lgbtq.unc.edu), however, elsewhere in her blog post, V translates the “Q” as signifying “Questioning”] to feel ostracized; really, if you are anything but thin and pretty, you're on the fringe, especially in the fashion world (V, 2010).

Wohlwend and Medina, in their research on identities as found on the British television show *What Not to Wear*, suggest that these opinions are often a result of pre-established offline biases of race, ethnicity, culture and gender of “actual and projected identities” (2012: 550).

Even so, those minority demographics that have managed to gain access to the inner circle of the community, that is to say they have managed to break down the barriers imposed on them by the hegemonic ideologies present on the site, are still observed as different. Representations of “Asian-ness”, where an individual personifies characteristics traditionally associated with being of Asian descent or culture, are destabilised by means of the act of dressing in fashionable clothing, with the subject – the Lookbooker – viewed as incompatible with the conventional and racially gendered notion of the Asian female as an Oriental object. As Pham concedes, this “demonstrate[s] the inadequacy of critical frameworks that only understand ‘Asian’ in stable and static relation to Orientalist epistemologies” (Pham, 2011: 15) as illustrated by Edward Said in his writings on Orientalism (1978).

Figure 9 portrays a girl who looks as though she is of Asian descent (her profile identifies her as hailing from the Russian Federation) with long white-grey hair in a futuristic outfit of a white leather skirt and transparent silicone top. The look is both typical of what Orientalism has come to be personified as (as demonstrated in Figure 10, which portrays an Asian female with long black hair, pale face and red lips), as well as the associated meanings of Asians as technologically driven, and hence, futuristic in their pursuit of greater technologies (here, one can look to the otherworldly concepts that merge ancient Asian cultural stories with futuristic ideas as displayed in Asian television and cinema, such as animated television show *Fullmetal Alchemist* (2005) and the 2009 live-action film *Dragonball Evolution*, based on a Japanese animated television series and manga).

Two of the three looks posted by males (Figures 10 and 11), illustrate a somewhat contemporary view of male fashion that differs from the heteronormative notion of masculinity as manly, crude and undomesticated, and extending a polished ideal of masculinity in a context that is otherwise predominantly feminine. This novel form of masculinity invokes “the spectre of homosexuality”, which is said to have given rise to metrosexuality (Shugart, 2008: 300), a term best defined by the impression of men who are “muscular but suave, confident yet image-conscious, assertive yet clearly in touch with their feminine sides” (Khanna, 2004: 66). The images explicate the idea of metrosexuality due to the fact that the digital arena of online blogging is generally viewed as a space dominated by females. The male Lookbookers of these images embrace both the practice of blogging about clothing and fashion, an area associated mostly with females, as well as their masculinity. On the one hand, they forego gendered notions of the masculine through the act of fashion blogging and dressing fashionably. On the other, they retain, and one can even say assert, their masculinity in the types of fashion they choose to clothe themselves in when portrayed on Lookbook: In Figure 10, the Lookbooker is pictured in a three-piece suit, traditionally the garb of well-off businessmen, as demonstrated in men’s magazine *GQ*’s Japanese edition (Figure 12). In comparison, the look in Figure 11 is a return to the idea of traditional masculinity, composed of a t-shirt and jeans, items of clothing that

are deemed, and often marketed as, manly in their aesthetic (see Figure 13). Yet, the look in Figure 11, a collage of three images, remains in the realm of the metrosexual in that the Lookbooker has chosen to accessorise this otherwise masculine look with a floral jacket and a satchel.

A fashionable identity

As indicated earlier, one of the most prominent items of clothing found in the sample was that of shorts. Figures 14 to 19, taken from the Top looks by day, illustrate four ways in which shorts are portrayed as a fashionable and trendy item of clothing. While the looks by members Anila <3, Ebba Z., Flávia D. and Lua P. (Figures 14, 15, 16 and 17 respectively) can be categorised as casual, the other two images – one by Jennifer G. (Figure 18) and another by Ebba Z. (Figure 19) – can be said to border between casual and everyday semi-formal looks. Although the shorts convey a more casual approach in Jennifer G's image, her structured jacket, purse and pulled-back hair give her look a sense of being dressed up. Ebba Z's look in Figure 19 differs to the one in Figure 15: while both Looks feature monochrome black, the latter is more informal and relaxed as her hair is in braids, she is wearing a peak cap and sneakers and her midriff is showing, whereas the former reveals less skin and is accessorised minimally. As evidenced by these array of looks utilising one item, that of shorts,

[c]onsumers are no longer perceived as “cultural dopes” or “fashion victims” who imitate fashion leaders but as people selecting styles on the basis of their perceptions of their own identities and lifestyles (Crane, 2000: 15).

However, although many of the looks appear different on the surface, within the Lookbook community there exists an explicit lack of “sartorial expressiveness”, as noted by Hill in an essay entitled “People Dress So Badly Nowadays: Fashion and Late Modernity” (2005: 67), which renders the notion of individuality in fashion null and void. The sample contained in this study is an indication of the homogenous nature of fashion as well as reflective of

Western sartorial norms, fortifying the hetero-normative values of fashion as represented in traditional mass media.

As many of the members' profiles indicate, the majority of the Lookbook community identify themselves as students, models and bloggers. Thus, their self-identification as part of either a "student community" or the "fashion conscious" industry outside the space of Lookbook imply that members' fashion choices are most often based on experimentation and comfort (a specifically important concept for college-going youth, but also an indication that individuals are comfortable in styles perceived as acceptable by others), and influenced by their perceived identities within their offline spaces.

The medium of social media, as exemplified by the space of the Lookbook community, presents evidence of how interpellation works in the construction of identity amongst its members. Lookbook members create their looks with clothing sourced from different eras and that represent their lifestyle typologies, or the lifestyle typologies which they wish to create for themselves, thus defining their online identity through fashion items whose intended purpose may have differed from the way in which it is represented in the Lookbooker's images. This can be likened to the way in which Liao's *Second Life* blogger participants "assemble" their images through a creative "mix and match" of clothing "from different designers and wear them in ways that are different from the designer's original intentions" (2011: 107). Yet, the pastiche of fashion items used to create these looks remain within the hegemonic ideals of the fashion system, unlike the subcultural styles of, for example, the punks, rockabillys or any number of other style tribes that came before them (Polhemus, 2010). Hebdige describes this as the "recuperation" of subculture, defined as

1. the conversion of subcultural signs (dress, music, etc.) into mass-produced objects (i.e. the commodity form);
2. the 'labelling' and re-definition of deviant behaviour by dominant groups – the police, the media, the judiciary (i.e. the ideological form) (1979: 94).

As mentioned in the section on social media, researchers have indicated that the relationship between the off- and online selves of an individual is not fixed and sometimes not even separate (Wilson & Peterson, 2002; Liao, 2011). Instead, it is “multi-dimensional and subject to change” (Liao, 2011: 108) as the individual progresses in life. One way in which this is depicted on Lookbook is via the profile page of a member. Although Anouska P. (Figure 20) predominantly dresses in a way that exemplifies a smart-casual aesthetic, some of her other looks incorporate clothing that can be viewed as formal and glamorous as well, indicating that her style vocabulary is quite vast. On one hand, this makes it difficult to define her identity concisely, and on the other, it disrupts and challenges the mono-standard of fashion and beauty as represented by some of the other Lookbook members.

What is particularly apparent, even as it has been noted that the Lookbook community members' looks are most often representative of their specific lifestyle typologies, is that many of the clothing choices made by Lookbookers are often imitations of looks found in mass media, such as seen on celebrities, bloggers and in the fashion press. There is also a stark absence of other racial and ethnic demographics present within both this sample and on the site, as well as individuals of varying body shapes and sizes other than thin, tall and petite.

One can therefore argue that fashion bloggers, models, celebrities, and even some media producers such as fashion editors, have become increasingly influential in the world of fashion as they are constantly being photographed in the latest styles. These are then co-opted by clothing manufacturers alongside other styles drawn from subcultures and marketed to consumers as expressing a particular lifestyle, whether real or imaginary. The looks depicted on Lookbook are often put together using clothing targeted at a wide range of lifestyles, thus reinforcing the individual's emphasis on his or her personal identity. By drawing influences from other “lifestyles” and subcultures, and reflecting these in their clothing choices, Lookbook community members create personal identities that can often be antithetical, reflecting deviant or

conflicting standards. In the same way, the meanings interpreted by audiences of these looks may also be contradictory. As Bocock observed,

style, enjoyment, excitement, escape from boredom at work or at play, being attractive to self and others, these become central life-concerns, and affect patterns of consumption in post-modernity, rather than copying the ways of living and consumption patterns of “superior” social status groups (1993: 81).

This is especially important in the context of Lookbook as the site’s community members are both linked through their similar identification as fashion lovers, but also via their differences in the way they observe and love fashion.

While this chapter attempted to analyse content found on Lookbook in relation to the prevailing ideologies established on the site and discussed in Chapter 1, Chapter 3 focuses on the architectural framework on which the Lookbook web site is built and how this plays a role in the way users form an identity within the online community space.

Chapter 3: Gamification on Lookbook

As illustrated in Chapter 1, environment shapes both an individual's aesthetic and their formation of identity. Although Lookbook exists in an online space that can be viewed as separate from the real, offline world, this chapter will discuss the site's structure and its influence on how members are perceived as well as how they represent themselves within the community space, thus informing their identities.

Firstly, by drawing on the architectural structures and frameworks of SNS, blogs and online content-sharing communities, Lookbook has expanded beyond its initial tenets of an "online community centered around shoppable personal style photography" and "the world's first 'editor-less' (user-generated and community-curated) fashion magazine" (lookbook.nu/faq, n.d.). In addition to claiming that it provides a source of fashion inspiration from real people of diverse cultures and lifestyle typologies (lookbook.nu/faq, n.d.), Lookbook also establishes a sense of belonging and meaning for its participants. This is done via various channels that include an open-source infrastructure, established rules that promote positive posts, reputation building, and the opportunities and incentives granted to top participants of the site, such as posting privileges and participation in exclusive features.

