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# The value creation in brand public

by

[Hongwei Han, Zana Rama]

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Supervisor: [Clara Gustafsson ]

Examiner: [Mats Urde ]

## Abstract

- Purpose:** Brand public is a new theory developed as a brand communication on social media. The aim of this thesis is to reveal the value creation of brand public in contrast to the values created by brand community
- Methodology:** We apply a postmodern perspective and our study is constructionistic, therefore we have selected the qualitative approach called netnography.
- Theoretical perspectives:** We draw on relevant literature on brand public, brand communities, crowds, social status game and micro-celebrities.
- Empirical Foundation:** Our data consists of 20775 tweets in the timespan from 2017-12-01 to 2018-04-09 in relation to the hashtag #HM. Through the tweets, we have been able to study the Twitter content in terms of hashtags, tweets and @replies.
- Conclusion:** Supported by our findings, we have discerned that brand public is probably able to develop the connective actions. Second, we have discussed how to create crowds by means of affectivity on Twitter. Third, through relentless publics, the Twitter users can become micro-celebrity, which is marked by the number of retweets and @replies. Fourth, we have revealed the role played by brand public in the multidimensional social game on Twitter.
- Keywords:** Brand public, brand community, crowd, affectivity, connective action, social status game, micro-celebrity.

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Hongwei Han

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Zana Rama

# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1	Background.....	7
<b>2</b>	<b>Literature stream .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Brand public.....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1.1	The rise of communities .....	10
2.1.2	Brand community and the online environment.....	12
2.1.3	The rise of brand public.....	13
2.1.4	Summary of brand community and brand public.....	14
2.1.5	Value-creation in brand public vs. brand community.....	15
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Brand public on Twitter .....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.2.1	Affectivity, the vehicle of the value creation of brand public.....	18
2.2.2	Micro-celebrity on Twitter.....	20
<b>2.3</b>	<b>The theory of tastes.....</b>	<b>23</b>
2.3.1	Bourdieu’s theory of tastes.....	23
2.3.2	The problems with Bourdieu’s theory of tastes.....	25
2.3.3	Adjusted theory of tastes .....	26
2.3.4	The theory of taste and Twitter .....	28
<b>3</b>	<b>Method chapter .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Qualitative Approach.....</b>	<b>29</b>
3.1.1	Research philosophy: Postmodernism .....	29
3.1.2	Constructionism and qualitative study.....	30
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Netnography.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Twitter .....</b>	<b>32</b>
3.3.1	Anonymity on Twitter.....	33
3.3.2	Sharing on Twitter .....	33
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Trustworthiness.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Data collection.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>3.6</b>	<b>Data analysis.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings and analysis .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Analyzing the content of the most frequently mentioned tweets .....</b>	<b>41</b>
4.1.1	The topic: HM’s stock price.....	42
4.1.2	The topic: General fashion information.....	43
4.1.3	The topic: Information about the new season.....	43

4.1.4	The topic: Nicki Minaj.....	44
4.1.5	The topic: Holiday Sale .....	45
4.1.6	The topic: Sale of New Season .....	46
4.1.7	The topic: Capitalism of H&M .....	47
4.1.8	The topic: H&M vs. Street Art .....	48
4.1.9	The topic: Outfit of the Day .....	48
4.1.10	The topic: Racist Commercial.....	49
4.1.11	The topic: Vandalistic news .....	50
<b>4.2</b>	<b>The traffic volume of the #hm hashtag.....</b>	<b>50</b>
4.2.1	The relationship between the traffic volume of the #hm hashtag and the top 5 popular co-hashtag list 52	
<b>4.3</b>	<b>The value process in the connective action .....</b>	<b>55</b>
4.3.1	Self-organizing network and retweets.....	55
4.3.2	Collective identity in a connective network.....	56
4.3.3	Driving further meaning to the brand .....	57
4.3.4	The power of connective action.....	58
4.3.5	Not acting properly to the direction of the connective network .....	59
4.3.6	Connective action in the category of <i>self-presentation</i> .....	60
4.3.7	Summary of the value-creation process of Connective Action .....	60
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Affectivity .....</b>	<b>62</b>
4.4.1	The different characteristics of affect .....	64
4.4.2	The extent of affect.....	67
<b>4.5</b>	<b>The creating value of brand public: Micro-celebrity .....</b>	<b>68</b>
4.5.1	The ordinary account vs. the verified account.....	68
4.5.2	How to become micro-celebrity.....	70
<b>4.6</b>	<b>The value-creation of brand public from a postmodernism perspective .....</b>	<b>73</b>
4.6.1	Cultural capital on Twitter .....	73
4.6.2	The social status game on Twitter.....	75
<b>4.7</b>	<b>Discussion .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>84</b>
	<b>Reference List.....</b>	<b>88</b>
	<b>Appendix A: The top five popular co-hashtags list .....</b>	<b>94</b>

# List of Figures

Figure 2-1 The characteristics of brand community, online brand community and brand public. ....	15
Figure 2-2 The value-creation in brand public and in brand community. ....	17
Figure 3-1 The steps that our study follows in the data collection and data analysis in order to create dependability partially.....	35
Figure 3-2 The database and how the information is structured into columns based on different attributes. ....	36
Figure 3-3 The different topics within the categories.....	40
Figure 4-1 The illustration of the topics within the different categories .....	42
Figure 4-2 The tweet had the highest number of retweets in the topic HM’s stock price. The post was retweeted two times. ....	42
Figure 4-3 The tweet had the highest number of retweets in the topic General fashion information. The post was retweeted 232 times.....	43
Figure 4-4 The tweet had the highest number of retweets in the topic Information about the new season. The post was retweeted 4 times. ....	44
Figure 4-5 The tweets had the highest number of retweets in the topic Nickiminaj. The post on the left was retweeted 12 times and the post on the right was retweeted 1363 times. ....	44
Figure 4-6 The tweet had the highest number of retweets in the topic Holiday Sale. The post was retweeted 91 times.....	45
Figure 4-7 The tweet includes the hashtag #zara, which was frequently mentioned during the holidays..	46
Figure 4-8 Tweet (shown above) had the no retweets in the topic Sale of New Season. ....	46
Figure 4-9 Tweets (shown above) had the highest number of retweets in the topic Sale of New Season. The post on the left was retweeted 239 times and the post on the right was retweeted 277 times.....	47
Figure 4-10 Tweet (shown above) had the highest number of retweets in the topic Capitalism of H&M. The post was retweeted 4 times. ....	48
Figure 4-11 Tweet (shown above) had the highest number of retweets in the topic H&M vs. Street Art. The post was retweeted 45 times. ....	48
Figure 4-12 Tweet (shown above) had the highest number of retweets in the topic Outfit of the Day. The post was retweeted 41 times.....	49
Figure 4-13 Tweet (shown above) had the highest number of retweets in the topic Racist Commercial. The post on the left was retweeted 4698 times and the post on the right was retweeted 2022 times. ....	49
Figure 4-14 Tweet (shown above) had the highest number of retweets in the topic Vandalistic news. The post was retweeted 29 times.....	50
Figure 4-15 The traffic volume of the #hm hashtag over the time from 2017-12-01 to 2018-04-09 .....	51
Figure 4-16 (From left to right): the tweet of the H&M official account on 2018-03-20; the retweet of the Twitter users, Terminal21 on 2018-03-23.....	53
Figure 4-17 (from left to right): The tweet of @OxAmOsxO with #fashion hashtag on 2018-03-31; The tweet of @TjpAbdul with #fashion hashtag on 2018-01-09 .....	54
Figure 4-18 Tweet (shown above) was posted during the period 5/2-15/2, where the topic H&M vs. Street Art was publicly deliberated. The post was retweeted 45 times. ....	55
Figure 4-19 Retweet (mentioned above) contained their personal perspective on the topic of H&M vs. Street Art and was retweeted 11 times.....	56

Figure 4-20 Retweet (shown above) adds his own negative perspective on the brand and was retweeted 4 times.....	57
Figure 4-21 Tweet (shown above) indicates the accomplished goal of the connective actions and it has been retweeted 4 times. ....	58
Figure 4-22 Tweet (shown above) was highest ranked during the topic Racist Commercial and was retweeted 4698 times. ....	59
Figure 4-23 In the tweet (shown above) the author expresses a negative attitude towards the mothers respond to the backlash. The tweet has been retweeted two times. ....	60
Figure 4-24 The value-creation process of Connective Action in Brand Public shows how self-organizing network, retweets and hashtags interact. ....	62
Figure 4-25 The original tweet posted by @Blavity (Left-Top); The retweet posed by @TimmyJig (Right-Top); The retweet posed by @Alyricz (Left-Down); The retweet posed by @Mike (Right-Down) .....	63
Figure 4-26 From left to right: the word cloud of the top 50 words appearing in the tweets concerning the topic of Holiday Sale. The word cloud of the top 50 words appearing in the tweets concerning the topics of Information about the new season. ....	65
Figure 4-27 From left to right: the word cloud of the top 50 words appearing in the tweets concerning the topic of Racist Commercial. The word cloud of the top 50 words appearing in the tweets concerning the topics of H&M vs. Street Art. ....	67
Figure 4-28 The distribution of different types of Twitter accounts with @reply ten times or more in #hm hashtag database (Left-Top); The distribution of accounts with @reply five times or more about the topic of Racist Commercial (Right-Top); The distribution of accounts with @reply once or more about the topic of Holiday Sale (Left-Down); The distribution of accounts with @reply once or more about the topic of General fashion information (Left-Down) (Source: Twitter.com) The verified account denotes where Twitter company has verified the Twitter users as the authentic celebrities in music, fashion, government and media areas. The ordinary account denotes where the Twitter users are regular but allow anyone to get access to their posts. ....	69
Figure 4-29 From left to right: 1. the ordinary account with the highest retweet has criticized H&M concerning H&M’s lawsuit against the street artist. 2. The tweet made a comment on the H&M 2018 Spring & Summer fashion show. 3. It was announced by H&M’s USA account while the Christmas commercial would star in Nicki Minaj. ....	74
Figure 4-30 From left to Right: 1. The tweet posed by @HM (12 retweets and 149 likes).; 2. The tweet posed by @HMPhilippines (211 retweets and 4319 likes).....	76
Figure 4-31 The model of Bourdieu’s classification of lifestyle (Source: Rosengren 1995).....	77
Figure 4-32 From left to Right: 1. The tweet posted by @ MickyBeisenherz; 2. The tweet posted by @ TheVoiceNews .....	79
Figure 4-33 The tweet posted by @buffalosouljah1 .....	80

# 1 Introduction

In a digital era, social media plays a vital role in the way, whereby people communicate, and networks are built beyond time and space. The rise of social media platforms and their usage have allowed users to discover and share information faster than ever. Twitter is one of the most popular social media sites with over 300 million users and 500 million tweets per day (Internetlivestats.com, 2018), and has emerged as a popular communication tool for users to organize movements. Twitter has become an indispensable part of many people's everyday life. This has created a digital landscape where individuals share their personal perspectives, information and social supports with others (Haripriya & Kumari, 2017). Retweeting and hashtags are common features used by users on Twitter, and they have emerged as a key function of information diffusion (Araujo et al, 2015). Retweeting is a manner by which a Twitter user decided to share the message of the original tweet in the user's network (Araujo et al, 2015). By applying a hashtag, the message becomes more visible, searchable and traceable. The users assign the tweets into different topics by the various hashtags.

Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) have conceptualized brand public as a discursive space wherein the users express their ideas and perspectives rather than by interacting. Meanwhile, brand public is also the one kind of association triggered by a brand (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). There is an imitation among some users in brand public, where people engage in a one-way following system and their focus is to create publicity and visibility around events that occur around the world. In sum, brand public is a public media space, which is structured by an aggregation of heterogeneous meanings from users (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). On the contrary, Muniz & O'Guinn (2001, p412) refers brand community to a sphere where members share consciousness, traditions and moral obligations with each other. The brand community, specifically online brand community, is a prevalent theory to reveal a long-term relationship between a particular brand and the consumers of the brand. This is consistent with Holt's (1995) theory that consumers' subjective interaction commonly occurs with the consumption of objects. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) argue that the stronger the brand community becomes, the more values are created in the wake of the great influence created by the brand marketer. In comparison with the notion of brand community, brand public is a new theory, whereby scholars are able to assert that a variety of users, who do not know each other, spontaneously conduct the reaction of mediation (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). Meanwhile, through the repetition of the reactions, the users have imposed a new meaning on a hashtag # that does not have any meaning. (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). In order to legitimize the new theory, brand public, we need to address how important the notion of brand public is.