In order for this architectural dynamic, which requires a community of participants willing to exchange effort and not product (Dahlander, Frederiksen & Rullani, 2008), to operate successfully, this chapter will consider the objects or devices utilised on both the Lookbook web site as well as the mobile application, which are used to encourage member participation, regular activity and repeat visits to the site. As with the analysis on Lookbook looks in the previous chapter, the same devices utilised on the site are present on the mobile applications for Android and iOS, and thus no differentiation is needed or made when discussing these elements. In discussing these devices, it is hypothesised that certain ideologies are built in to the mechanism of the site structure and thus influence members' representations of their online identities.

What is gamification?

An apparatus used prominently on Lookbook to encourage user participation is that of gamification. Originating from frequent flyer and rewards programmes used by airlines, hotels, retailers and banks, the tenets of gamification have been utilised in many industries over the years. However, the term for this concept of play was only coined as recently as 2002 by British computer programmer and inventor Nick Pelling (Marczewski, 2012: 46) and has generated many definitions. Some of these include “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled and Nacke, 2011: 9), “the process of game-thinking and game mechanics to engage users and solve problems” (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011: xiv), “the use of video game elements (rather than full-fledged games) to improve user experience and user engagement in non-game services and applications” (Deterding, Dixon, Nacke, O’Hara & Sicart, 2011: 2426) and the use of “tricks that make gaming fun and successful in a non-game environment to encourage a particular behaviour” (Wright, 2013: 54).

From 2010, the use of mobile games and consumer software, specifically on mobile phone operating systems, allowed gamification to gain popularity. This stimulated an increase in various forms of “play” in the mass market as game design elements were incorporated into the architectural frameworks of both CMC-based businesses and social media (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011), with some of the more prominent and wide-reaching game design elements utilised, including devices such as leaderboards, levels, badges and rewards.

Other than adhering to the interests and needs of users and participants, as well as needing the correct technology, in the form of hardware and software, to operate, social media platforms require user participation and contribution in order to succeed. As a result, UGC forms an integral component of social media. One of the challenges that developers are faced with at the initial stages of development of any social media entity, specifically online communities, is the difficult task of how to motivate users of a particular

platform to participate and contribute to the community by producing and uploading their own content. It is here where the modus operandi of gamification comes to the fore. By means of the introduction and continuous revision of objects and devices procured from design elements of games, developers of online communities, SNS and even some mobile applications are able to prompt users to return to a site on a regular basis as well as attract new participants.

Notions of play

In 1739, David Hume's writings (2007) on the irrational self formulated the foundation to the contemporary understanding of player motivation. However, recent years have seen other forms of player motivation take precedence, specifically that of the struggle for power and the formation of identity in forms of adult play as examined by Brian Sutton-Smith (2007). More recently, Sutton-Smith's consideration of adult play has addressed the allusion of both the struggle for power between two or more individuals or groups, and the collective expression of identity formation that results when one individual of a group or the group itself triumphs over another group. This power struggle is most clearly demonstrated in contests and sporting activities wherein individuals and groups participate.

However, Sutton-Smith acknowledges that rhetoric of play exists in varying forms and across multiple disciplines, with each discipline developing its own implicit ideologies in relation to the term. Rhetoric of play as it is discussed in this dissertation is only done so in respect to the ideologies of power and identity that exist within the cultural and community frameworks of Lookbook. This viewpoint presupposes that an individual is provided with power or superiority over another when that individual beats an opponent in a conflict, combat or contest, which, in turn, also recognises the individual's position as being more skilled or qualified.

Sutton-Smith's intended definition of "community" does not suggest or recognise the presence of commercial web sites, yet it is noted that while "the

ancient power and identity rhetorics are also collective concepts ... the modern rhetoric generally focus on individuals” (Sutton-Smith, 2007: 75). Nevertheless, the depicted perspective relates to the emergence of online communities, such as Lookbook, that are both collective and individualistic in structure: members are simultaneously prompted to contribute to and identify with the rest of the community, as well as promote their differences from it.

Bearing this in mind, some scholars have endeavoured to theorise and critique the role of agency in social media networks (van Dijck, 2009; Garton, Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 1999), while others examined consumer culture’s use of core game design concepts and the interpretation thereof (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011). In addition, a new vernacular has been established with terms such as “produsage”, “prosumer” and “produser” being coined to denote users of social media who are both producers and consumers of content (Bruns, 2007) on social media web sites. Although the bulk of the research conducted in this area indicate that “a small percentage of users typically provide the majority of the content” (Lampe, Wash, Velasquez & Ozkaya, 2010: 1927), isolated studies of individuals’ reasons for contributing instead of only participating as an onlooker on social media sites have revealed

that different design decisions led to different effects in terms of establishing common identity among users, and forming personal attachments (Lampe, Wash, Velasquez & Ozkaya, 2010: 1928).

Design decisions that include game mechanics are integral to the discussion that follows, and thus elements such as badges that are said to be “an excellent way to encourage social promotion” (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011: 55), ranking (in the form of leaderboards) and scoring systems that rate skill, reputation, karma and points (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011: 38), levels that indicate progress and exclusivity (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011: 45), and a plethora of additional devices primarily used in video games, are now routinely utilised in digital and mobile media. Montola, Nummenmaa, Lucero, Boberg and Korhonen note that these “achievement systems are secondary reward systems that have been developed for digital games”

(2009: 94) and “are likely to work best with an already existing good user experience” (Montola et al., 2009: 97).

The next section will investigate how gamification constitutes a large proportion of the structure of Lookbook and will examine the most common devices on the site and mobile application. Furthermore, the role of these devices insofar as they influence users’ formation of identity as established by the apparent ideologies within the community space will be discussed.

The influence of gamification on Lookbook

A social system

As indicated earlier, the structure of Lookbook, in both its physical form as a web site and its online virtual community space, incorporates its own internal system. The game design elements¹¹ analysed in this research forms part of this “game” system, which provides “contexts for interaction, which can be spaces, objects, and behaviors that players explore, manipulate, and inhabit” (Salen & Zimmermann, 2004: 50). When viewed in union with other design elements on Lookbook, the game design elements contribute to user experience, satisfaction and participation. These additional elements include what Littlejohn (1989: 41) describes as (1) objects, the variables within a system; (2) attributes, the qualities or properties of the system; (3) the internal relationship among the objects of that system; and (4) the environment within which all of the previously mentioned elements operate.

The following discussion concentrates specifically on the objects within the Lookbook architectural system, but in order to fully understand the devices utilised and how they influence the ideologies, and thus identities, present on the site, it is necessary they be considered in relation to the rest of the elements as outlined by Littlejohn. Many of the objects or devices employed by Lookbook have been co-opted from gaming as well as other social media, although they are named differently. In particular, the objects analysed in this

11 For illustrations of the elements of game design as discussed in this section, please refer to Addendum E.

chapter have been chosen due to the fact that they are perceived by the researcher as being integral to motivating member participation on the site, and thus assisting in the formation of a member's identity, and include the hype, fan, love and flag buttons (Figures 1–4); the tools used for commenting and discussion, such as the LB Forum (Figure 5); and the reward systems, such as karma (Figure 6), the leaderboard (Figure 7) and the interview feature called Beyond the hype (Figure 8). By way of codes and conventions outlined on the site's Frequently asked questions page (FAQ, as seen in Figure 9) and the adherence of members, the objects found on Lookbook are an established component of the overall sign system or structure of the site. Similar to the components of sign systems as pioneered by Saussure and Peirce¹², the devices on Lookbook are an integral aspect of the site's system and achieve the desired effect because community members share the ideology surrounding the sign system and thus implement it accordingly. New members who wish to participate in the culture of the site, which includes sharing content, awarding others for good content and becoming reputable, must first familiarise themselves with this code.

Objects of interest

An object that is most prominent on both the web site and mobile application is the hype button (Figure 1), situated beneath an uploaded look. The icon is simple in its design: the word "hype" in capital letters placed in a black box next to another black box containing a number. On the site, hype represents the score or total number of times other members have promoted a look they found appealing. By using this device, members are voting for the look and this plays into the meaning of the word 'hype' itself, which implies a form of publicity or advertising. Hying a look on the site allows the look, and therefore also the member who it belongs to, to gain more exposure within the community and thus build on their reputation and karma score. In order to

¹² American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce and Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure pioneered semiology, also referred to as semiotics, in the nineteenth century. Semiology/semiotics is the study of signs and sign systems that communicate through codes and conventions; via knowledge of the specific codes and conventions with a culture; by a "system of difference" (Saussure, 1972/1983: 101/68) where a sign gains meaning when observed in relation to other signs; and by denotation and connotation.

earn karma points (Figure 6), a look needs to receive a lot of hype, and the number of hypes thus indicates the amount of ‘votes’ the look has received since first posted to the site. An interesting aspect of hype, and the community in general, is the fact that only positive voting, known as “up-voting”, in the form of giving hype, is offered. This is noted in the Frequently asked questions section of the site, which specifies that no “down voting” exists “because the purpose of the site is to promote a diverse and openminded [*sic*] community” (lookbook.nu/faq, n.d.). This is similar to the popular social network Facebook, where disliking is not a given option.

Other than hyping or voting, members can show their appreciation for a look by giving love (Figure 3) using a pink device in the shape of a heart (♥), which operates in the same way as the Like device on Facebook. Lookbook’s love device, however, operates slightly different to that of Facebook’s Like button as it has a restriction of only one love per member per day. The love device is situated above the image and beneath the information of the look, and is often accompanied by a number indicating how many people have chosen to love the image that day. Needless to say, this device is slightly more weighted in value than the hype device when it is regarded in relation to identity. While hype indicates how popular a look is within the community because other members feel the style displayed in the image is appealing, love takes this notion a step further: the Lookbook member is being given a privilege by other members through the perceived sacrifice of a rare commodity – their one “love”. This could therefore also be perceived as the members indicating that they not only like the look posted by a member, but they also like the identity of the member, which the look – via its combination of styling, pose and location – displays.

Members are able to keep track of looks they have liked on their user profile page with the use of tabs for each category, where the most recent looks that they have hyped or given love is saved. These tabs provide three functions:

allowing users to save content they like, offering a member's fans¹³ access to the looks that member has hyped or given love, and providing more exposure in the community to the members whose looks are displayed on others' profile pages.

The majority of objects utilised on Lookbook offer members exposure, which in turn leads to recognition within the community. The fan button (Figure 2), a black box with a "+" symbol and the word "fan" in capital letters allows a member to become a fan of another member. The total number of fans then appears on a member's profile page, indicating the popularity of the member and his or her looks, and establishing his or her reputable status to new users or visitors to the site. The use of a "+" symbol, universally recognised as signalling an addition to an object, with the word "fan" is understood as an indication of wanting to follow another member. In contrast, the Comments device (Figure 10) offers an opportunity of interaction between members where they are able to write "positive and constructive comments" (lookbook.nu/faq, n.d.) to communicate their thoughts on others' looks. Moreover, members who comment on looks are afforded exposure – by commenting, they open themselves and their profiles up to being looked at. This could then lead to possible hype, love or fans if other members like what they see.

A forum, a communication tool often utilised by gaming fan sites and virtual communities, is also available on Lookbook. Called the LB Forum (Figure 5), this tool provides members with a space wherein they are able to discuss topics of interest relevant to the site, most specifically centred on fashion, shopping and navigating the web site. New members are discouraged from using the forum and are denied posting privileges for a certain period of time so as to prevent spam and trolling (lookbook.nu/faq, n.d.), and to urge the new members to participate through other means, such as posting looks, commenting and hyping. Older members' privileges, behaviour and interaction

13 Lookbook's fan functionality is similar to the follower functions on Twitter and Instagram, where individuals are able to follow prominent people and friends to keep track of their activity on the site.

on the forum are governed by rules, such as not posting duplicate posts, offensive or copyrighted content, or posts that are off-topic to the thread.

While the devices examined thus far have all been discussed with regard to their more obvious roles on the site, each device is also a means for a member to build on his or her reputation within the Lookbook community. By hyping, commenting, fanning and giving love to other looks and members of the community, a Lookbook member constructs his or her own presence or identity on the site. These acts of participation lead to other members being exposed to a new member's look with the possibility of yielding hype, love or even a fan – gestures symbolic of the existing gift economy within the community.

Here, although space constraints allow no further exploration of the gift economy, it is of import to observe that exchanges of this type are often a feature of SNS and online communities. SNS research has indicated that social media users frequently display an inclination to be validated by their online peers, and therefore “Friends’ [or fans, in the instance of Lookbook] are not just people that one knows, but public displays of connections” (boyd, 2008: 129).

One of the ways a member's status on Lookbook is elevated is when that member gains a reputable fan, someone who already has a large fan base of their own and who regularly receives plenty of hype, comments and love for their looks. This type of give-and-receive relationship is homogenous to an “ideal equilibrium”, as described by Homans, cited by Cheal, “in the process of economic exchange, when there is no relationship that could bring greater benefits to the individual than those in which he is already engaged” (Cheal, 1988: 40).

The iconography utilised for the various devices discussed thus far have all been simple and uncomplicated, however, some of the other objects may prove to be slightly more problematic for first-time users of the site or other online communities who use similar devices. The flag device (Figure 4), for

example, is a grey vector drawing of a beach flag with the word 'flag alongside it in capital letters when a user moves the mouse cursor over the image of a look. The flag is one of three grey icons that pop up to the right of the look and change to black when the cursor is placed on them. A first-time user of an online community or SNS, who is unfamiliar with the rhetoric of social media, would interpret this device in a different manner than an SNS user who encounters it regularly. Images of beach flags often represent a warning – a red flag on a beach symbolises that it is unsafe to swim in the ocean, for example. A secondary interpretation of the flag icon could be marking a particular thing or object in order to call it out or return to it at a later stage, such as the way a Post-it note flags a page in a book. With this particular Lookbook device, these two meanings are combined and the icon can be used by a community member to flag a look which they feel is harmful, unrelated to fashion or contains discriminatory or offensive content, all reasons that are indicated as not adhering to the rules of the site (lookbook.nu/faq, n.d.). Moderators of the site will then investigate whether the flagged content needs to be removed from the community space.

Levelling up

In examining the various objects found on Lookbook, as well as the intended meanings and usage of these objects, the discussion has so far veered away from the integration of the devices in the community's sign system and the manner in which they are employed. One of the primary reasons social media utilise elements of game design, as has been mentioned earlier, is to maintain user interest. Rewards systems are often the simplest method to obtain and retain user interest, however, they may also prove to be quite complex when it comes to implementation. According to Salen and Zimmerman, rewards in games shape "a player's sense of pleasure and overall play experience" (2004: 345), and it is for this reason that many social media sites' incorporation of game design elements have been met with varying degrees of success. Two types of rewards are employed on Lookbook:

"glory", which allows the user to "end up taking away from the experience: by winning or being ranked first or top of all players", and

“access” that “allow[s] a player access to new locations or resources that were previously inaccessible” (Hallford & Hallford, 2001: 157–160).

The scoring system on Lookbook, called karma, as well as the leaderboard (Figure 7) and the New view page, which displays three types of recently added looks – Spotlight, Up & Coming, and First Look – are manifestations of rewards of glory. Karma acts as an incentive for members to participate by posting looks, commenting, hyping, fanning and giving love. In order for a member to appear on either the Leaderboard, or the New page’s Spotlight and Up & Coming sections of the community, the member is required to have accumulated a certain amount of karma points, which are awarded for hypes received for any given look posted by a member with one hype equal to one karma point. Dividing the total number of karma by the number of looks posted by a member calculates the average karma of that member.

Individuals who are active on a regular basis or are more experienced members, and who may have been members for a long period of time, are rewarded by being permitted certain privileges, one of which is allowing their looks priority over newer members who are yet to still build a reputation within the community (lookbook.nu/faq, n.d.). This is calculated using the Karma Filter¹⁴. The leaderboard is characteristic of the top-rated ranking systems employed in video games, and also makes use of the Karma Filter, presenting the top members who have gained the most karma by day, week, month, year and of all time. New members of the community are therefore encouraged to participate on the site to gain karma and build their reputations so as to appear on these pages.

The reward type of access is also a by-product of the Karma Filter on the New and Leaderboard pages, but is also encountered in the types of participation allowed on the site. A section of the site called Beyond the hype (Figure 8), which is found under the Interviews tab, is a feature where top-ranking members are given the opportunity to exhibit their knowledge of fashion – a

¹⁴ This feature has since been disabled.

subject matter on which Lookbook was developed – by answering questions related to their fashion preferences, personal style and Lookbook posts. By spotlighting a member, the site offers a type of achievement award, wider recognition within the community for the member and a sense of satisfaction on the part of the selected member that the efforts of participation and accumulation of hype and karma were worth it.

Other noteworthy devices that exist in the Lookbook ecosystem, which have not been explored further due to space constraints, are the buttons linking to other SNS (Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest), the fan counter, and profile badges and widgets. It is hypothesised that procuring a full understanding of the site's infrastructure and its relation to identity formation would require further analysis of these and other devices present within the community.

Gamifying fashion bias

The previous discussion looked at the architectural elements of Lookbook and the ways in which these devices contributed to users' notions of gaining reputation. This, in turn, relates to the formation of members' perceived identities insofar as the devices – how they are displayed and what they indicate – corroborate the ideologies at play on the site. These gamification tools indicate not only a means of interaction, but also a way for users to increase their prominence and identity reputation within the community by utilising the tools to gain more exposure.

Unlike social networking sites, which the available research suggests is predominantly used to maintain and support existing social relations within an individual's peer group (boyd & Ellison, 2008; Barker, 2009), the connections on Lookbook are made when members have friends or contacts in the existing community who are already experienced Lookbookers. However, the site's Frequently asked questions section notes that individuals who do not have these pre-existing connections can increase their visibility by sharing them on their personal blogs and other social media networks:

making friends on LB (by fanning people, hyping looks and leaving meaningful comments & loves on your favourites) and especially building a fanbase [*sic*] who get your looks delivered straight to their homepage feeds (lookbook.nu/faq, n.d.).

As Papacharissi notes in her study of the social networking sites Facebook, LinkedIn and ASmallWorld (2009), a second inference on the way in which “the transparency of the network is configured” (2009: 207) can be made of the architectural structure of a web site of this nature: on Lookbook, this is the way in which the architectural foundation has been established to determine access to the level of privileges available on the site, both externally to non-members and internally to members of the online community. Whereas Lookbook’s Rules section (Figure 11) is slightly less subtle in suggesting to its members how to regulate their behaviour and content on the site, and although not as tightly administered as on LinkedIn and ASmallWorld (Papacharissi, 2009), in a similar manner to the latter two SNS, Lookbook’s architecture also subtly suggests its members conform to the norms of self-representation already prevalent on the site:

Self-presentation is restricted by the limited profile options that both services provide and is guided by the orientation of both networks. The resulting spaces produced are tight, offering little room for spontaneous interaction and network generation (Papacharissi, 2009: 215).

Thus, the already established ideologies of acceptable fashion within the community is furthermore reproduced by top-ranking members who, in turn, are required to verify and affirm a newer member’s reputable status through the act of hyping, commenting, fanning and giving love to that particular member. Top-ranking members, especially those who have been members of the site for a long period of time or since its inception, are highly ranked due to their style and fashion preferences, which have become a form of inspiration and a cultural norm within the community. It is therefore only new looks similar to or modelled on the looks posted by top members that are hyped, commented on and given love. In this way, the framework on which Lookbook has been built contributes to both the way that members of the site choose to represent themselves as well as the way they are perceived.

What follows is a conclusion to the research outlined here as well as a look toward further research in the fields of identity formation and user-generated content within online spaces, such as Lookbook.

Conclusion

Although social media and online community platforms, such as Lookbook, aim to provide users of these platforms with the agency to produce and share content with like-minded individuals, the analysis of UGC as well as the gamification tools utilised by the site indicate that hegemonic notions of beauty, power and fashion exist on the Lookbook platform.

Lookbook proclaims an open structure for all individuals irregardless of background or affiliations and is an amalgamation of various new media forms, most specifically that of online communities, social networking sites, and fashion blogs. Some of the characteristics of fashion blogs, specifically, are a central component of the Lookbook community: members' images of their looks mimic the style of images found on fashion blogs and are accompanied by captions derived from the manner of written entries found on blogs, which are often descriptive. A good deal of Lookbook's elements, appropriated from game design formats, is utilised with the intended purpose of replication and continuous intertextuality, the process whereby "texts refer to other texts and in fact rely on them for their meaning" (Porter, 1986: 34), via hyperlinks (see Figure 1)¹⁵ for use by its members, many of whom are bloggers or users of social media. This hypertextuality – defined as "the electronic linking of a wide range of written texts and images, brought together in a constantly shifting configuration of networks" (Rocamora, 2012: 94) – is not a new conception, having been defined by Nelson in 1965 (Rettberg, 2008).