As brand public associated with users' interest and mediation that they have encountered (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016), engaging in brand public commonly enables the Twitter users to the embodiment of their judgment and favorite. What consumers have chosen is not subject to utility maximum in economics, but it also depends on the embodiment of distinction (Trigg, 2001; Sassatelli, 2007). According to Bourdieu (2010, [1984]), only people with the high social status are capable of pursuing distinction. Brand public becomes valuable as it is a vehicle to embody the high social status in the mass of strangers. In other words, manifesting the social status is one of the values generated by brand public. According to Stage (2013), moreover, both brand publics and crowds are the result of collective emotion, affect. The affect refers to an integrity of various sensation triggered by an array of events (Stage, 2013). Stage (2013, p213) refers public to that "regardless of established social totalities, it establishes relations and communication among strangers and it circulates both rational-critical and more poetic, affective or documenting types of texts." Publics are the practices of brand public, when it occurs around a brand (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). Meanwhile, Stage (2013, p224) refers crowd to "a process by which participants share relatively synchronized affective process in online settings." The practices of brand public require less emotion compared with that of the crowds (Stage, 2013), so that the practices of brand public become an intermediate in the process of crowding driven by aggregating emotion. In the light of more emotional aggregation generated by publics (Papcharissi & Oliveira, 2012), the collection of affectivity ends up triggering crowds based on brand public. We may consider that the crowd is another value created by brand public.

Arvidsson (2013), furthermore, discusses how value: buzz, reputation and opinion, are created by publics. The discussion also sheds light on our research regarding brand public. As crowds are driven by the affect, the emotion maintains brand public together (Arvidsson et al., 2015, Arvidsson, 2013). As the efforts of emotion on consumer behaviors are vital, brand public, which stems from the affect, is able to interpret the same brand differently (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). It is reasonable to assume that the different affect associated with a brand equips the brand with various images. The brand image perceived by consumers is somehow able to influence the brand reputation in the long term (Roper & Fill, 2012). It is intriguing to clarify how affect impacts on brand image on the basis of brand public.

**The aim of this thesis is to reveal the value creation of brand public in contrast to the values created by brand community.** This study classifies the features of brand community, brand public and crowds and then disclose how the values created by brand public, in the brand marketing and postmodern consumer culture field. The notion of brand public connected to the Bourdieu's theory of tastes, in the light of the characteristics of the brand public defined by Arvidsson and Caliandro. Brand public provides a vehicle,

by which the different identities have been embodied (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). We wonder if brand public is one part of the multidimensional status game driven by the Bourdieu' theory of tastes. Especially, Arvidsson and Caliandro have illuminated the notion of brand public by means of the lavish consumption, Louis Vuitton. In the light of the tight relationship between the lavish consumption and Bourdieu's notion of tastes (Trigg, 2001), the notion of brand public somehow is bound up with the theory of tastes. Nevertheless, the rise of a democratic society diminishes social capital, which is the cornerstone of Bourdieu's theory of tastes. Holt (1998) believes that nowadays it is cultural capital that maintains distinct in reference to Bourdieu's theory of tastes. It becomes valuable to legitimate the theory of brand public in a non-luxury background and to disclose the fundamental value creation of brand public when we bear in mind that validity is of the importance of constructionism (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

## 1.1 Background

It is essential to understand the characteristics of brand community and crowds in order to expound the notion of brand public. Brand community is a dominant theory in the contemporary brand marketing field. Brand community primarily focuses on the social interaction, whereby the value is produced. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) states that brand community is a platform, on which consumers can share their information regarding the brand and all members of the platform are able to enjoy the social benefit through sharing information around the focal brand. Thus, a community is set up of its members and relationship among them (James et al., 2002). A brand community is characterized by a mutual relationship between the customer and the brand, between the customer and the firm, between the customer and the product in use, and obviously among other customers (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al, 2002). In sum, the role of brand community is to complement the real community in the current society and liberally to push an individual to pursue the hedonistic ethos (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Lave and Wenger (1991) and Lave (1988) conceptualize the practice of community, which refers to collective learning by means of interaction and sharing. Schau, Muniz, and Arnould summarize that a variety of value-creating practices in brand community including social networking, impression management, community engagement and brand use, based on antecedent studies such as Star Trek fans' cosplay, Saab drivers' tale about the test result, and the discuss about how to deal with the battery in Newton palm computer (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, Kozinets, 2001, Munize & Schau, 2005, Schau & Muniz, 2007). Through the understandings of culture templates, procedures of rules and engagements in emotional projects, physiology of practices facilitates the creation of collective value by the interaction among users (Schau et al. 2005). As the influence of practices, Schau and colleagues (2005) conclude that brand

community equips participants with capital, establishes a repertoire of internal insights, triggers consumption opportunity and then produces the value. Ward (2005) agrees to this statement and points out that the practices of brand community around a brand appeal to participation and then the attachment to brand community. Finally, aesthetic knowledge is disseminated and strengthened in the brand community.

When Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) introduce brand public, they argue that the characteristics of brand public are closer to that of a crowd in comparison with that of a brand community. It becomes necessary to illustrate crowds prior to researching how to create values in brand public. Crowds mainly focus on the intense collection of affectivity rather than content creation or individual attractiveness (Arvidsson, Caliandro, Airoidi & Barina, 2015). Moreover, both brand public and crowds are ephemeral and unstable. Nevertheless, it is clear that the degree of ephemerality in crowds is higher than that in brand public. Arvidsson and his colleagues (2015) state that members of crowds in the social media are merely following a particular perspective with respect to the hashtags instead of a deliberate structure. Crowds are means of consumer emancipation, by which the spontaneous participation is temporarily liberated from panopticon of the market. Rather than the development of personal brands or charismatic qualities, crowds, with regard to the affective collection, play a crucial role of exerting network effects (Arvidsson et al., 2015). Crowds enable participants to trigger events, which would appeal to more participants who chase the collective identity through sharing the same emotions (Arvidsson et al., 2015). Crowds are a dynamic cycle and participants gain social signification. Arvidsson et al. (2015) insist that individuals who are enjoying the affective intensity such as appraisals and self-celebratory tweets, can gain more followers. Finally, crowds are rather of sentiment in relation to a prevailing trends and contemporary culture (Arvidsson et al., 2015).

In terms of brand public, Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) expound that with the occurrence of new events, people spontaneously participate in a loose community and the hashtag equips them with a way to fulfill the communication to create some form of social movement. By participating once or twice, a variety of users on social media, from inactive to active, are probably able to drive actions through the creation of self-expression. The self-expression in brand public, which refers to an internal insight in the loose community, is somewhat associated with charismatic quality. The rise of brand public is consistent with the transition in consumer culture from a reproductive to an innovative phase. There are hundreds of thousands of fragmented new ideas that are created and diffused in the advent of online social media. These different ideas and perspectives are difficult to be composed as integral as a brand community (Arvidsson, 2013). Additionally, in contrast to the deliberate definition of meaning, the words of the hashtag commonly are incompetent of representing a specific meaning, as Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) claim that the hashtags themselves are meaningless. Terms with the character, #hashtag, serve as a container, in which

individuals can convey any meanings. With a multitude of tweets containing similar information, the hashtag attaching to these tweets has acquired a coherent meaning, which is consistent with the content of tweets (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) contend that brand public becomes a vehicle by which the Twitter users have successfully imposed a coherent meaning on the meaningless character, #hashtag.

Brand public is the sphere, where publics take place around a brand Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016). Arvidsson (2013) points out that publics are a mediated way among strangers to possess a temporary emotion towards a certain event. According to Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) and Stage (2013), characteristics of publics are akin to that of crowds, but the formation of crowds should be more affect-intensive in comparison with publics. Publics in sum is spontaneous and autonomous, but it lasts relatively longer than crowds.

We move on to the literature review in the second section. Analyzing differential between the brand community and brand public sheds light on the characteristics of brand public. We are also able to discern what occurs in brand public, when several conversations take place around one topic. Meanwhile, based on the attributes of the hashtag, we may discuss what is created through retweeting and @replying and what the affect plays in the value creation of brand public. Bourdieu's theory of tastes equips us with an insight to reveal the consumer behavior on the social media. Applying Bourdieu's theory of tastes enables us to understand the function of brand public in the multidimensional status game. The third section introduces the method of this empirical analysis. While we legitimize netnography in this research, we explicitly introduce the data collection, preparation, and analysis. Based on different models mentioned in the literature review, we analyze the tweets in the fourth section to disclose the various value creation of brand public. In the end of the fourth section, we summarize what we have found. The fifth section is the conclusion, in which we summarize what we have found and point out the contribution of this master thesis.

## 2 Literature stream

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of brand public, brand community and crowd. To begin with, we introduce the concept of brand public, then compare the characteristics and values of brand public with communities and especially those in an online setting. In addition, we describe the brand public on Twitter and how value drives from the circulation of affectivity. Furthermore, we discuss micro-celebrity and the social status game on Twitter and enables us to acknowledge how brand public generate the value on Twitter.

### 2.1 Brand public

Arvidsson and Caliandro (2015) suggest a new way of how consumers create value of brands that differ from brand communities. The fundamental idea behind brand communities involves the mutual relationship between the consumer and the brand, as well as the other members of the community. The relationship that is built by the members creates a form of collectiveness between one another (Muniz and O'Guinn (2001). Arvidsson and Caliandro (2015) introduce the concept brand public, which is “an organized media space kept together by a continuity of practices of mediation” (Arvidsson and Caliandro, 2015, p.1). Brand public is characterized by a diverse set of personal experiences and perspectives shared among users rather than interacting with each other (Arvidsson and Caliandro, 2015). However, social platforms such as Twitter hashtags create a collective of expressions around the focal brand.

#### 2.1.1 The rise of communities

Brand community provides a valuable framework for showing how value drives from the connection between members. In brand public, the people generally have loose relationship with others in the network. However, during occasions the participants of brand public can drive a mass of otherwise disconnected people to come together. Therefore, it is essential to understand the rise of communities and the characteristics of the participants because in order to compare them to brand public.

The industrial revolution has given rise to the consumer culture which we live in today. The consumer culture is a form of capitalism where consumption plays a vital role in society (Sassatelli, 2007). The culture of modern-day consumption has eliminated geographical bonds and increased the commitment towards brands (McAlexander et al, 2002). Furthermore, the market shifted from a demand of unmarked commodities to branded products and the consumer could not find their own identity through the variety of

brands (Muniz and O'Guinn (2001). This period was the beginning of modern consumption collectives, which is characterized by the commitment consumers felt towards a product class, brand, or consumption activity (McAlexander et al, 2002; Thomas, Schau and Price, 2011). In consumer culture literature, researchers offer rich insights on how people create different forms of collectives, such as consumption communities (Boorstin, 1994), consumer tribes (Cova and Cova, 2002), subcultures of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander 1995).

Another form of collective, introduced by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) is the term brand community; which emerge from bonds that are created between members of a group towards brands. Brand communities offer members value beyond the functional and symbolic values delivered by the brand, they offer a place where members generate value through the interaction of like-minded people that share the same interest (Özbölük, Yunus Dursun, 2017). Thus, communities can undermine or strengthen brands by their collective actions (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Schau, Muniz, & Arnould, 2009; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995).

Scholars and researchers (Holt, 1995; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; McAlexander et al, 2002; Muniz O'Guin, 2001) agree that a community consists of a group of members and the relationship between them. They are characterized by a different set of mutual interests among the members; it can involve a neighborhood, a leisure pursuit or in the case of brand communities, the relationship to the brand (McAlexander et al, 2002). Thus, an essential element within a community is the connection members feel towards each other and how they distinguish themselves from others outside the collectiveness (Muniz and O'Guinn (2001).