Having deliberated the notion of the Internet as democratic and participatory, as well as evaluating its disadvantages and limitations, such as accessibility and built-in demographic bias prevalent on many web sites, and examined in chapter 1, it is evident that Lookbook's structural formation – wherein hyperlinks are found not only within the site's UGC text (both written and visual) but also in its use of other multimedia elements, such as buttons and

¹⁵ For all images referred to in this section, please consult Addendum F.

banners – offers its audience a circumlocutory and nonlinear discussion of its content.

Singer's study on political j-bloggers (journalist bloggers) yielded that hyperlinks, while performing the function of a nonlinear discourse, is also a means by which journalists could link to source materials and thus strengthen transparency (2005: 192). In the same way, Lookbook's hyperlinks – in the form of buttons, badges, tags and clickable words – act as a means of crediting both the items and the creators of the looks, even if the creators themselves have uploaded these looks to their profiles within the community. In this way, the identity of a member is reinforced through the act of linking to his or her website, blog and other social networking sites.

While radio and broadcast television both offer audiences immediacy, online media harnesses immediacy by enforcing its ability to produce "live" content, thereby producing an aura of authenticity and truth, as described by Bolter:

What producers of new media artefacts are selling are experiences of immediacy ... Often the immediacy of the product is expressed as transparency: you can see through the product to the ostensible reality behind it (2001: 70–1).

This need to engage with the real – real fashion worn by real people – instead of the highly stylised forms of fashion found in mainstream media outlets, such as magazines, has driven the street fashion phenomenon in the online world, most prominently seen on fashion blogs. Lookbook prescribes to this model of authenticity by granting greater privilege to images than it does words. In so doing, it also grants greater privileges to members who conform to its standards as outlined in the site's rules. The site proclaims that it was developed "to bring together creative, passionate, and openminded [*sic*] fashion enthusiasts, and to democratically recognize the talents of real people around the world" (lookbook.nu/faq, n.d.), and reinforces the representations of immediate content found on the Internet. In this way, Lookbook offers audiences seeking "real" fashion a networked community of immediate fashion as worn by real people across the globe. Its members, therefore, are

not only identified via their real and personal fashion practices but also by their online social ties to the Lookbook platform, the other members of the community and the similarities of the fashion and style found within the community space. Comprising members who are located across the globe, the online community of Lookbook purports to offer a space of support around the shared interest of fashion. However, on closer inspection, it appears that the community subsists only through a few shared ideologies that operate to maintain a certain level of content generated by members.

Although Lookbook is clearly situated within the context of new media, its structural framework, both in the visualisation of the site as well as the characteristics displayed and reinforced by its community, is a reversion of traditional media. A comparison to j-blogs (journalism blogs) can be made here, as described by Singer, who indicates that journalists normalise the medium of blogs by

maintaining control over the information provided under their names, sticking to their traditional gatekeeper function even with a format that is explicitly about participatory communication (2005: 192).

Similarly, the content on Lookbook is communicated in a one-directional way, and despite the fact that the platform employs elements of new media, such as hyperlinks and multimodal devices, in the form of its mobile applications, for example, to a certain extent it operates as a gatekeeper by denying members to reciprocate and communicate in ways other than those outlined in its rules. Another mechanism of control, as Bourdieu (1993) alludes to, is that of Lookbook members acting as custodians – by means of adhering to the rules of the site, members become gatekeepers to other members' access and behaviours within the community as well. Bolter and Grusin name this reversion of new media "remediation":

What is new about new media comes from particular ways in which they refashion older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media (2000: 15).

This remediation occurs when bloggers and news web sites reproduce content found in traditional media, most often print. Fashion blogs, specifically, often in homage to established and conventional fashion magazines, such as *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Jalouse*, to name a few, will reproduce covers and even complete editorials in posts (Figure 2).

On Lookbook, member Flávia Desgranges van der Linden (Figure 3) makes use of a hyperlink in the form of a badge (Figure 4) on her profile page to link to her blog Fashion Coolture (Figure 5). Both Flávia D's blog and Lookbook profile employ remediation of print magazines, a characteristic of many fashion blogs where the bloggers' poses seen in their images "evoke those of models in glossies" (Rocamora, 2012: 101), as observed in the earlier discussion of the fashion images found on Lookbook as well as in Flávia D's own images. Rocamora and O'Neill (2008) note that the genre of fashion photography from the early 1980s known as the "straight-up", full-length portraits of ordinary people first popularised in the British style press, was widely influential for street fashion blogs, such as The Sartorialist.

In addressing the notion that the Lookbook community purports ideologies of beauty, power and gender to create specific and homogenous fashion identities in line with mainstream fashion trends, and which inform its users' formation of identity within the structure of its community space, a sample of looks from the site as well as a sample of design elements used within the site's architectural structure was analysed using critical discourse analysis. The theoretical frameworks of semiotic and textual analysis of multimodal discourse, in particular, proved helpful in delineating the various elements of the Lookbook community, and emphasised the way in which fashion shapes identity within a community environment through perceived and projected images of members as well as via the gift economy of reciprocation.

While all the Lookbook members whose looks and profiles were analysed here represent the ideals promoted on the site, the majority of looks epitomised contemporary ideals of style and beauty found in offline spaces,

such as fashion magazines, thus corroborating the hypothesis that homogenous ideologies are present within the community. The assembled fashion and expression visible in the content of the images articulates the members' identities in such a way as to suggest a shaping both via the institutionalised space of Lookbook, insofar as the hegemonic ideologies of fashion, gender and cultural representations are presented within the online community, as well as the offline socio-cultural practices of each member.

The importance placed on the design elements, including the use of gamification, utilised within the architectural structure of the site, also pointed to how members' managed and displayed their identity impressions on the site.

Beyond Lookbook

The focus of this dissertation has excluded, although lightly touched upon, the inequalities to digital access presented by the great digital divide as well as various other factors. It is important to note that inequality to access also includes, amongst others, equipment, a working knowledge of the Internet and the equipment used to access it, skills and knowledge of the technology being utilised in online social communities and networks, as well as the implications thereof, although many users of online social media do not subscribe to all of these. The three key areas mentioned in this research and that is felt to need further elaboration are the multimodal, hypertextual and ephemeral qualities of the digital medium in relation to sites such as Lookbook, audience engagement and the types of devices utilised in accessing these sites.

The majority of the literature on SNS is largely concentrated on network structure, performance and impression management, connections both on- and offline, self-presentation, reasons for use, and privacy issues, with more recent studies on identity formation within the larger framework of social media. However, there is a need for a more ethnographic approach to the study of social media and online communities and, in particular, with regard to

identity formation within these spaces. The challenges with regards to this research and drawn from the literature therefore stand as follows:

- How does one measure audience engagement outside of a controlled environment without the use of a survey, which may often not be accurate (as participants can access social networking platforms in private and through various devices, such as tablets, smartphones and PCs)?
- Should an ethnographic observational study be undertaken in a controlled environment with a focus group that spans two different generations (generation X, who have assimilated technology into their lives, and generation Y – and now also Z – who have been raised alongside the development of most major technologies) and how each group and individuals within each group interact with the medium?

Additionally, as Rocamora (2012) and others have recognised, new and old media have developed a co-dependent relationship through the process of remediation. A deeper understanding of identity formation using fashion on social media will be reached only if future research aims to undertake ethnographic studies into social networks founded on the tenets of fashion. While this dissertation's focus is that of a textual nature, the expectation is that future projects considering identity formation and fashion media, in the form of other online texts and not specifically social media, will reveal further redefinitions of contemporary media practices.

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University of Cape Town
Faculty of Humanities

Information sheet

As part of the University of Cape Town's Centre for Film & Media Studies Masters programme, Masters students are required to conduct a pilot study as part of their coursework and in preparation for their larger dissertation report.

I have chosen to investigate the role of gamification in motivating users' participation and contribution to the online community of LOOKBOOK.nu. You have been chosen to participate in this research based on your location and the fact that you are a registered user who is regularly active on the web site.

For this reason, I would greatly appreciate if you would kindly assist me in my data collection by completing a short questionnaire of no longer than 15–25 minutes, which will be sent to you via email on the completion and return of the consent form attached¹⁶.

As an incentive, a R500 V&A Waterfront shopping voucher will be given to one lucky participant at the completion of the survey period ending on (date to be confirmed). The draw for the voucher will take place on (date to be confirmed) and the winner will be contacted via email before (date to be confirmed).

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

The following information outlines the nature of the research to be undertaken, including details of the methods that will be used, and any risks, benefits, costs and payments as it affects you and your participation in this study.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

For queries and/or questions, please contact Zainab Slemang on SLMZAI004@myuct.ac.za.

¹⁶ All responses are strictly confidential and will be used for academic purposes only. Pseudonyms can be used on request, however, given the public nature of the site, some information supplied and used for clarification purposes in the final research report may lead to identification of specific users.

Title of research project

Sense of Style: Constructing and managing impressions on LOOKBOOK.nu

Nature of the research

The proposed study will concentrate on LOOKBOOK.nu, an online community for street style fashion bloggers, and its use of gamification i.e. the use of certain devices employed in the design of gaming and that make particular games successful, such as icons, levels and rating systems, in a non-game environment. In addition, the research aims to investigate how these elements of game design motivate users of the site to participate and contribute to the online community.

Participant's involvement

Involvement

If you are an active registered user of the online community LOOKBOOK.nu and you have received the information sheet and consent form via email, you will be required to voluntarily answer a short survey that will be sent to you via email, which should take no longer than 15–25 minutes.

Risks

While LOOKBOOK.nu is a public online community and your profile is available to anyone, every effort will be made to conceal sensitive information that you provide to the researcher. However, your profile name will be used throughout the findings if you are selected as a case study by the researcher. If you would like a pseudonym to be used, you may request this, but be aware that certain information provided by you for clarification in the final research report may identify you and your profile on the web site.

Benefits

While there is no direct benefit to your ratings or reputation on the site itself, your input will contribute to the scientific research and development of understanding towards users' reasons for participating and contributing to online communities, such as LOOKBOOK.nu.

Costs

Should you choose to participate, there are no costs involved other than the time taken to complete the survey.

Payment

No payment for participation in this research will be made. However, a lucky draw for a R500 V&A Waterfront shopping voucher will be made at the end of the survey period. All respondents who have completed and submitted the email questionnaire voluntarily are automatically entered into the draw.

Future research

Please note that you may be contacted in the future to participate in a larger project of a similar nature, of which this pilot study is a part. If you do not wish to partake in future research, please indicate so by circling an option on the consent form attached.

Research methods to be used

As mentioned earlier, you have been chosen to participate in this study based on your regular activity on LOOKBOOK.nu. The researcher undertook a period of two weeks to identify relevant candidates on LOOKBOOK.nu who reside in Cape Town, regularly post to the site as well as make use of devices such as hyping, fanning and commenting on other members' posts. A user who was initially identified and approached to participate in this study may also have nominated you.

For the purposes of this study, a short questionnaire on your use of, participation, contribution and motivation for using LOOKBOOK.nu will be sent to you via email once you have returned your consent form to the researcher.

Storage of data and personal information

All responses received by you will be consolidated and recorded on Microsoft Word and Excel documents on the personal external drive of the principal researcher as well as the Google Cloud drive. Personal information will be filed separately and only users' profile names will be stored alongside their responses. User profile names and/or pseudonyms will be used in the final research report to clarify information and/or explain case studies.



University of Cape Town
Faculty of Humanities

Consent form

Title of research project

Sense of Style: Constructing and managing impressions on LOOKBOOK.nu

Principal researcher: Zainab Slemang

Department address: Centre for Film & Media Studies

Arts Block

Upper Campus

University of Cape Town

Rondebosch

7701

Contact number: 072 348 6443

Contact email: SLMZAI004@myuct.ac.za

Name of participant:

Contact details of participant:

Participant declaration of intent

- I agree to participate in this research project
- I have read the information sheet and consent form provided and have had the opportunity to ask questions about anything I do not fully understand
- I am satisfied with all the information provided to me in the information sheet and consent form, as well as to any of the questions I have posed

Addendum B

- I agree to my responses being used for education and research on the condition that my privacy is respected, subject to the following:
 - I understand that my personal details may be included in the research to illustrate case studies and/or elucidate the research being undertaken
 - I understand that I may request a pseudonym to be used in place of my real name
- I also acknowledge that I am under no obligation to take part in this project, and that I have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage
- I am aware that a draw for a R500 V&A Waterfront shopping voucher is being offered as an incentive, and understand that my participation in this research only means that I *may* win this prize but there is no guarantee that I *will* win this prize.

Please indicate your interest in participating in a further study on this topic in future by circling a response.

Yes

No

Signature of participant/guardian of participant (if under the age of 18 years): _____

Name of participant: _____

Name of guardian (if applicable): _____

Signature of person who sought consent: _____

Name of person who sought consent: _____

Signature of principal researcher: _____

Date: _____

Research invitation

Zainab Slemang

Sat 2013-08-24 11:26 PM

Sent Items

To:hello@lookbook.nu <hello@lookbook.nu>;

Hi there

My name is Zainab Slemang and I am studying towards my Masters degree in Media Theory in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Cape Town in South Africa.

For my dissertation, I am concentrating on your site (as well as the new Lookbook.nu app for iPhone).

My paper is mostly concentrated on identity formation through dress (fashion) within an online social community (hence the reason for choosing your site as opposed to others) and involves a content analysis of a few of the looks posted to the site.

However, I am also interested in the gamification aspects of your web site and app, and would like to know if it would be possible to chat to one of the creators about the reasons for using certain elements (like the <3, + Fan and Hype functions).

I feel that my research is beneficial in two ways: firstly, it will enlighten media theorists as to the popularity of social networking sites that make use of gamification and how this has spawned a competitive, yet friendly, community culture; and second, through looking at identity formation, it will allow Lookbook.nu to become more diverse, as is one of the stated goals (according to the Wikipedia page on Lookbook.nu).

If you have any further questions on my research, feel free to email me at SLMZAI004@myuct.ac.za or zslemang@gmail.com.

Regards

Zainab Slemang
+27 72 348 6443



Figure 1: “Let them stare” by Anita K. on Lookbook (2 July 2014¹⁷)



¹⁷ Dates in brackets following images taken from Lookbook indicate when images were retrieved; all other dates refer to the time period in which films and magazines were produced and/or published.

Addendum D

Figure 2: Actress Kiernan Shipka in *Vanity Fair* (May 2014)



Figure 3: “That jacket is a fashion killa. bang-bang, boom-boom” by Anila <3 on Lookbook (6 July 2014)



Addendum D

Figure 4: Brazilian model Gisele Bündchen for V magazine's The Star Power Issue (70th issue, 2011)



Figure 5: "Old habits die hard" by Lua P. on Lookbook (1 July 2014)



Figure 6: "WET but DRY" by Marcel F. on Lookbook (17 July 2014)



Figure 7: "Dublin Days" by Anouska P. on Lookbook (7 July 2014)

COMMENTS (66)

SHOW PREVIOUS COMMENTS



CLAIR DE LUNE W. @vrdwiredweird

wow! <3333333

0 ▲ [reply](#) · about 8 hours ago



MARIE LU S. @maneku

This goes beyond classy!

0 ▲ [reply](#) · about 7 hours ago



EVA H. @therococostyle

Awesome!

0 ▲ [reply](#) · about 7 hours ago



HELOISE L.

Fabulous !

0 ▲ [reply](#) · about 8 hours ago



INNA I. @innagram

love everything about this look!
очень красивая)

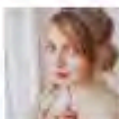
0 ▲ [reply](#) · about 4 hours ago



JULIA W.

Великолепно!

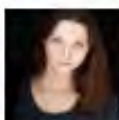
0 ▲ [reply](#) · about 4 hours ago



JENNI R. @pupulandia

I love the midskirt and the hat. So pretty! :)

0 ▲ [reply](#) · about 4 hours ago



SOPHIE Y. @syakshina

Amazing pic!

0 ▲ [reply](#) · about 3 hours ago



POLDO N. @nspitpoldo

so lovely

0 ▲ [reply](#) · about 3 hours ago



MARTINA G. @justanotherme

Great!

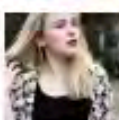
0 ▲ [reply](#) · about 2 hours ago



LISE K. @lse_kepins

очень эффектно!!!

0 ▲ [reply](#) · about 2 hours ago



NICOLA MARLEEN @morningselegance

Gorgeous!

0 ▲ [reply](#) · about 2 hours ago

Figure 8: Comments for “Hat” by Anouska P. on Lookbook (17 July 2014)



Figure 9: "White future" by Dasha L. on Lookbook (18 July 2014)



Figure 10: "Oriental Extasy", *Harper's Bazaar* Korea (January 2013)



Figure 10: “English Lavender” by Adam G. on Lookbook (8 July 2014)



Figure 11: “WET but DRY” by Marcel F. on Lookbook (17 July 2014)



Figure 12: “Timeless Elegance”, GQ Japan (July 2010)



Figure 13: Runway image from Mardou & Dean Mens Spring/Summer 2014



Figure 14: "Hello, summer" by Anila <3 on Lookbook (1 July 2014)



Figure 15: "LOVERS AND DRIFTERS" by Ebba Z. on Lookbook (17 July 2014)



Figure 16: “Brasil!” by Flávia D. on Lookbook (5 July 2014)



Figure 17: "Light is shining" by Lua P. on Lookbook (5 July 2014)



Figure 18: "14-07-15" by Jennifer G. on Lookbook (16 July 2014)



Figure 19: "Nothing scares me anymore" by Ebba Z. on Lookbook (3 July 2014)