Brand communities' base social interaction around the brand, which makes the social context fundamental to the construction of the community (McAlexander et al, 2002). However, brand communities still differ in geographic concentration (McAlexander et al, 2002). According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), a community developed to become "more than a place. It became a common understanding of a shared identity" (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001 p.3). Thus, it is not bound by geographical bonds, rather, characterized by the social relationship among the members of the brand. However, researchers have been critical since some communities are concentrated geographically, while others are more spread out (McAlexander et al, 2002).

Granitz and Wards (1996) argue that communities exist in cyberspace called virtual communities. Virtual communities overcome the geographical restrictions that some brand communities in the physical realm face (Özbölük, Yunus Dursun, 2017). Scholars and researchers have argued against the existence of virtual

community due to the reason that users don't have a social relationship with others and don't feel a sense of moral responsibility towards the community and the users within it (Granitz and Wards, 1996). According to McAlexander et al (2002), moral obligation is a core element for the existing of communities. This means the members of the group share a moral responsibility towards the community and the people in it. As a result, members of the community take collective actions. Holt (1995) researched consumers' subjective interaction with consumption activities. Although Holt's research did not focus on the practices of the collective consumption, He noticed individuals in a group are prone to follow the majority. Thus, those actions are an attempt at an engagement rather than a revolt against the existing group (Holt, 1995). Similarities can be observed in brand communities, where people assimilate to the actions of the community to create collective goals for the brand (Özbölül, Yunus, and Dursun, 2017).

### 2.1.2 Brand community and the online environment

An online brand community is a type of brand community that exists solely on the web. Online brand communities are a developed version of a physical one, in which members co-create content around the brand, which results in, a combination of a brand community and a virtual community. This makes it more convenient for people to interact with the brand and can express themselves freely (Özbölül, Yunus, and Dursun, 2017). However, in an online environment user can be anonymous and do not need to be active in the conversations. Therefore, the information shared with each other does not necessarily need to be in the best interest of the community. As a result, the social ties shared by the members of a virtual community does not need to be strong (Granitz and Wards, 1996). McAlexander et al (2002) argued that other personal information of the members outside of the brand can be shared but is not a necessity in communities. Furthermore, the activity of the members is also depended on variable occasions. The relationship of members does not maintain permanently (McAlexander et al, 2002; Thomas, Schau and Price, 2011).

Communities continued to evolve due to the technology and the ability, where people could communicate and move around more conveniently. Thus, the advancement of technology and the increased popularity and use of the internet allowed people to unite worldwide based on a shared identity (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Being able to connect people across geographical boundaries plays an essential role in online brand communities. Carvalho and Fernandes (2018) research on virtual brand communities and show users are no longer passive but active co-creators, where value is created through their self-expression. However, the social context differs from physical communities to those in a cyberspace setting (McAlexander et al, 2002). While the face-to-face communication takes place, the peer-to-peer interaction occurs in the online background, wherein an outsider can often join in the discussion (McAlexander et al, 2002; Carvalho and Fernandes, 2018; Granitz and Wards, 1996).

Granitz and Wards (1996) discuss the difference in communication and point out that virtual communities are still created by members that are connected by a shared interest (Granitz and Wards, 1996). Furthermore, the peer-to-peer interaction is a way both to create and co-create value within the community but also for visitors and other members (Carvalho and Fernandes, 2018). Özbölük, Yunus, and Dursun (2017) claim the brand benefits from collaborating with users in a community. Members share knowledge and experience of the brand with each other, which can create new insight for the brand. Researchers have questioned the role concerning brands within communities. Members of a community can start a discussion and control them spontaneously without the interfering of brands (Kozinets, 2002). However, the interaction between the consumer and the firm is essential for the exchange of value to occur in communities. Value co-creation is all about allowing the customer to build meanings, acting as partners to define the problems, and figuring out the best solutions. (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

The nature of digital networks, such as Twitter has introduced new ways for users to gain publicity by communicating, sharing their private concerns, and their perspectives with a broad network. (Arvidsson and Caliandro, 2015). Brand public contains more users than brand communities, where they often do not participate, anyone can join the discussion and there are no core members. Arvidsson and Caliandro (2015) claim that there is no real interaction between user. Instead, personal perspective and experience together with trending hashtags are the motivators. In brand public, users impose new value to the brand by sharing content on their everyday life situation associated with the brand. The collection of material drives further meaning with the potential to either endow or weaken the brand through different content. Thus, shared content around the brand becomes a form of publicity rather than a source of identity (Arvidsson and Caliandro, 2015).

### 2.1.3 The rise of brand public

Brand public applies to life in late modern consumer culture, which indicates how loose social networks are replacing group ties. This loose social network is shaped by the concomitant rise of social media and the smartphone with the integrated camera. Thus, consumers seek more personalized ways to engage in digitally networks, such as Twitter (Arvidsson and Caliandro, 2015; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Bennett & Segerberg (2012) introduced the concept the logic of connective action, which reflect these networks and how social media, such as Twitter impacts the logic of collective action. Connective actions are held together by networks with weak ties, while collective actions developed in brand communities represent the close relationship between the members. However, users in brand public still engage and participate in co-creation of shared understanding. Through this form of connective network, the user takes personal



action to speed up and increase the circulation of struggle. The users may struggle against economic, political, environmental problems or smaller injustices on a daily basis. One such success story is the People's Global Action (PGA) organization, which formed by a protest in 1998 in Geneva and the organization has become worldwide coordination of social movements against globalization and capitalism. They have developed many campaigns online in order to bring together inclusive and diverse users on social networks (Fenton, 2008).

#### 2.1.4 Summary of brand community and brand public

The figure (Figure 2-2) illustrates the characteristics discussed in the previous sections of brand community, online brand community and brand public. Brand communities have evolved due to advanced technology, which have allowed people to communicate more freely with others worldwide. Thus, we can see how the internet has changed some of the characteristics of brand communities and the concept of brand public share some of those characteristics.

Characteristics	Brand Community	Online brand community	Brand public
The interaction of like-minded people.	X	X	
The connection that the members feel towards each other and that they distinguish themselves from others outside the collectiveness.	X	X	
Fosters members passion, traditions and rituals.	X	X	
Individuals in a group are prone to follow the majority of the group.	X	X	
Collaboration between customers and brands.	X		
A moral responsibility towards the community and the people in it.	X	(X)	
Overcome the geographical restrictions.		X	X
Anonymity		X	X
Anyone can join the discussion.		X	X
Loose social networks and weak tie.			X
The drive of personal action.			
Aggregation of expressions and perspective.			X

Figure 2-1 The characteristics of brand community, online brand community and brand public.

### 2.1.5 Value-creation in brand public vs. brand community

The value that emerges from brand public is the effect of diverse meanings that create discursive power (Arvidsson and Caliandro, 2015). In the case of Arvidsson and Caliandro (2015), the hashtag #LouisVuitton represents the meaning of seeking to express themselves through conspicuous action, while the brand uses it for the efforts of corporate communication. Brand publics aggregate for compatible expressions and perspective, but it does not necessary provide a place for interaction between people.

Similarities of values can be seen in studies in new social movements (Arvidsson and Caliandro, 2015). New social movements refer to the new ways that people can interact due to Web 2.0 and bring about forms of collective political actions. The internet is a home for people who seek to engage in different movements, both for the people who are actively involved and also those who participate during occasions for instance

when an environmental issue has become public. The people that are partly active are more visible during periods of the incident, whereas during other periods they are relatively invisible. Furthermore, they lack membership within a community and do not produce universal values and goals other than the drive for social action (Fenton, 2008). Bennet and Segerberg (2013) suggest that willingness to engage in some form of political action can be described through the degree of personal actions to push the movement further rather than the collective efforts. In the logic of connective action, the co-creation of meaning and co-distribution of personal views is a central part of creating social change. Different social networks are brought together by technological platforms, which increase the information diffusion between users (Bennet & Segerberg, 2012).

Schau, Muniz, and Arnould (2009) discuss value-creating activities that from collective actions. Other researchers concerning consumer collectiveness (Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Lave and Wenger 1991, Warde 2005) support that value-creation occurs in communities with high relevance for business. Lave and Wenger (1991) have shed light on social and collective learning as value creation drives from communities. Co-creation refers to the value that comes from the collaboration between customers and producers (Özbölük, Yunus Dursun, 2017). In the traditional ways, value creation was only created internally in the firm and therefore did not include customers. In the wake of business, the importance of co-creation driven by consumers is discerned. Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody (2008) argue that the companies would enjoy the competitive advantage if they invite the consumer in the co-creation.

Schau, Arnould, and Muniz (2009) observe the value-creation practices in nine brand communities, where they find out that the practices create not only consumption opportunities but mutual value for both the brand and consumers. In their paper, they illustrate the process of collective value creation in brand communities, which includes the categories; social networking, impression management, community engagement and brand use. The first category, social networking consists of the practices, such as greeting new members, lending emotional support to other members, and explaining the expected behavior within the community. The second, impression management practices, involve the members to be active outside the brand community, where the focus is on inspiring others outside the collectiveness. The third, community engagement, involves practices that strengthen the commitment within the community. The fourth, brand use, refers to the practices that will improve the use of the brand (Schau, Arnould and Muniz, 2009).

In a collectiveness, the person shifts from personalizing actions to embracing the practices of the group (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Holt, 1995). However, the set of social practices espoused by the

members of a community has developed from the shared history and culture of the community (McAlexander et al, 2002). Arsel and Bean (2013) researched how brands form preferences and found out that it is the online collective engagement of users that continue to create meaning for the brand. According to McAlexander et al (2002), “one thing seems always to be shared: the creation and negotiation of meaning” (McAlexander et al, 2002 p.2) The members of the community share the same passion. However, they are still a heterogeneous group. Some users have been apart from the start, which can be classified as experts of the brand. Members that have developed a passion for the brand at a later time are considered as beginners. Thus, brand communities are characterized by a set of users with different level of engagement and participation which provided a fertile ground for creating further meaning to the brand (Özbölük, Yunus Dursun, 2017).

According to Arvidsson and Caliandro (2015), brand public adds a different form of value, where the emphasis lies on the publicities value to brands rather than the collective identity that emerge from brand communities. This is of particular importance for creating new meanings to the dimensions of value, where brand-related meanings are articulated outside of the brand community (Arvidsson and Caliandro, 2015). However, according to Schau, Arnould and Muniz (2009) value is still created beyond the brand community, where the members act as ambassadors of the brand. Brand communities are still characterized by the relationship between the members of a group towards brands. Furthermore, the connection between the members, and distinguish from others outside the communities is still the central point (Muniz and O’Guinn (2001).

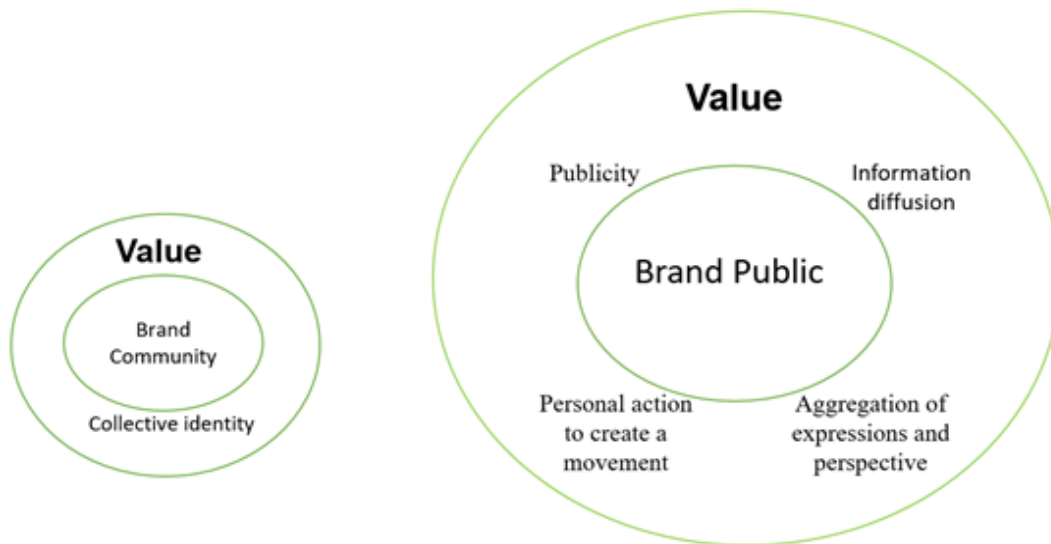


Figure 2-2 The value-creation in brand public and in brand community.

## 2.2 Brand public on Twitter

Twitter is a kind of social media platform where users are willing to share their own status, narrate events, interact with others, and express their emotion so that communication is created (Hansen, Arvidsson, Nielsen, Colleoni, and Etter, 2011, Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012). As Zappavigna (2011) states it, the appearance of Twitter is consistent with the rise of interpersonal fashion. Hansen et al. also attribute Twitter to both broadcastings such as news or traditional blogs and symmetrical interaction. They outline that the characteristics of applying Twitter consist of the one-way following, shared interests, public as default, and aspiration, which equates to a users' dream (Hansen et al., 2011).

### 2.2.1 Affectivity, the vehicle of the value creation of brand public

According to Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016), the affect is a vital constituent of brand public. We need to outline what else would be created by brand public with the development of emotion on Twitter. Furthermore, to expound the different characteristics of affect enables us to understand what brand public creates by means of affect.

Stage (2013) states that the distinction between publics and crowds is diminished in the wake of the online interaction. Stage (2013) has elaborated the conceptualization of both publics and crowds, to which Gabriel Tarde failed. Moreover, He argues that both publics and crowds are the results of affect, but the crowds are more affect-intensive. Affect refers to a body of emotions results from a series of tiny shocks (Stage, 2013). Brian Massumi (2009, p4) denotes that affect is an integral sensation, which is "inseparable from the concept of shock. It is really more about micro-shocks, the kind that populates every moment of our lives." According to Stage (2013), It becomes clear that publics and crowds on Twitter are not mutual exclusives, rather symbiosis. Stage (2013) establishes a new relationship between publics and crowds. Publics, which aggregate an affective cohesion, result in crowding on social media. Brand public is the sphere wherein publics caused by a mediation take place concerning a brand (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016), so that brand public by means of aggregating affect results in the occurrence of the crowds.

As crowding is commonly the result of the collection of members around an event, a hashtag becomes a mark with affect, by which the number of strangers is attracted to the event (Arvidsson et al, 2016). Papacharissi and Oliveira (2012) use #Egypt as a case to clarify that the hashtag plays an affective role when users post tweets regarding opinion expression. In their case, around #Egypt, the unstoppable retweets and reflection not only include different users' opinions, but their emotions towards the entire event and others' comments are involved. The #Egypt became a mark embracing emotion, in order to prompt more affective

input. Meanwhile, when Papcharissi and Oliveira (2012) researched the news storytelling by means of a hashtag on Twitter, they refer Twitter to an ambience wherein the emotion is eminent through hundreds of thousands of tweets in relation to a particular theme. As tweets embrace subjective attitudes and sentimental opinions, both publics and crowds take place on Twitter. They also point out that perception is the result of different affective actions toward an event, while it results in the movement of the event. These mediations are obviously to be one type of publics. The affect relentlessly ferments and ends up with crowding (Papacharissi, 2011).

### *The different characteristics of affect*

Papcharissi and Oliveira (2012) found that a popular tweet commonly triggers emotional feedback and is repeated. They also conclude that the repetition of tweets regarding the same topic rather enhances the affective engagement among Twitter users, when they retweet. According to Papcharissi (2011) and Papcharissi and Oliveira (2012), the Twitter users apply the circulation of affectivity to create the reflexive storytelling image. The emotional diffusion occurs on the basis of either one's emotion or other's reciprocal attitude, and then lay a strong function for the occurrence of publics and crowds. Therefore, we primarily focus on the effects of the affectivity on the emotional diffusion in order to understand the transition from the practices of brand public to crowds.

Overall, the more affective content is involved, the more information diffuses through word-of-mouth. Berger and Milkman (2013) elaborate the impact of emotion on the information diffusion, when they research the most-emailed list of the New York Times articles. They point out that as the useful information composing the content is the reason for the information diffusion, the affective content serves as a catalyst to trigger the information diffuses by means of word-of-mouth.

The different types of the affect attached to the tweets impacts on information diffusion differently. Berger and Milkman (2013) continued to discuss the association of the different types of affect with the information diffusion. They delineate that both positive and negative feelings generally facilitate the information diffusion. However, this statement contradicts Hansen and his colleagues' (2011) argument that only negative feelings tend to prompt the information diffusion in the news segment, whereas Hansen and his colleagues have admitted that the positive emotion is able to enhance the probability of diffusion in the non-news segment. This contradiction probably is the result of the different research methods, Twitter and most-mail list. The model applying Twitter corresponds to the logic of aggregation, which is a meaningful framework that creates interaction and then leads to the diffusion flow of information as well as the collection of individuals (Juris, 2012). On the contrary, the method, the most-mail list, is associated with

the logic of networking which is the cultural framework causes social and political networking practices by means of interaction (Juris, 2012). The logic of aggregation is commonly applied by a newcomer or even a stranger, whereas the logic of networking is obtained by the old members, (Juris, 2012). This provides an insight that the extent to which different users are close with each other causes the impacts of different emotions on information diffusion. It is a reasonable postulation that the behavior entailed in most mail lists are driven by the model of network organization, while the behavior on Twitter is to follow the logic of aggregation. Because the practices of brand public are prevailing to obey the logic of aggregation, we need to bear in mind that the negative affect is supposed to play a dominant role in the information diffusion in the news segment.

According to Berger and Milkman (2013), apart from the positive or negative emotion, the impacts of content embracing different emotions on the dissemination are more complicated. They state that given the simply cognitive information, the affect associated with awe, anger and anxiety facilitates the occurrence of information diffusion. Nevertheless, the affect in relation to frustration and sadness commonly hinders the information diffusion. It becomes necessary to research on the effects of the types of affect in the tweet on the information diffusion.

Our study contributes to consolidate the relationship between affect and information diffusion and disentangle the paradox in terms of the influence of positive content on the dissemination. It is possible to deeply understand the role of the affectivity played in the symbolic interaction in the social media. In the light of the relationship between brand public and affect, it is clear the knowledge regarding affect facilitates the understanding of the creating-value in brand public, crowds on Twitter.

### 2.2.2 Micro-celebrity on Twitter

Arvidsson and Caliendo (2016) attribute micro-celebrity to another value of brand public. As the characteristics of Twitter is symmetric interaction, the practices of brand public prompt the reaction of mediation. It is possible that other certain value created by brand public apart from the crowds. As Twitter allows for polysemic presentations, Marwick and Boyd (2010) contend that as a public sitting, users on Twitter present themselves and receive judgments from strangers rather than acquaintances or family members. They insist that nowadays individuals are serving as actors catering to the strangers, the audiences. It is clear that in contrast with this backdrop, the stage which corresponds to Twitter, is a place where this symbolic interaction occurs. Marwick and Boyd (2010) refers symbolic interaction to online discourse, primarily talking, through which a preferable self-image is established in the sociological perspective. As Stage (2013) mentioned that the distinction of public is the mediated exchange, brand public can generate

value, self-image, by means of symbolic interaction on Twitter. Accumulating the self-images over time will ultimately result in the micro-celebrity, by which one refers oneself to a celebrity on the internet.

The use of hashtags is bound up with the application of micro-celebrity (Page, 2012). Zappavigna (2011) reveals that the online discourse is a way by which tweets constitute perceivable metadata. In the metadata, there is an affiliation among various tweets. During the connection with different tweets, #hashtag as a linguistic character plays a crucial role in adhering to different people's coherent ideas (Zappavigna, 2011), whereas the hashtag itself is meaningless (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). Page (2012) also elaborates that frequently appearances of a particular hashtag enables a term to become discernible, searchable and visible. Applying the hashtag is to prompt users, who are sharing a certain interest, to aggregate (Hansen et al., 2011). The collection of tweets containing the identity hashtag composite 'ambient affiliation' (Zappavigna, 2011, P800). The ambient affiliation is one community of hashtag, wherein hashtags can represent a significant meaning (Zappavigna, 2011). Due to the ambient affiliation, the degree of attraction insofar becomes amplified (Zappavigna, 2011). In the light of searchability in the ambient affiliation, strangers can join in the symbolic interaction spontaneously without any previous discussions (Zappavigna, 2011). The ambient affiliation undergirds the reaction of mediation, which occurs on brand public. Through repetitive retweet and reflection, the hashtags appeal to other followers, the audience, called by Zappavigna (2011) into the affiliated ambience.

In the affiliated ambience, appealing to a variety of audiences is the way to ultimately generate the micro-celebrity. When Marwick and Boyd (2010) elaborate how to draw a potential audience's attention in the social media background, they have analogized it with the model of the writer's audience. The writer's audience consists of the real readers of the articles and the hypothetical readers imagined by authors; the authors can only think of the requirement of the hypothetical readers to cater to the real readers. Similarly, the Twitter users strive to cater to those potential audiences through imaging what their target readers want. If the authors successfully satisfy their target readers, then the Twitter users need to maintain the audience's interest with content such as news or the sentimental messages. Based on this practice, Twitter users would establish their own micro-celebrity by means of convincing others (Marwick & Boyd, 2010, Papacharissi, 2011). Papacharissi (2011) agrees with Marwick & Boyd and asserts that users are able to revise, improve, or reverse existing social norms through manipulating the conversation on social media, and the ambient affiliation is of importance in the process of self-performance.



### *Micro-celebrity vs. Celebrity*

The micro-celebrity is a status-building technique whereby ordinary users are able to express their opinions concerning what they have observed, notwithstanding that the celebrity practitioners entail a para-social interaction in order to promote themselves and cater to their followers (Page, 2012, Marwick, 2013). According to Marwick (2013), the influence of the micro-celebrity practitioners is restricted in the online interaction, while the offline celebrities or corporation influences on both online and offline environments. Based on the analysis of hashtags, Page (2012) clarifies that the manners by which an offline celebrity and a micro-celebrity practitioner draw audiences' attention on Twitter are also different. Whereas the celebrities in the real world tend to exploit the searchable hashtags continually, the micro-celebrity practitioners focus on the attach themselves to an individual network.

Page (2012) also argues that the conflicts between the offline celebrities and the micro-celebrity practitioners commonly take place. Marwick and Boyd (2011) disclose that the social status in real life is the underlying reason causing the disparity between celebrity and micro-celebrity. On the one side, the real celebrities can project their higher social profile to the social media, so that they are tagged as Very Important People. On the other side, only micro-celebrity cannot make individuals to obtain financial affluence.

As the difference between celebrity and micro-celebrity is great (Marwick & Boyd, 2011), it is necessary to distinguish which practitioners are more influential on social media. Marwick and Boyd (2011) argue that the celebrity practitioners are more influential than the micro-celebrity counterparts. However, based on an array of computer simulations of interpersonal effects, Watt and Dodds (2007) argue that no one can impact more than 100 other individuals in their empirical study. So, what Watt and Dodds (2007) found successfully diminishes the power of celebrity on Twitter. In other words, in comparison with the ordinary practitioners, the celebrity practitioners have no more influential. Watt and Dodd (2007, p441) even state that 'large cascades of influence are driven not by influence but by the critical mass of easily influenced individuals'. The cascade is to outline the interlocking process, in which influence triggers inactive users to become active. Moreover, when Bakshy, Mason, Hofman, and Watts (2011) research the influence of Twitter users by netnography, their statement is that a prominent individual cannot trigger the cascade of influence. They reject the intuitive hypothesis that celebrity is eligible to manipulate mass. They successfully defended the importance of micro-celebrity. The value creation of brand public, micro-celebrity becomes meaningful.