Addendum D

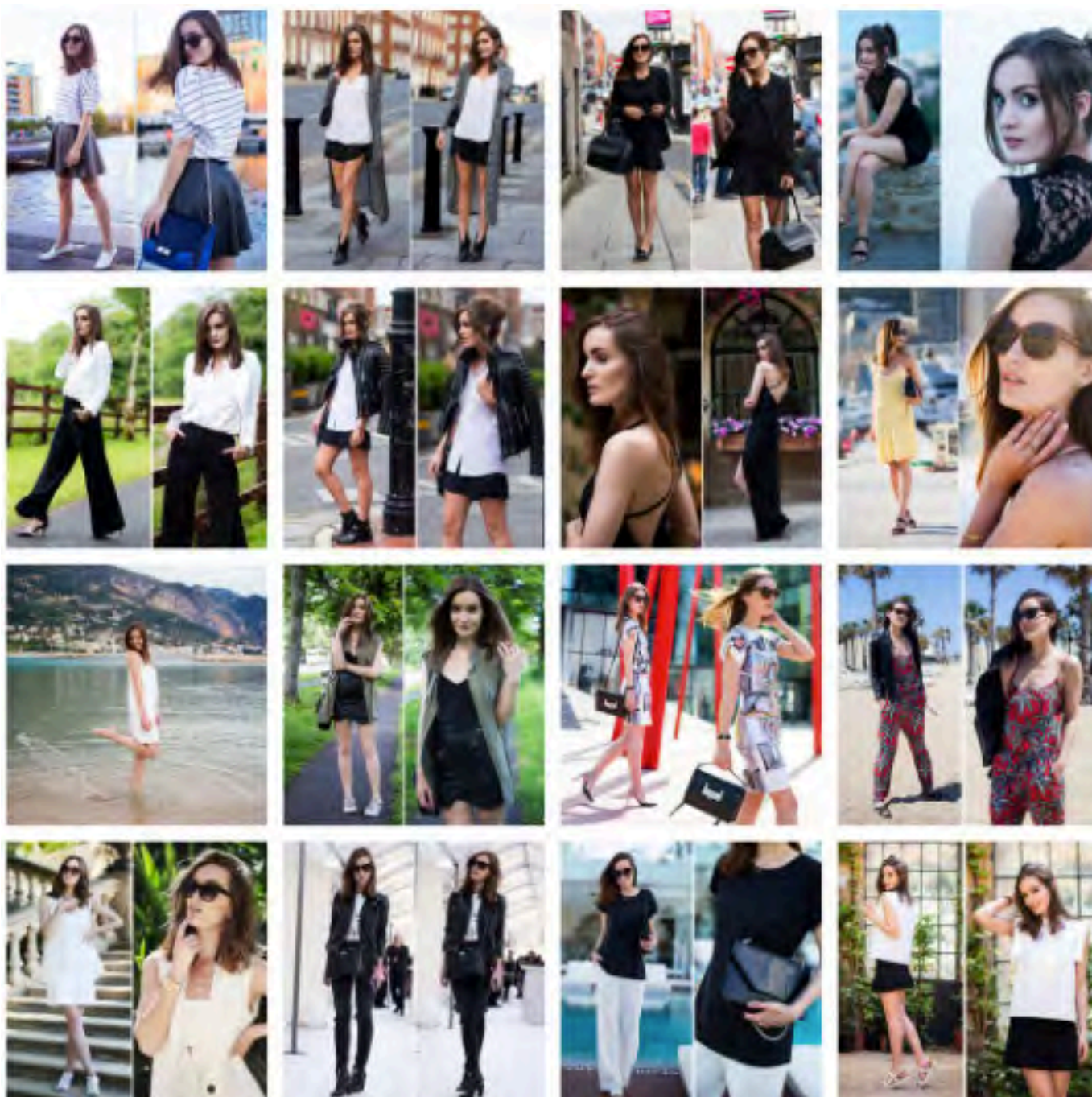


Figure 20: Most Recent Looks (on Lookbook profile) by Anouska Proetta Brandon (7 July 2014)

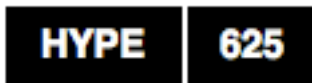


Figure 1: Hype button



Figure 2: Fan button



Figure 3: Love button



Figure 4: Flag device

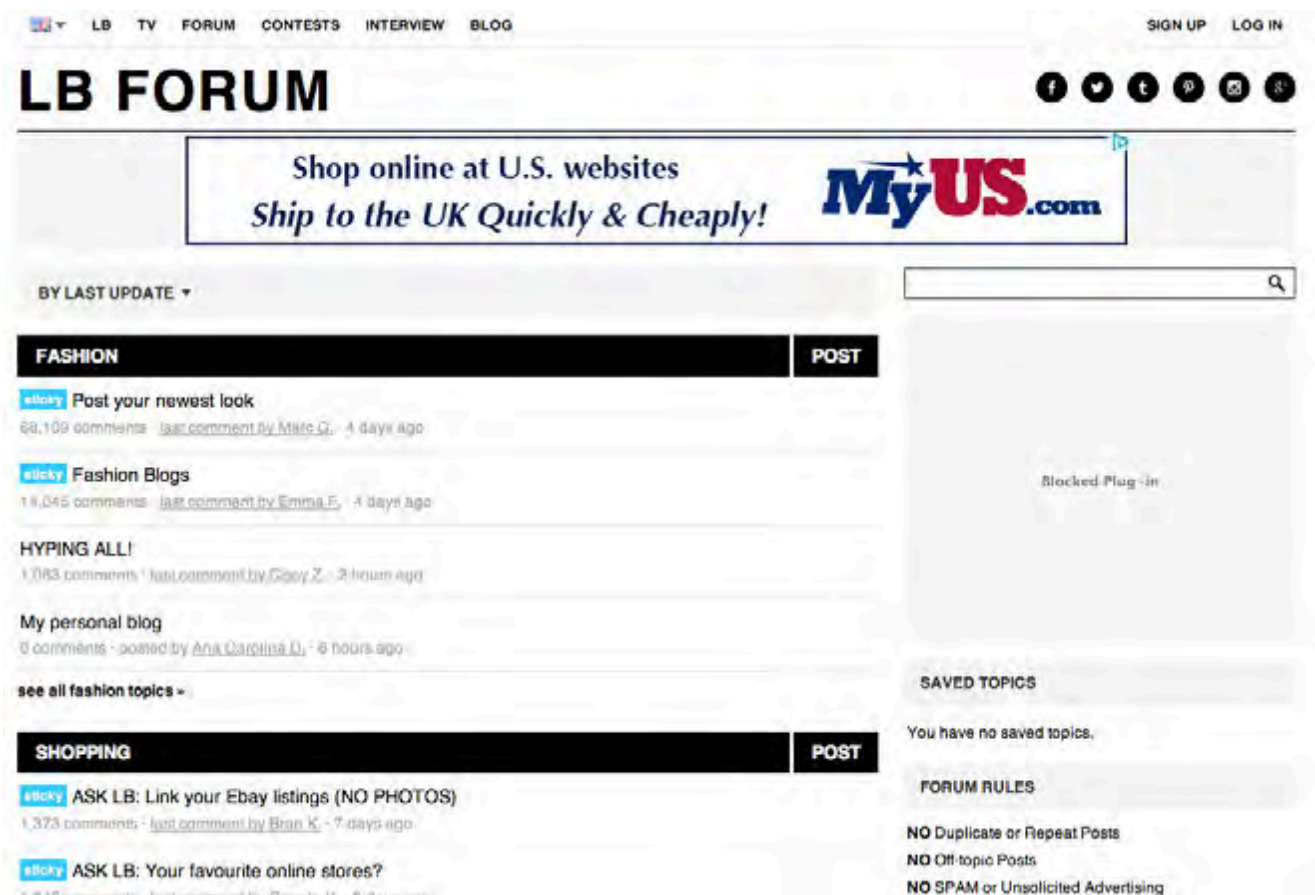


Figure 5: The LB Forum page displays various threads related to fashion as well as the forum rules (bottom right)

22,001 Karma ▲ 213

Figure 6: The karma counter element (left) indicates the average number of hypes a member has received across all the looks they have posted on the site, while the blue karma counter (right) indicates how many additional hypes they have received within a certain period of time

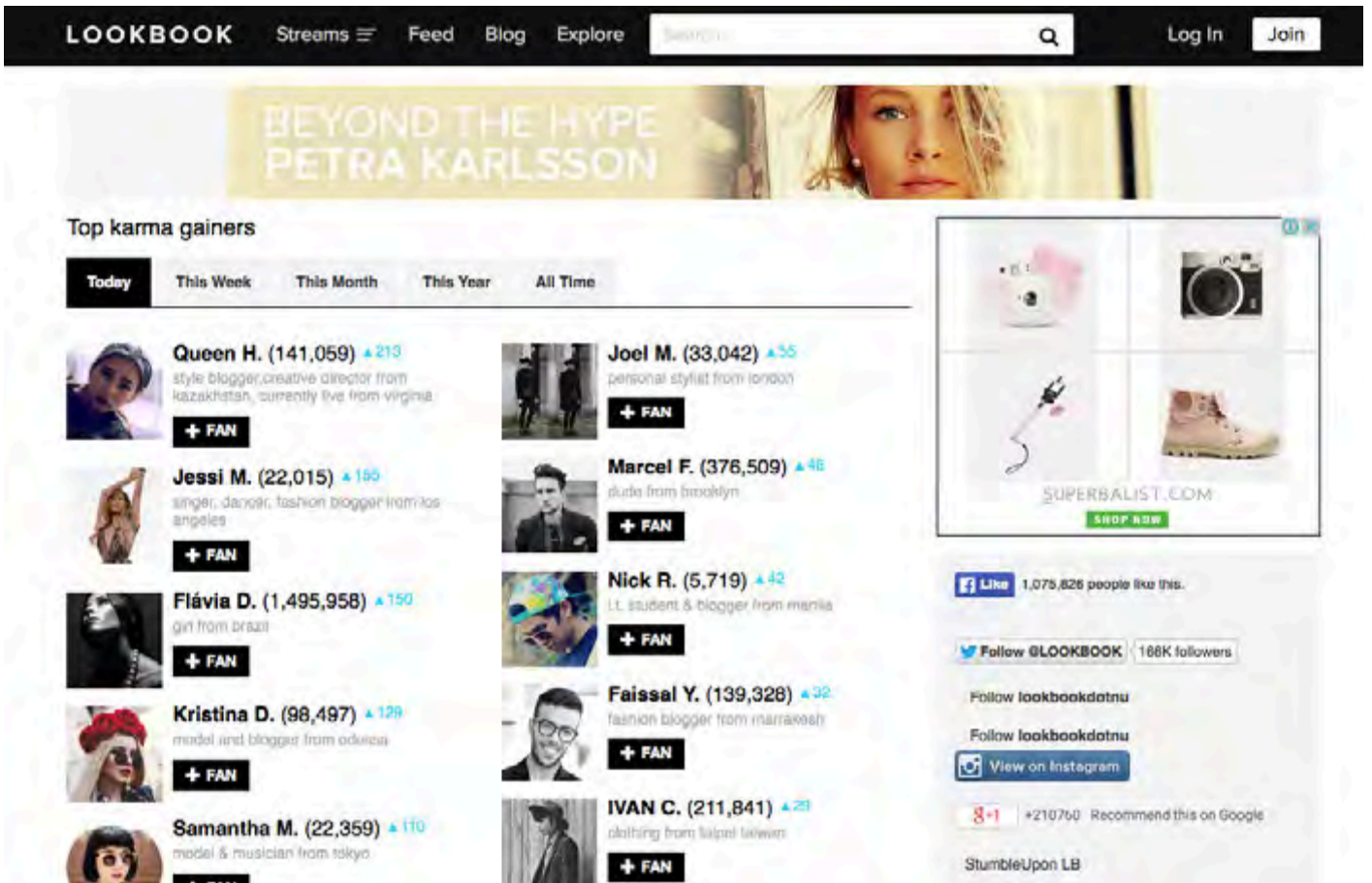


Figure 7: The Leader is a leaderboard that displays the top karma gainers in five different ways: by day, week, month, year and all time

The screenshot shows a website interface with a dark navigation bar at the top containing 'LOOKBOOK', 'Streams', 'Feed', 'Blog', 'Explore', a search bar, 'Log In', and 'Join'. Below the navigation bar are links for 'Blog', 'Interviews', and 'TV'. The main content area features a large image of Alana Ruas, a woman with a red headband and a patterned top. Below the image is the title 'BEYOND THE HYPE // ALANA RUAS' and the date 'DECEMBER 2013'. A quote follows: *"My mood is my main influence when getting dressed."* Below the quote are social media sharing buttons for 'Like' (58) and 'Tweet' (21). A short bio reads: *Alana Ruas is a 26 year old Fashion Stylist and Blogger from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Visit her blog at www.alanaruas.com/.* To the right of the main article is a 'MORE INTERVIEWS' section listing other members with their names and interview dates: Marcel Floruss (May 2015), Alessandra Kamaile (March 2015), Petra Karlsson (June 2014), Christoph Schaller (May 2014), Elle-May Leckenby (April 2014), Jalan and Jibril Durimel (March 2014), Rachel Lynch (February 2014), and Mikko Puttonen (January 2014).