In the end, Bakshy and his colleagues' (2011) concludes that some small cascades driven by micro-celebrity are an appropriate vehicle to diffuse the word-of-mouth information on Twitter. This conclusion is supported by Basto, Raimundo, and Travitzki (2013). Rather than the number of followers, in the light of which the offline celebrities outperform the micro-celebrity practitioners, the user activity and individual network are the reason to lead to an influence on social media (Basto et al., 2013). According to Page (2012), only ordinary members, who are active, draw attention to maintain the relationship between themselves and the individual network. It is reasonable to argue that micro-celebrity plays a pivotal role in the cascades of influence on Twitter. In the end, the cascades of influence on social media results in micro-celebrity, which is the value created by brand public. Understanding the model, in which micro-celebrity as a technique on Twitter impacts other and builds status, enables us to acknowledge how brand public generate value on Twitter.

## 2.3 The theory of tastes

According to Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016), manifesting the diverse identities of the Twitter users is the value of brand public. Bourdieu has built up the model of social organization, by which the underlying motivations of manifesting the identity have been expounded (Trigg, 2001). Researching the social status game with respect to embodying the identity on Twitter facilitates the understanding of the value creation of brand public in this case.

### 2.3.1 Bourdieu's theory of tastes

In the book, 'Distinction: a social critique of the judgment of taste', Bourdieu (2010, [1984]) successfully establishes a paradigm of social organization. This paradigm of the social organization successfully undergirds and legitimizes theories concerning consumer behaviors such as trickle-down effect and trickle-up effect. Bourdieu (2010, [1984]) defines that social life equates to one kind of a multidimensional status game, in which people unconsciously conduct their behaviors.

The social status game composes of a conglomerate of resources such as economic, educational, social capital and cultural capital (Holt, 1998). Holt (1998) respectively expounds these resources: the economic capital is associated with the financial situation; the social capital focuses on the social network; the cultural capital derives from the milieu, in which one immerses itself in the daily life. Among different resources, Bourdieu (2010, [1984]) emphasizes the importance of the cultural capital in the social status game as no one can escape the game of culture. Holt (1998) delineates that cultural capital is an aggregation of one's daily experiences since they were born, brought up in a well-educated household, approached with a variety

of relatives with similar context, attended the high educational institution, and finally engaged in a certain occupation with particular skills. In the 19th century, well-educated household, top educational institutes, and skilled profession seemed scarce sources in the hierarchical society and possessing limited resources generally is an indicator of the dominant group in the multidimensional status game. According to Bourdieu (2010, [1984]), cultural capital typically stands for different scarce resources in the society, so that cultural capital becomes the symbolic capital (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

An amount of cultural capital serves as the elements of a subjectively psychological structure, habitus (Holt, 1998). Meanwhile, habitus can refer to a determinant, based on which people are commonly able to perceive an object, interpret it and express their attitudes and opinions towards it (Bourdieu, 2010 [1984]). Sassatelli (2007, p92) argues that “habitus is a system of transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures”. In other words, habitus is not only a compound of an amount of cultural capital, but the manifested habitus is also a component of the new habitus.

Moreover, Habitus is attributed to an intangible, non-context specific, and transposable disposition (Lizardo, 2004, Bourdieu, 2010 [1984]). In contrast with content-specific commitment, the habitus is spontaneously manifested by the different social fractions (Lizardo, 2004). While there is different habitus representing different fractions, the different habitus in a certain social environment allows people to perceive symbolic practices, which composite what is prevailing (Lizardo, 2004). Apart from the flexible characteristics of habitus, Lizardo (2004) also points out that notion of transposable disposition, which refers to constrictive characteristics of habitus, by samples of English speaking and understanding Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto. Lizardo (2004) argues that people are subject to their daily experiences, which serves as a rigid framework of other practices. For example, it is challenging for the English mono-linguists to get rid of their accent when they attempt to learn a second language. People, who have dropped out prior to the high education, are unable to appreciate Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto.

As habitus is an internal conglomerate of cultural capital concerning the daily experience, fields are the external stage where the multidimensional status game is held (Holt, 1998). Others cannot be directly aware of habitus without fields, and a particular cultural capital makes the elite group distinction with regards to the fields (Holt, 1998). For example, intelligent quality is dominant cultural capital in the field of education. The manner, whereby the cultural capital is embodied in the consumption field, is named as tastes by Bourdieu (2010, [1984]). Distinguishing the good tastes from bad tastes is an effective way to embody the distinctive cultural capital by means of consumption (Holt, 1998).

In turn, an array of consumptions of goods and services, which are the practices to embody good taste, constitutes lifestyle. The elites who are holding the dominant cultural capital in a particular field can determine what is the prevailing lifestyle. Meanwhile, they also prompt the transition of the current lifestyle. Their motivation for the transition is to attain the distinction in order to manifest their social status (Holt, 1998). The process of exhibiting the social distinction is named as “*invidious comparison*” by Bagwell and Bernheim’s (1996, p350). Holt (1998) also pointed out that as elites consume a particular object for the sake of distinction, masses tend to take advantage of same goods affinity in order for seeming escalation of their social status. The behaviors of the ordinary people are consistent with the term “*pecuniary emulation*” (Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996, p350). *Pecuniary emulation* is an embodiment, whereby in order to climb up the social ladder, the inferior members in the social hierarchy tend to mimic what the members in the next higher social status have done (Adams & McCormick, 1992, Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996, Veblen, 1994, Trigg, 2001). Both *invidious comparison* and *pecuniary emulation* are bound up with brand public on Twitter in the light of visibility and publicity. As the members with higher social status countervail the effects of *pecuniary emulation*, they are prone to consume unpopular goods. The consumption of unpopular goods is a way to attain the *invidious comparison*, which becomes visible through brand public on Twitter. Consuming unpopular products, which opposes the prevailing culture, is to distinguish them from the inferior members (Sassatelli, 2007; Berger & Ward, 2010; Trigg, 2001). The practices of brand public are a manner, whereby a variety of consumers on social media manifest themselves (Arvidsson & Calidandro, 2016). In other words, brand public enables the *pecuniary emulation* to occur on social media.

### 2.3.2 The problems with Bourdieu’s theory of tastes

Bourdieu’s theory successfully reveals the intrinsic mechanism of social status competition and legitimizes several dichotomies: high/low, rare/common, and brilliant/dull. The restriction of Bourdieu’s theory of tastes also needs to be drawn out. In the 20th century, the French society, where Bourdieu has established his theory, is a society with a strict hierarchy. Lamont and Lareau (1988) apply a mass cultural society, the United States, to challenge the validity of Bourdieu’s theory. They argue that the boundary of good tastes becomes a blur with the rise of the mass cultural society. They use music to describe it: In contrast with the classical music such as Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto, country music, which is the rural music, became popular after the second world war. It is difficult to argue what is good taste, nowadays, comparing the country music with the classical music. In sum, Lamont and Lareau (1988) argue that without the clear definition of the good tastes, Bourdieu’s theory of tastes cannot expound the consumer behavior in the mass cultural societies, such as the United States.

Holt is standing on Lamont and Lareau's shoulders and continues to challenge Bourdieu's theory of tastes in the modern day. He has found that people possessing less cultural capital resources were prone to ignore what refers to the good taste stemmed from the affluent cultural capital in a particular field (Holt, 1997). Holt (1997) proceeds to expound that nowadays the culture world becomes fragmenting. In the fragmenting cultural world, inferior members need not attend all fields, where they do not have sufficient cultural capital. In the end, the absence of a particular field prevents inferior members from exposing their bad tastes in the fields. So, *pecuniary emulation* is not necessary to work in this field.

Moreover, Ramstad (1998) not only casts doubt on the *pecuniary emulation* but also states that the elite group adapts to the taste of inferior group in the consumption trend. For example, the decent people were reluctant to have a tattoo in the traditional society. The tattoo culture initially was popular in the gang members or the criminals in prison. However, the celebrities such as pop musicians or movie stars have manifested their tattoos in different public occasions since the 1980s. The Tattoo culture has become mainstream culture. So, *invidious comparison* also becomes malfunctioning. Holt (1997) argues that elites who possess more cultural capital resources are ready to articulate what they prefer, through using common sense, and then convince others in order to naturalize the elites' preferences. It seems that the elite group gets rid of the invidious compassion in the social status game. At the mercy of the advertising system, the inferior members readily perceive the innovative design, which elites have selected (McCracken, 1986). For example, the new designs and styles are delivered swiftly by the fashion magazines. In the wake of the development of technology and the incessant appearance of innovation, the number of people who can be more easily aware of what the elite group prefers (Marwick, 2013). Because the elite group could not maintain the distinction for a long period, the invidious compassion adhering to tangible goods or service has lost its value.

### 2.3.3 Adjusted theory of tastes

In order to address those critiques, Holt has conducted to revise Bourdieu's theory of tastes to the modern society. Holt (1997) admits that Bourdieu's theory of tastes could not catch up with the social shifts and points out that consuming certain goods is not eligible to play the role of embodiment. In other words, a certain object is not enough to indicate the good tastes (Holt, 1997). He moves on and contends that rather the action of consuming a certain object than the object itself plays a crucial role in signifying the cultural capital given the ambiguous boundary of different social groups. The delimitation of consumption behaviors takes over the boundary of social hierarchy in the United States.

In order to defend Bourdieu's theory of taste Holt (1997) states that different cultural fields overlap in the wake of fragmenting the cultural world. The members who have a different amount of cultural capital in a particular field irrevocably interact with each other in the overlapping fields (Holt, 1997). For example, people with different educational degrees work together in the workplace. The students from different households attend in the same classroom. Due to the fact that various fields are overlapping, even if the inferior members attempt to be absent from one field, they would expose their mediocre taste in the other field. The countless and diverse interaction, by which the elites in a certain field are able to symbolize their prestige, facilitates the manifestation of social status (Holt, 1997).

Notwithstanding that the innovative styles and designs such as the name of good restaurants or favorite brands diffuse swiftly, Holt offers a new perspective to explain how to embody the tastes in the seemingly egalitarian society. While Holt (1997) agree with that the practice of manifesting tastes aims to the embodiment of distinction, he argues that the hierarchical boundaries become latent rather than disappeared. In order to bestow this assertion, he uses an example. Culture elites are willing to have a casual chat in daily life regarding specific cultural objects, and everyone with diverse milieus and tastes is welcome to participate the conversation; nevertheless, the cultural elites are only glad to share their specific ideas with people who emanate similar tastes in the certain field. It makes sense that the cultural elites disguise the underlying cultural capital of their taste when they are communicating with normal people in daily conversation. Berger and Ward (2010) elaborate that although the rise of internet facilitates the members of the inferior group to the adaptation of the dominant culture, the regular people cannot understand and exploit the essence of the dominant culture. For example, though everyone in China prefers to use MacBook, the elite programmers are in favor of the high quality of the screen and its lightweight, of which the regular people are never aware. On the contrary, the regular people emphasize that possessing a MacBook and using it in the coffee store are cool because the elites have done the same things.

According to the arguments above, Holt has established an adjusted theory of tastes. The core of the adjusted approach of taste is that idealistically cultural capital replaces the scarce social resource so that Holt's social elites take over Bourdieu's cultural elites (Holt, 1998). Holt (1998) states that the cultural elites exploit the idealism with regards to good tastes in the action of consumption to embody the distinction. It is clear that the differential of the aspiration successfully maintains the social status game when the material becomes affluent. First, he elaborates that the cultural elites advocate for environmentally friendly and organic goods. Second, the cultural elites prefer to select the goods associated with authenticity, as Holt (1998) asserts decommodified goods. The decommodified goods are by no means of economic rarity, but they can significantly stand for a particular habitus (Holt, 1998). He categorizes the bespoke tailors and

Haute Couture into the decommodified goods. Third, in contrast with homogenizing objects, the practices which different cultural groups entail are heterogeneous. (Holt, 1998). The consumptions the same objects have different meanings (Holt, 1998; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995).

In the light of the notion of the adjusted theory of tastes, the symbolic meaning of particular merchandise becomes rather ephemeral over time (Sassatelli, 2007). In comparison with the goods themselves, the meanings imposing on the goods are of more importance. The transition of the consumption among different goods is to embody the social status (Holt, 1998). According to the adjusted theory of tastes, Trigg (2001) addresses Ramstad's (1998) argument in terms of *pecuniary emulation*. Trigg (2001) illustrates that the middle-class not only work hard to climb up the social ladder but also try to distinguish themselves from the working-class as elites have distinguished themselves from the middle-class. Meanwhile, the elites adopt the consumption which is prevailing in the working-class, for the sake of the distinction from the middle class (Trigg, 2001). Berger and Ward (2010) elaborate what Trigg expounded as the elite group entails similar behaviors with working class for the sake of the distinction from the middle-class group. Bourdieu's theory of tastes still works even if the mechanism becomes more complicated.

#### 2.3.4 The theory of taste and Twitter

The advent of Web 2.0 is akin to the social shift in the mass cultural society. The web 2.0 prompts egalitarianism and transparency (Marwick, 2013). However, it is true that both the openness of communication and the clear hierarchy are not mutually exclusive. In the background of Web 2.0, everyone assumes that the society is egalitarian, and everyone is equally rich, whereas only the elites can consume luxury goods such as an Apple laptop or iPhone (Marwick, 2013). She also finds that while the wealthiest people tend to keep low-profile, the symbol of the elite group in the multidimensional status game becomes whether one can contact the rich. So, if one has manifested that s/he is an insider of the elite group through sharing information with elites, then s/he has successfully signified his/her relatively higher status. On the contrary, the outsiders referring to the lowest status have to strive to participate the network with an elite, in order to enhance their social status. According to Marwick (2013), the social relationship determines the distinction in the notion of tastes. It is possible that brand public is a vehicle by which people share information with each other on Twitter in order to reveal insiders' distinction.

The social media such as Twitter refers to a field, wherein multidimensional status game becomes visualized. Initially, Twitter is an aggregating social platform, on which a variety of tweets and retweets appear. According to Marwick (2013), the tweets, which are frequently retweeted commonly contain interesting, useful or valuable information. In other words, people only reiterate the information that is

worth diffusing. Visibility on social media through frequent retweets and the audiences indicates that the authors of the original tweets have good taste in the field, Twitter, and that the authors become distinctive. According to Holt (1998), acquiring distinction, as well as *invidious comparison*, is a way, whereby the elite group embodies their higher social status. Marwick (2013) proceeds to articulate that retweets and @replies are the ways, whereby the social status can be revealed on Twitter. Based on the theory of tastes on Twitter, the more other retweets, the higher status the authors of tweets acquire.

This thesis examines the adjusted theory of tastes in the new venue, online social media. Bourdieu's theory of tastes encountered an array of challenges, when scholars had imposed it on the new society, the United States. It becomes likely, that the adjusted theory of tastes would meet several doubts again when they are applied in another social platform, the online media. The adjusted theory of tastes lays a strong foundation for the value creation of brand public. Based on Holt's theory of taste, we wonder if the practices of brand public, as well as manifesting the social identities, facilitate *pecuniary emulation* on Twitter. If it is correct, the *pecuniary emulation* is the value created by brand public. Moreover, this study would insofar prompt that the openness on social media strengthens the social hierarchies and that higher status is built on social media (Marwick, 2013).

## 3 Method chapter

In the following chapter, we will present our methodological decisions taken in the research, research design of our study and reflections of our choice. We use the method ethnography on the Internet, 'Netnography' in order to study brand public around the hashtag #hm.

### 3.1 Qualitative Approach

#### 3.1.1 Research philosophy: Postmodernism

The nature of our study is studying the consumer culture in the modern society and we, therefore, apply the postmodern perspective. Postmodernism reflects the postmodernist condition of a society, which has developed from the advanced technology, globalization, differentiation of lifestyles and consumption of the society (Rzayeva & Oktay, 2016). A postmodern approach is suitable in an online sphere of brand public, where the social setting takes more than one form. The social reflections of the postmodern can be of help to understand the relationship between consumption and culture in an online context that can be found in brand public (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) stressed the neoliberalism when they established the notion of brand public. The neoliberalism is consistent with the online context, in which



consumers attribute their behaviors to egalitarian. However, we argue that neoliberalism behaviors cannot get rid of the consumer culture, as people who advocate emancipatory from consumption, have to buy a ticket for participating in the annual event in the western United States, Burning Man (Kozinet, 2002). When we take into account that the postmodernism can embrace heterogenous perspectives, the postmodern perspective can shed light on brand public in our study.

### 3.1.2 Constructionism and qualitative study

As postmodern theory as used by us is opposing objective realism, our study is therefore constructionism, through which we may find an underlying process of organization (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Constructionism refers to that we have established our theory in the wake of previous knowledge (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). In consideration of research issues, we attempt to explore the value creation through expressions and the interrelationship among different Twitter users. Our study is an approach, through which we apply our experience to interpret the expressions and interrelationship, to make sense of the world. We take it for granted that our interpretations with multiple perspectives are rather subjective than objective. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2015), for the sake of an appropriate understanding of the reality by means of observation in everyday life, constructionists, as well as us, are prone to select qualitative approaches including action study, ethnography, or narrative method in this study.

The qualitative approach enacted by this study enables us to reveal the rich underlying meanings of consumers self-expressions. Expressions are better understood from a qualitative approach rather than quantitative. According to Kozinet (2002), a qualitative approach will help to emphasize the underlying meanings, which is of particularly importance for our research. Furthermore, quantitative techniques cannot measure the nonverbal meaning between the interactions of individuals, which qualitative data can provide (Fisher 2005).

In our research, we use an abductive research approach. The abductive approach arises from going back and forth between the pattern of deduction and induction. According to Kovács & Spens (2005), abductive reasoning is a structured approach to develop “new” knowledge rather than focusing on generalization. The abductive reasoning seemed the most appropriate given the nature of the research aim. During our research, we researched on brand communities, brand public and crowds to understand what has been done before. We then moved back and forth between the relevant theories and data as new insight was presented and sheds lights on each other. Thus, by using an abductive approach, we can develop “new” knowledge on the concept of brand public.

## 3.2 Netnography

The research method, Netnography is ethnography over the internet. Thus, a combination of the principles of ethnography with techniques used for the online environment. The method is designed for the researcher that wants to observe cultures and communities online (Kozinets, 2002).

According to Easterby-Smith et al (2015), ethnography is a traditional manner by which researchers explore the underlying meanings of members' experience, which is shared in a group. Similar to ethnography, netnography is interpretative and flexible, however at the same time it is easier to use, allows the researcher to conduct the study in a faster way and its less expensive (Kozinets, 2002). Compared to another qualitative research method, netnography is less obtrusive, whereby the researcher interprets the consumer behavior in the actual context without interruption. This means that the research environment becomes more real, where the consumer is not affected by researchers who are observing (Kozinets, 2002).

Kozinets (2002) proposes five criteria for studying online brand communities since they are adapted to the unique characteristics of an online setting. Online communities should have (1) a focused topic, (2) high posting traffic and (3) a high number of discrete message posters, (4) detailed or descriptively rich data and (5) a high level of member-to-member interaction. Even though, the criteria suggested by Kozinets (2002) focus on online brand communities, the criteria still shed light on our study regarding brand public. We have revised the criteria (1) and (5) to meet the characteristics of brand public. Due to fact that brand public embraces diverse social groups, selecting several topics facilitates the understanding of the different value creation in brand public. In light of the little interaction in brand public, focusing on the publicity corresponding to a variety of tweets is necessary for our study. We did a pilot study on the hashtag #hm in which we have revealed the relationship between the content created by users and the brand. The pilot study gives us an indication on how many posts users create over the time, so that our study meets the criteria (2), (3), and (4). We could also observe that a diverse set of tweets around the focal brand. During the period of the data collection 2017-12-01 to 2018-04-09, we even knew that many different public discussions around incidents related to H&M were happening during the time. Therefore, there has not been a concern of not finding rich data since the users were somewhat active around the focal brand.

Consumer culture research has successfully explored online brand communities. Previous researchers studying value-creation in brand communities use in-depth interviews with community members, observation of communities, ethnography and also netnographic research on forums, blogs, communities that center around a specific brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Schau, Muniz, & Arnould, 2009; Özbölük,

Yunus Dursun, 2017; Kozinets, 2002). Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) use a netnography approach in the study of brand public in order to understand how people interact and what they talk around the brand Louis Vuitton on Twitter. The authors have adapted the netnography approach to suit the environment of Twitter, where the observation will surround the interaction of hashtags related to the brand (Arvidsson and Caliandro, 2016).

In the article of Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016), they studied the high fashioned brand Louis Vuitton to develop the theory of brand public. Our research aims at extending the boundary of the notion of brand public. Thus, we have chosen to apply a different type of brand that can emphasize various aspects of brand public. Our choice was the multinational fashion company, H&M. Based on the characteristics of H&M; a high-street brand that covers a variety of markets segments, since more people can afford the goods of H&M and, there is more publicity that occurs. We will have more opportunity to disclose the different value creation associated with brand public. In comparison with Louis Vuitton, which commonly is possessed by elites, researching on H&M sheds light on how members behave around a mass-market brand on Twitter.

### 3.3 Twitter

In the last decade, social networks, such as Twitter have grown in popularity, especially for discussing news and social events. According to Omnicore' report (2018), the average amount of tweets per day is 500 million, and the number of daily active users is 100 million in 2017. People participate more in brand public compared to brand communities (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). The enormous amount of data produced on a daily basis is usually organized by a user-driven way to organize tweets called hashtag. Marking a hashtag is a way to organize and categorize content by applying the symbol # before or after the specific word that represents the topic. The development of hashtags was first introduced on Twitter and has continued to prompt to communicate on diverse issues nearly on every social media platform (Demasi et al, 2016). Thus, hashtags are more than just organizing content; it is used to connect to public discussions and build communities around a specific topic (Yang et al. 2012).

Hashtags play an essential role in studying the interaction between users online (Demason, Masi and Ma, 2016). In contrast with the traditional way, by which the conversations on forums have been collected, we have entailed the netnography approach to scrape the tweets through the #hm hashtag. According to Demason, Masi and Ma (2016), the meanings of a hashtag are different and ambiguous. For example, the hashtag #wow can refer to the World of Warcraft game or the word 'Wow' to express an exclamation of surprise, wonder or pleasure (Dictionary.com, 2018). For eliminating this problem, we have combined

scraping data on Twitter with co-hashtag analysis to study the Twitter content. The tweets which contain the relevant hashtag #hm are collected using the program Python.

### 3.3.1 Anonymity on Twitter

Individuals usually disclose the part of their real identity in an online setting. Thus, the virtual identity on Twitter can differ from the person's real identity. The users might use their real name, but there are also individuals that are well-known by their virtual nicknames, like the educator of environmental problems, Raul Pacheco who is recognized online by his nickname, hummingbird604 (Kietzmann et al, 211). On Twitter users don't have to provide their real names but they have to use a pseudonym which creates close ties to anonymity. Since the users don't have to give a real name on their Twitter account, the platform has been a popular place to exchange and access information, expressions and feelings without being identifiable (Peddinti, Ross and Capps, 2016). This can create both a more open environment to discuss different topics, share experiences and emotions without being connected to the person's real identity. However, at the same time, the anonymous user can feel less responsible for their actions, and it can result in individuals being more hateful towards one another since it is not considered the "real world".