Figure 8: A monthly feature spotlighting one top karma gainer, the Interviews section of the site, called Beyond the hype, privileges and rewards top-rated (i.e. most-hyped) members

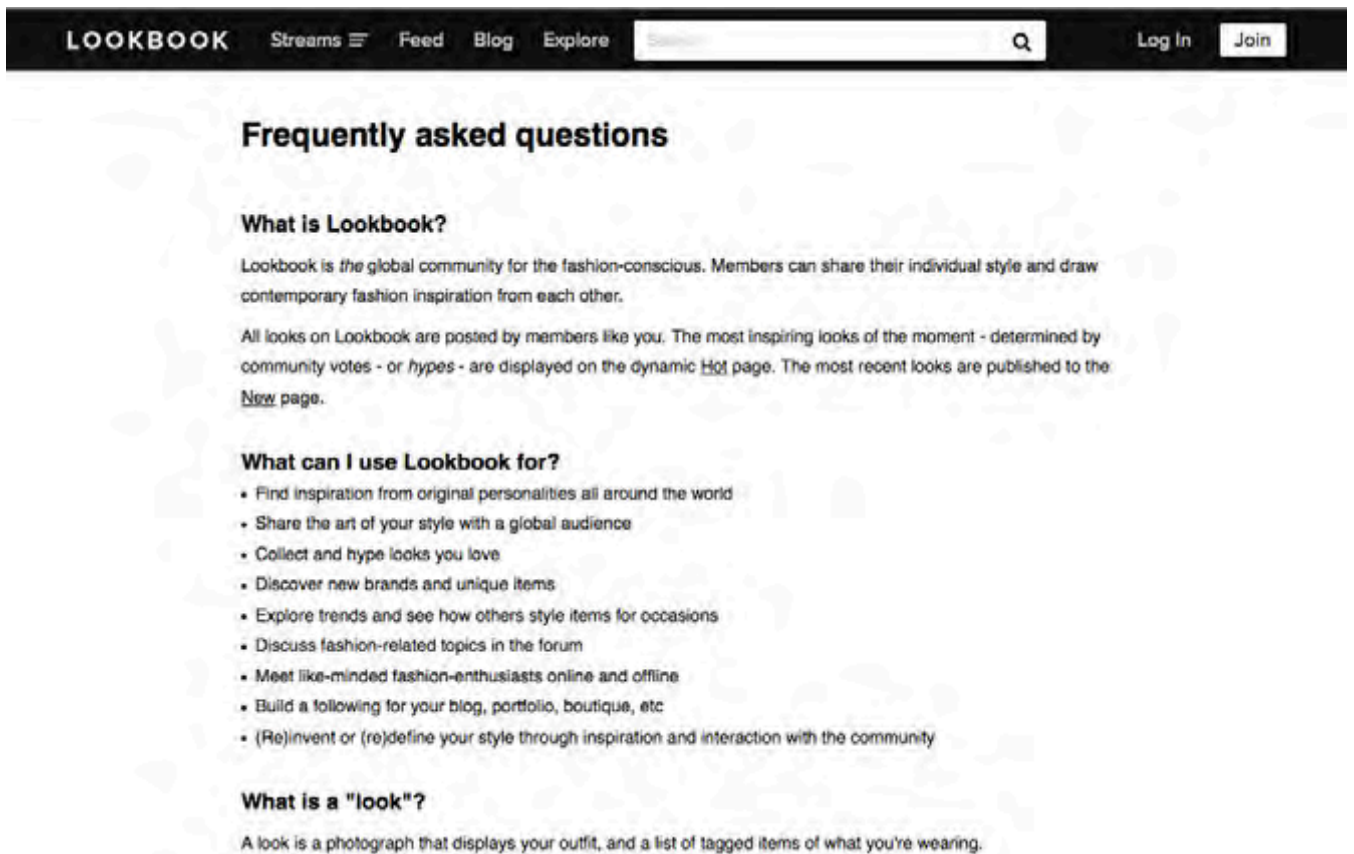


Figure 9: The Frequently asked questions page outlines what Lookbook is and how the site can be used

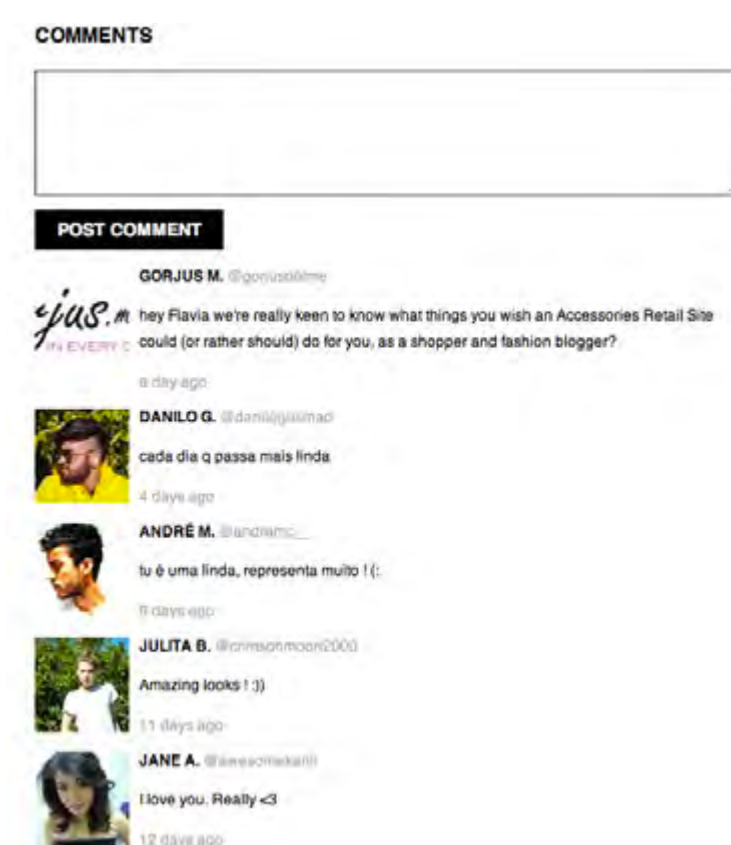


Figure 10: A comment thread on one Lookbook member's profile

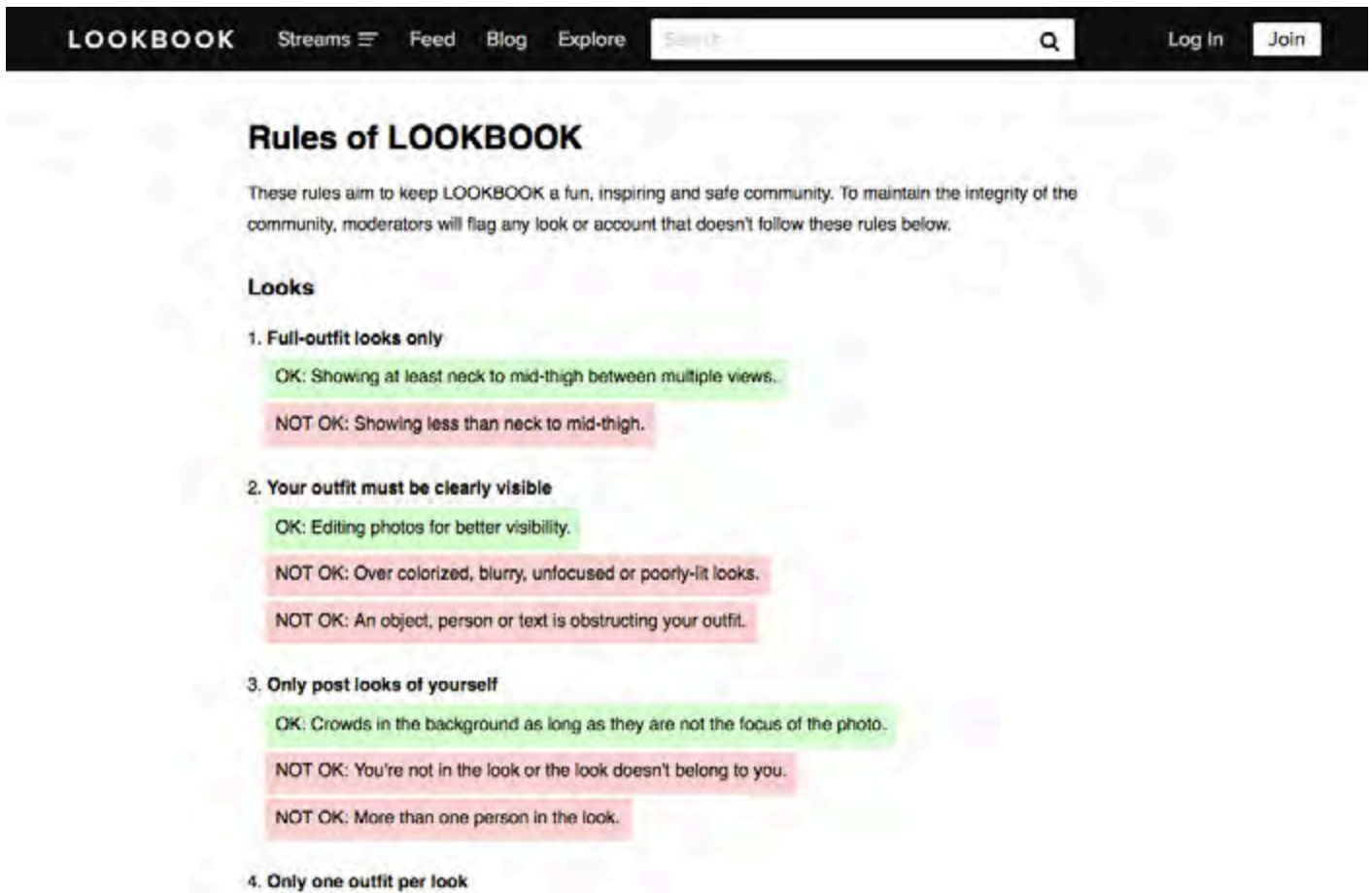



Figure 11: The Rules of LOOKBOOK page provides guidelines for use of the site

540 Here nor there.
 BY ANOUSKA P., BLOGGER @ ANOUSKAPROETTABRANDON.COM FROM DUBLIN, IRELAND.
33 comments · 1 · 18 hours ago