### 3.3.2 Sharing on Twitter

The act of sharing involves the way users exchange, distribute and receive content. In order to be 'social' on networks, people usually exchange information, thoughts and feelings with each other. So, sharing is a way of interacting with other users in social media and the different functions of sharing change the way users interact on the different platforms. On Twitter, users can retweet other tweets, which is a form of sharing the original tweet with your own audience. Users might comment through retweeting or just copy and paste the original tweet to show that they support the original tweet and agree with the opinion in the original tweet. Retweeting can be understood as a form of information diffusion since the tweet reaches a new network (Marwick, 2013). The retweeting is to imply a certain value of the original tweet, even though the Twitter users who have retweeted can bring additional meaning to the post by adding their own view of the information or they can just retweet the original information. Thus, these actions propose that the content of the original tweet contains relevant information (Arvidsson et al, 2015). Based on the relationship between retweets and the original tweets, we have applied the number of retweets to reveal what kind of content the Twitter users are most concerned. Retweeting is a way that shows the relevance of the original tweet. Therefore, many retweets indicate that many users consider they are relevant to the original tweet. (Arvidsson et al, 2015; Marwick, 2013). Furthermore, It also depends on the features of the platform, on for example LinkedIn user might share more work-related information while on Twitter, people manifest

themselves more through unconscious ‘self-disclosure’ of subjective information such as likes, dislikes, personal thoughts and feelings (Kietzmann et al, 211).

### 3.4 Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four criteria within trustworthiness for assessing the quality of qualitative research. Trustworthiness is made up of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability.

Credibility in the qualitative research equals internal validity (Bryman & Bell, 2015), which involves finding a middle ground between the observations and theoretical viewpoint they established (Bryman, 2001). In order to build credibility, the researcher needs to ensure that the study is done according to good practice and to ensure that the researcher has understood the context of the study (Bryman, 2001). Transferability parallels external validity, which refers to the generalization of findings (Bryman, 2001). Thus, transferability is established when the reader can observe that the findings of the study can be put into different opinions, attitudes and feelings (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

By using netnography, the researcher can learn everything about a new culture and the interaction among people from the inside. In the brand public, we can observe the aggregation of different opinions and feelings around a hashtag. Netnography shares the same approach as ethnographic, where the researcher can observe an event when it occurs and without anyone interfering (Kirk and Miller, 1986). In our study, we follow the brand public through the hashtag #hm to understand key processes to obtain value-creation. The credibility and transferability of our study might strengthen when we apply netnography in comparison with the traditional ethnography. In a netnographic study, the researcher observes the actions and behaviors independently from the person, which minimizes the risk for data to be cultivated and controlled (Kozinets, 2002). This creates a unique opportunity to gather and interpret specific data without affecting the actions of those involved (Kirk & Miller, 1986). In other words, Netnography equips researcher to observe a variety of stakeholders and their behaviors in the event without obtrusiveness. Based on the netnography approach, we are observing tweets that have already been posted, while we do not affect the collected data.

Dependability parallels with reliability (Bryman & Bell, 2015), the purpose of the measurement of reliability is to ensure that the study can be replicated and that the researchers agree about what they have observed (Kirk and Miller, 1986). The findings need to be consistent and repeatable to establish the criteria dependability, which makes the criteria vital to increase trustworthiness (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This study

involves a subjective approach to understand the context that is created in a brand public. Therefore, there is reliability partially in the method of netnography because each researcher's experience is unique and their reality is only accessible from their perspective.

Based on the method discussed above, we will present a guideline of the data collection and the data analysis in order to attain dependability. We insist that our findings are somewhat repeatable with the raw data by following the steps in the data collection and data analysis listed below. The steps (Figure 3-1) are described in detail in the sections; 3.5. Data collection and 3.6. Data Analysis.

#### Data Collection

- Step 1 collecting tweets with the hashtag #HM on Twitter
- Step 2 saving all scraped tweets in the database, MongoDB
- Step 3 screening the data manually
- Step 4 establishing the co-hashtag list

#### Data Analysis

- Step 1 finding the most frequently mentioned tweets to define the topics
- Step 2 observing the value in the content of the most frequently mentioned tweets
- Step 3 analysis traffic volume of hashtag #HM
- Step 4 observing the processes of value creation

*Figure 3-1 The steps that our study follows in the data collection and data analysis in order to create dependability partially.*

Confirmability parallels with objectivity, which involves that the research study's findings are based on participant's perspective and own words rather than possible researcher biases. In our research, we are observing expressions and the interrelationship among users on Twitter before we as the researchers made our incursion into the social context. Therefore, our study can obtain a high degree confirmability since we present the perspective and words of the users through the content in the tweets.

## 3.5 Data collection

### **Step 1: Collecting tweets with the hashtag #hm on Twitter**

The first step involves collecting tweets containing the hashtag #hm. The tweets are collected by the program Python (obtained in the website, [www.github.com](http://www.github.com)), by which we managed to collect scraping data on Twitter. The program collects the tweets from the twitter for the desired time period of analysis, based on the search function rather than scraping the data through Twitter's API port. For our research,

scraping data by means of the search function is a better option because we want to gather data with the hashtag, #hm, and the API has a restricted policy, where data can only be gathered around the users rather than the hashtags.

## Step 2: Saving all scraped tweets in the database, MongoDB

All scraped tweets have been saved automatically in the database, MongoDB in this step. In the database, the information is structured into columns based on the attributes; database ID, number of retweets, URL, the text in the tweet, username, date of the publication, replies, retweets and user's ID number (Figure 3-2).

The first column named as database ID consists of the unique codes in relation to tweets posted on Twitter. Nbr\_retweets, refers to the number of retweets of the tweet in the second column. Thus, we can observe how many other users have retweeted the tweet. User\_id refers to the unique ID of the Twitter users. The User ID is assigned by Twitter, when the users sign up on Twitter. URL refers to a hyperlink, which is the specific address of the tweet. By adding, for example, the URL: [movietvtechgeek/status/951198004840620032](https://www.twitter.com/movietvtechgeek/status/951198004840620032) after [www.twitter.com](https://www.twitter.com), we can read the tweet in the online setting of Twitter. Text refers to the content of the tweet, so that we can directly get access to what the Twitter users have expressed. UsernameTweet represents the username of the Twitter account. This can also be helpful when we seek for the users of a particular tweet. Nbr\_reply represents the number of replies to each tweet.

_id	nbr_retweet	user_id	url	text	usernameTweet	nbr_reply
ObjectId(5a5a312c403e450a71ad24a5)	4698	2.467E+09	/Blavity/status/951217968830173190	Mother of #HM hoodie model responds to backlash.  Blavity		477
ObjectId(5a5a3163403e450a71ad293b)	2509	621481992	/HIPWEEKLY/status/950950260393873408	# ListenToThis @cashflowharlem went in on #HM (HIPWEEKLY		172
ObjectId(5a5a3130403e450a71ad24f4)	2267	18372616	/movietvtechgeek/status/951198004840620032	Latest: H&M and 'I don't see color' politics don't cut movietvtechgeek		0
ObjectId(5a5a3101403e450a71ad212c)	2126	18372616	/movietvtechgeek/status/951560624915410944	UPDATE: Latest: H&M and 'I don't see color' politicmovietvtechgeek		0
ObjectId(5a5a3272403e450a71ad3f8f)	2022	1262578176	/ArianelaSelene/status/950207848910290944	@hm this is inappropriate, offensive, and racist. Why ArianelaSelene		1361
ObjectId(5a5a3270403e450a71ad3f59)	579	1.348E+09	/SirMaejor/status/950243150970474497	H&M PROVES TO THE WORLD THAT THEY AR SirMaejor		69
ObjectId(5a5a319a403e450a71ad2dfa)	520	24388490	/JoshEdwards88/status/950786752834351106	If you're white you have no say what is and isn't racistJoshEdwards88		0
ObjectId(5a5a311a403e450a71ad233e)	377	110396781	/ajplus/status/951330163572146176	Artists to #HM : We fixed that racist ad for you ... pi ajplus		25
ObjectId(5a5a3200403e450a71ad363d)	355	11912362	/WORLDSTAR/status/950559101758603264	FatboySSE and friends have a message for #HM @FaWORLDSTAR		62
ObjectId(5a5a3271403e450a71ad3f70)	305	16144221	/nuffsaidNY/status/950233254791143424	That one Black Marketing intern at H&M coming into nuffsaidNY		8
ObjectId(5a5a325a403e450a71ad3db5)	200	116894355	/Hannahgboola /status/950390699601661952	Let's flip the script #HM pic.twitter.com/RSab2l267i Hannahgboola		16
ObjectId(5a5a3271403e450a71ad3f7d)	194	39427287	/JamesJeffersonJ/status/950220668410372096	H&M wild for this one! Not screaming racism just scr JamesJeffersonJ		23
ObjectId(5a5a3190403e450a71ad2d12)	179	302204453	/namirari/status/950808899170553856	In case you needed another reason to avoid H&M: "T namirari		3
ObjectId(5a5f12e7403e4548758fa721)	164	64643056	/RT_com/status/952232498129461248	# HM stores trashed by anti-racism group over 'monRT_com		127
ObjectId(5a5f12c0403e4548758fa351)	160	2.918E+09	/JPY_Kurdish/status/952653330353934336	# SouthAfrica : Prominent Black racist politicians inc JPY_Kurdish		32
ObjectId(5a5a321f403e450a71ad38b5)	145	246519126	/HBCUBuzz/status/950502423612674048	He is royalty #hm pic.twitter.com/uv5oh1XYZR HBCUBuzz		5
ObjectId(5a5a31a1403e450a71ad2e80)	128	316428659	/ZuluPanther/status/950776437514088448	White supremacy does not make mistakes! If you beli ZuluPanther		16
ObjectId(5a5a318b403e450a71ad2ca7)	114	65610272	/StefanPierre/status/950819410742337544	Obviously it's not my place to comment on whether # StefanPierre		15
ObjectId(5acb0212403e45fa4c760d00)	277	384287774	/hmpilippines/status/981003398395940864	SPRING KEY TREND: Give a little cold shoulder thi hmpilippines		3

Figure 3-2 The database and how the information is structured into columns based on different attributes.

The period of the collection is from 2017-12-01 to 2018-04-09. We gathered the data in every two weeks. The data was collected on Friday 15:00 o'clock on every batch and we got in total nine batches. However, the last batch 2018-03-23 to 2018-04-09 included three more days to get as much data as possible and include the weekend as well. Because the Twitter users have the habit of deleting tweets after a while. Petrovic, Osborne & Lavrenko (2013) analyzed why Twitter users delete their tweets and suggest that users regret posting content associated with negative emotions and as a result the users remove them. In the nature of Twitter, users can also decide to make the tweets private. Although the user's friends are still available to read the private tweet, no one else outside the network has access to them anymore. Furthermore, the user might also delete their account, which results in that all of the tweets get deleted. Therefore, with an interval of two weeks, we were able to get more information including those tweets that contain negative content. After scraping, the total data collection includes 48884 tweets.

### **Step 3: Screening the data manually**

Because of the number of tweets with irrelevant information, we have to clean the data manually. Manually screening the data is an essential step as the aim is to make the data more readable and to remove the information which doesn't lie in our focus. We had already screened the data for from the 2017-12-01 to 2018-01-25 since it was a part of our database for our pilot study. So, we split the data from 2018-01-26 to 2018-04-09 into two parts for screening, the first was from 2018-01-26 to 2018-03-22 and the second one, from 2018-03-23 to 2018-04-09. Because each of us was responsible for manually screening a part of the data, it is necessary to set up a protocol in order to avert bias. Kozinet (2002) argues that the information in the study should be understandable for the researchers, so we should remove the tweets in which the language is not English or Swedish. Furthermore, the hashtag #hm can have different meaning besides from the brand. For example, in some tweets, the hashtag, #hm, can refer to Heavy Metal. Therefore, we have manually removed tweets that were not represented by the actual brand. After the screening, there are 20775 tweets in the dataset.

### **Step 4: Establishing the co-hashtag list**

In order to understand a whole picture in terms of #hm hashtag, we proceed to a co-hashtag analysis, by which we study the relationship between #hm hashtag and other hashtags that coexist in the same tweet. We extract the column 'text' in the database that represents the text content of the tweet, and then we copied and pasted into a new excel file. We have imported the excel file into the NVivo, a linguistic analysis software, to extract the hashtag from the text content. By using the query function in NVivo, we can fetch every word that has the symbol '#' from the content of tweets, and convert them from a matrix into one column. As a result, we now have collected all hashtags that has co-occurred with #hm hashtag.