ADD f t g

1. CARDIGAN ASOS [\(STYLE:ME-JA-NKYVYJANFXV...\)](#) in [ASOS CARDIGAN](#)
2. TOP TOPSHOP [\(STYLE:ME-JA-ZBFXK...\)](#) in [TOPSHOP TOPS](#)
3. SHORTS H&M [\(SIMILAR: \(STYLE:ME-JA-ZBFXK...\)\)](#) in [H&M SHORTS](#)
4. BOOTS SHOEPSON MORRISON in [BOOTS](#)
5. CARDIGAN SIMILAR [\(STYLE:ME-JA-NKYVYJANFXV...\)](#) in [CARDIGANS](#)

[anouskaproetta Brandon](#)

[facebook.com/anouskaproetta Brandon](#)

Find me on Instagram @[anouskacp](#)




Anouska Proetta Brandon
31,228 followers · 200,326 photos
[+ FAN](#)

LB: <http://lookbook.nu/user/200193-Anouska-P>
 BLOG: <http://www.anouskaproetta Brandon.com>
 SITE: <http://www.facebook.com/anouskaproetta Brandon>



DENIM & LACE
 by American Apparel

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BRANDS IN THIS LOOK

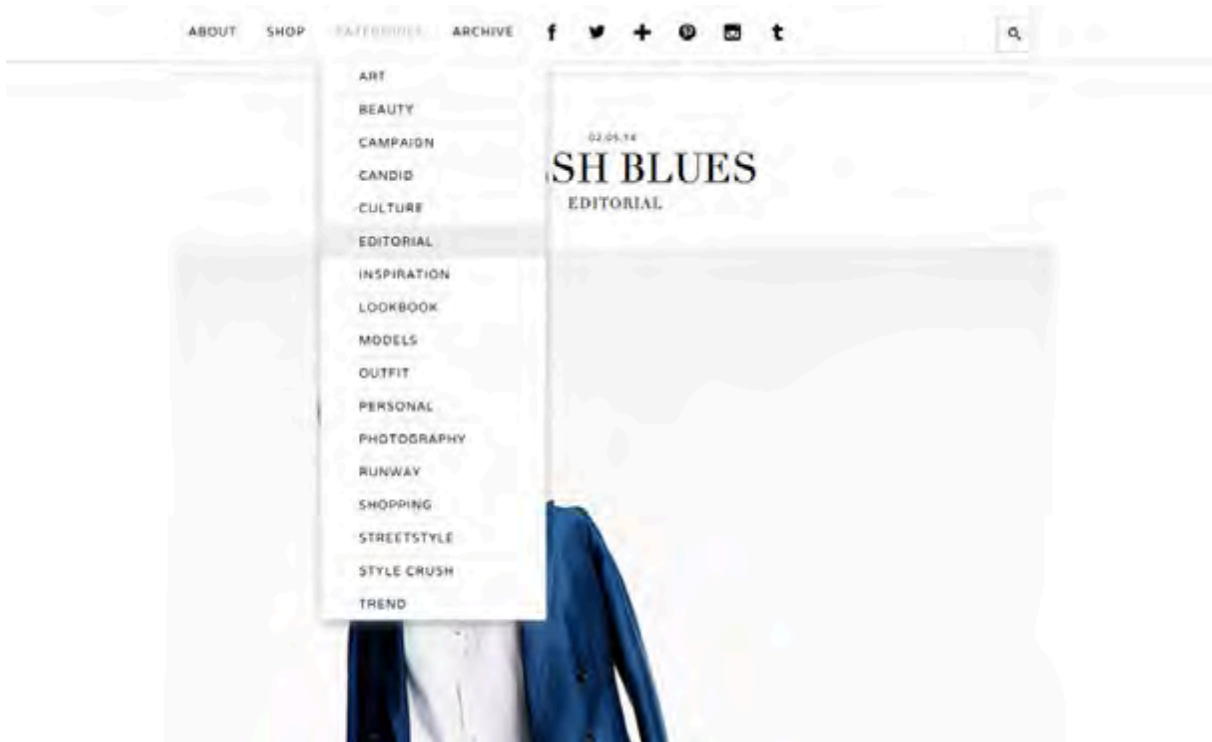
-  **Asos**
ASOS.COM
[+ FAN](#)
-  **Topshop**
TOPSHOP.COM
[+ FAN](#)
-  **H&M**
H&M.COM
[+ FAN](#)

PEOPLE YOU MAY LIKE

-  **Gabi Hikari**
1,100 followers
[+ FAN](#)
-  **Dani Roxanne**
1,000 followers
[+ FAN](#)

LYDIA ELISE MILLEN .

Figure 1: ‘Here nor there’ by Anouska P. on Lookbook (3 July 2014¹⁸) illustrates various hyperlinks to fashion web sites as well as her personal site, Facebook and Instagram accounts



¹⁸ Dates in brackets following images taken from Lookbook indicate when images were retrieved; all other dates refer to the time period in which the content was produced and/or published.

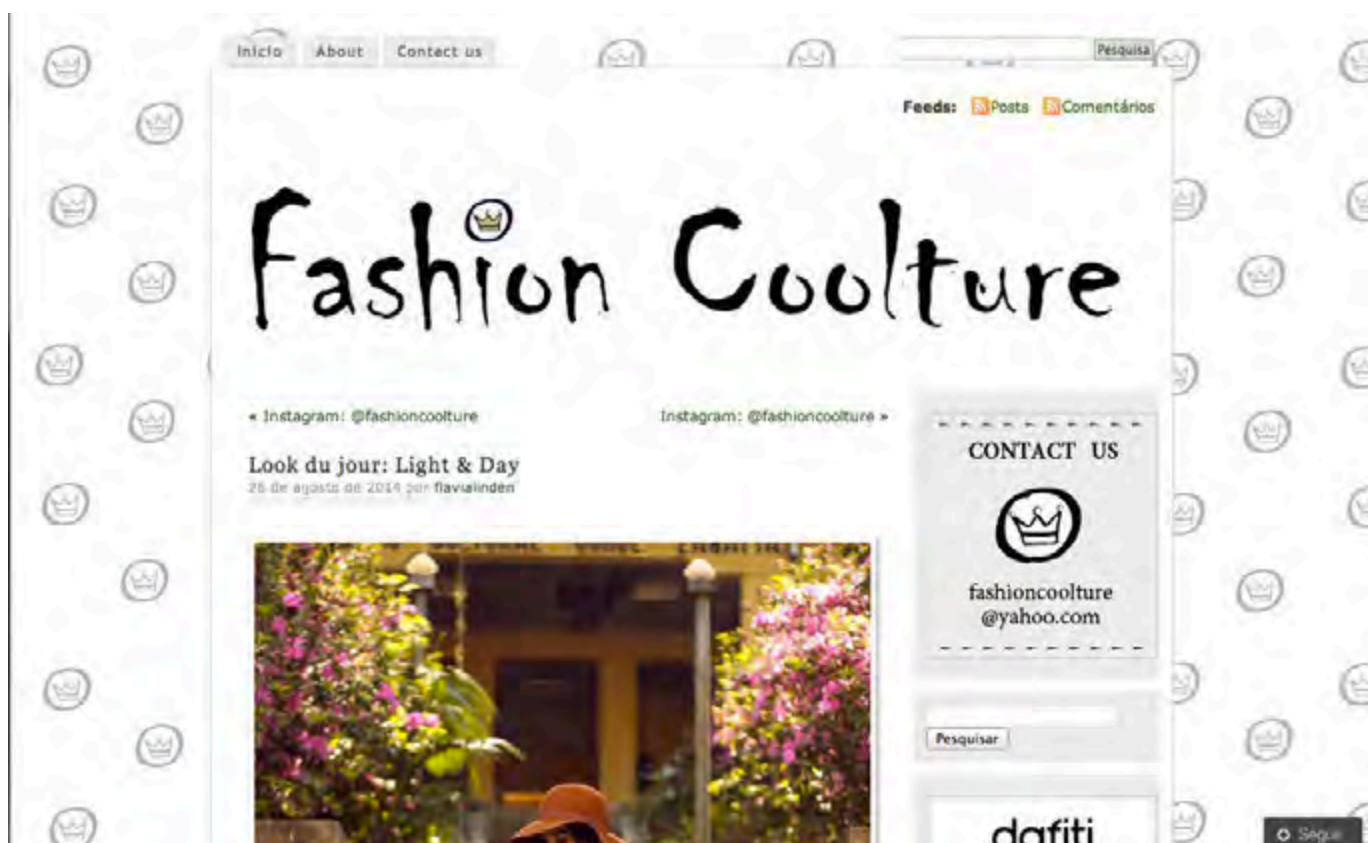
Figure 2: Menu on *studded-hearts* (2 May 2014) blog, displaying the Editorial option where magazine content is often reproduced in its entirety (as seen in the background)



Figure 3: Profile identifier of Flávia Desgranges van der Linden on Lookbook (4 July 2014)



Figure 4: Hyperlinked badge icon on Lookbook member Flávia Desgranges van der Linden's profile page (4 July 2014)



Addendum F

Figure 5: Screenshot of Fashion Coolture, the blog of Lookbook member Flávia Desgranges van der Linden (26 August 2014)