To find the most popular co-hashtags over the time from 2017-12-01 to 2018-04-09, we have established the top five popular co-hashtag list (refers to the popular hashtag list). We have combined all tweets in every two days so that there are 60 intervals in the research period. Based on the function of NVivo, we have selected five most popular co-hashtags applied by the Twitter users when they talked about H&M in every interval. We have listed the top five co-hashtag table in the (Appendix A).

## 3.6 Data analysis

Arvidsson and Caliandro's (2016) have categorized the material shared around the Louis Vuitton public into the categories: “*sale*”, “*news*”, and “*self-presentation*” to get an overview of different tweets. The content of tweet that falls into the category of *sale* represents the authors attempt to promote merchandise of Louis Vuitton. The category, *news* represents both financial news and fashion information associated with Louis Vuitton, while the *self-presentation* category focuses on what have been expressed concerning personal opinions and attitudes. By using the categories; *sale*, *news*, and *self-presentation*, we can observe the different value-creations that occur among them. However, we think that the categories are rather broad for our research. When we look at the various topics that mention the hashtag #hm, we can see that the brand is associated with complex meanings in comparison with the hashtag #LouisVuitton that is used in the research of Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016). The contents of tweets they gathered from the high-fashion brand Louis Vuitton were more homogeneous because the relationship between Louis Vuitton and the users is simple in all of the three categories. While in our research, the categories include a variety of topics, which describes how the brand H&M is in relation to the diverse personal perceptions.

### **Step 1: Finding the most frequently mentioned tweets to define the topics**

In the first step, we defined the topics by analyzing the popular hashtag list and the content of the most frequently retweeted post. Based on the top five co-hashtag list, we have grouped these popular hashtags, which represents the same event, into a topic so that the topic is named by the theme of the event. We can focus on variable events around the #hm hashtag and avoid losing in the overwhelming data. Based on the different topics on Twitter, we have successfully distinguished several groups of imitation or interaction from the diverse and chaotic assemblage of discourse. Moreover, applying different topics facilitates the understanding of the interaction or the imitation around the #hm hashtag, while brand public takes place around the brand, H&M.

In order to properly establish the different topics, we have followed three criteria: 1. the hashtag, of which is supposed to be mentioned more than ten times in every time interval on the popular hashtag list, is probably able to be involved in a topic; 2. the time point, in which a hashtag in relation to a topic appears in the popular hashtag list, is the beginning of the topic. Meanwhile, the time point, in which all hashtags associated with the topic disappear, indicates the end of the topic. 3. the hashtags in relation to a topic should continuously exist on the popular hashtag list. In other words, compared with a hashtag, previously existing on the popular list, the same hashtag recurring on the list after the amount of time is probably able to represent another topic. The meaning of hashtag around a particular event is ephemeral (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). We insist that given a term, the different Twitter users convey a different meaning and signal over time. To avert the latent risks concerning miscategorized topics, we have to assign one identical hashtag into two topics if it is interrupted on the popular list. Because a tweet can contain more than one hashtags, moreover it is possible that the different topics are overlapping. The different topics enable us to understand the most social formation associated as well as brand public given a certain event. In the end, we have selected 11 different topics. We have listed the names of the topics and the categories with respect to the topics (Figure 3-3).

To eliminate the problem of the tweets that only contain the hashtag #hm, we would manually assign it to a particular topic about its content. We assume that a specific hashtag will appear more frequently during specific topic, and then it may vanish when the circulation of expression around the topic has calmed down. So, different events are manually separated, based on the hashtags which continue appearing on top five popular hashtags list over time. Every tweet containing the hashtag refers to the consumers' expression of the event in relation with H&M. It is possible that different topics are overlapping in a timespan.

Moreover, Arvidsson et al (2015) found out that the majority of the tweets are retweets. A user can either retweet the original tweet or add their perspective to the retweet. However, the content of the retweet will still be similar to the original tweet (Arvidsson et al, 2015). Thus, by analyzing the content of the most frequently retweeted post, we are able to categorize the different topics. Furthermore, if a tweet is retweeted a large number of times, one can argue that it has been assessed as relevant by many other people (Marwick, 2013). So, by analyzing the content, we are also able to observe the content of the tweets that users think relevant.

## **Step 2: Observing the content of the most frequently mentioned tweets**

In this step, we define what kind of content the most retweeted post has on the different topics. We do so by observing how the user expresses their behavior or attitude on a particular topic. The retweet can contain

the same personal perspective as the original tweet. By contrast, some users can decide to retweet parts of the tweet, leaving out the private view on the information posted.

### **Illustration of the topics within the different categories**

Category	Topic	Define
News	HM's stock price	The general information in the stock market and H&M's stock performance
News	General fashion information	The fashion news
News	Information about the new season	H&M's lookbook for Spring/Summer season 2018
Sale	Nickiminaj	The promotion of the collaboration between H&M and Nickiminaj
Sale	Holiday Sale	The promotion about the holiday season including christmas and new year
Sale	Sale of new season	The promotion of the new season
Self-presentation	Capitalism of H&M	The critic regarding H&M's misbehavior
Self-presentation	H&M vs Street Art	The critic regarding plagerism
Self-presentation	Outfit of the day	Personal fashion style in terms of outfit of the day
Self-presentation	Racist Commercial	The critic regarding HMs commercial, where a young black boy was wearing a sweater with the text "Coolest Monkey In the Jungle"
Self-presentation	Vandalistic News	The vandalism in one of HMs stores in South Africa after the commercial ad "Coolest Monkey in the Jungle"

*Figure 3-3 The different topics within the categories*

#### **Step 3: Analysis traffic volume of hashtag #hm**

We have established a timeline that presents how many tweets including hashtag #hm in every two days over the time. The combination of the brand hashtag and the hashtags referring to the relevant topics creates further public attention (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). We wonder if there is a relationship between the high volume of retweets and the popular co-hashtag list. Therefore, it's essential to analyze different co-hashtags since a topic is shown to be more visible when using co-hashtags. Moreover, the tweet with a certain hashtag usually includes new co-hashtags about a topic. It is consistent with that the members of the brand public can define a new hashtag when they discuss something new (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016).

#### **Step 4: Observing the processes of value creation**

In this step, we look at the value creation by studying the interaction between the popular tweet and the tweets that have retweeted the popular tweet. The retweeted post will bring further meaning to the tweet. For example, in the retweets, some may just retweet the post without adding their own expression or perspective to the topic, while others will add further meaning to the tweet. By doing so, we will observe how value is created through how users drive further meaning to the brand through the assembly of the variety of contexts that are created from the diverse tweets. We could reveal how further meaning has been added and transformed the value in terms of the value created by brand public.

We have also applied the key words in context (KWIC) in order to analyze the impact of affectivity on the different categories. KWIC is used as a technique to understand what users discuss by cautiously observing the words (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Based the linguistic analysis software, NVivo, we have identified unique words used in the tweets and also in the retweets and then calculated how often those words appear. We have then made a word cloud, where the size of the word matches the times the word has been used. Thus, the bigger size of the word is indicated that the users have mentioned the words more frequently in the tweets.

## 4 Findings and analysis

In the following chapter, we will present the 11 topics within the categories to analyze the empirical data. At first, we will observe the value in the content of the most frequently mentioned tweets, followed by analyzing the hashtags around the different topics. We will then expose our findings and analyze the process of value-creation related to connective action, affectivity, micro-celebrity and the social status game.

### 4.1 Analyzing the content of the most frequently mentioned tweets

We defined 11 different topics from the 2017-12-01 until the 2018-04-09. In order to define the topics, we analyze the content of the most frequently retweeted posts. In the research on crowds and values by Arvidsson et al (2015), they found that 70% of the tweets are retweets. Thus, the action of retweets shows some form of habit among users and a way to endorse other personal expressions (Arvidsson et al, 2015). Furthermore, users may also retweet someone else's post and add their own perspective on the topic, thus similar content can be found in those retweets. As retweeting is a user's way of showing the relevance of a tweet, a tweet with many retweets indicates that those retweeting users are concerned with the content of the tweet. (Arvidsson et al, 2015; Marwick, 2013). By analyzing the content of the most frequently

retweeted post, we can categorize the different topics. Therefore, another reason for focusing on the content of the frequently mentioned tweets is because it can help us define what users considers relevant (Arvidsson et al, 2015).

**Illustration of the topics within the different categories**

Category	Topic	Hashtag that co-exist with #HM	Define
News	HM's stock price	#aktier, #pratapengar	The general information in the stock market and H&M's stock performance
News	General fashion information	#fashion	The fashion news
News	Information about the new season	#ss18	H&Ms lookbook for Spring/Summer season 2018
Sale	Nickiminaj	#nickiminaj	The promotion of the collaboration between H&M and Nickiminaj
Sale	Holiday Sale	#holiday, #christmas, #newyear, #zara	The promotion about the holiday season including christmas and new year
Sale	Sale of new season	#poshmark	The promotion of the new season
Self-presentation	Capitalism of H&M	#kapitalism	The critic regarding H&M's misbehavior
Self-presentation	H&M vs Street Art	#revok, #streetart, #boycotthm	The critic regarding plagerism
Self-presentation	Outfit of the day	#ootd	Personal fashion style in terms of outfit of the day
Self-presentation	Racist Commercial	#hmracist, #racist, #coolestmonkeyinthejungle, #racism, #boycotthm, #badadvertising, #wtf, #alllivesmatter	The critic regarding HMs commercial, where a young black boy was wearing a sweater with the text "Coolest Monkey In the Jungle"
Self-presentation	Vandalistic News	#eff, #soutafrica	The vandalism in one of HMs stores in South Africa after the commercial ad "Coolest Monkey in the Jungle"

Figure 4-1 The illustration of the topics within the different categories

#### 4.1.1 The topic: HM's stock price

The Value Investor v.03 Det farliga PE-talet (del 2, låga #PE). #analys #aktier #NETB #HM tradingportalen.com/value-investor ...

The Value Investor v.03 The dangerous PE century (part 2, low #PE). #analysis #shares #NETB #HM

Figure 4-2 The tweet had the highest number of retweets in the topic HM's stock price. The post was retweeted two times.

In the category *news*, the topic *HM's stock price* was the most mentioned topic during the period 2017-12-15 to 2017-12-20, where the users especially used the hashtag #aktier, the Swedish word for shares. Even though the public discussion around the topic had a high profile in the media, the engagement through retweets was low. The post contains financial information without adding a personal perspective on the news. The tweet got two retweets, and that was the highest number within the topic during the period 2018-12-15 to 2018-12-20.

#### 4.1.2 The topic: General fashion information

Enter the Holiday season with the most fashionable pieces for ladies, men's & kids – the latest Holiday collection out now! See you in store. #HM



*Figure 4-3 The tweet had the highest number of retweets in the topic General fashion information. The post was retweeted 232 times*

The topic *General fashion information* during the period between 2017-12-1 and 2018-1-7 provides emotional cues surrounding the brand H&M by focusing on visual data. The most frequently used hashtag was #fashion together with #hm. The most retweeted posts during the period were associated with the new season released by HTM. We have chosen the tweet that had the highest retweets, 232 retweets during the period, even though the hashtag #fashion was not used it is still consistent with the content of the other tweets, referencing the new collection of the Holiday season. The pictures chosen plays a vital role in promoting the clothes for the new season. According to Vilnai, Yavetz, and Tiffert (2015), visual content is processed 60 000 times faster than text. Furthermore, social media engagement increases when the content conveys particular emotions and/or during holiday people tend to be overwhelmed by positive emotions (Papcharissi and Oliveria, 2012).

#### 4.1.3 The topic: Information about the new season

H&M STUDIO 2018 S/S Lookbook  
[#hmstudio](#) [#SS18](#) [#spring2018](#) [#summer2018](#)  
[#HM](#) [#fashion](#)

[youtu.be/soR1cGgp7xQ](https://youtu.be/soR1cGgp7xQ) via @YouTube



Figure 4-4 The tweet had the highest number of retweets in the topic Information about the new season. The post was retweeted 4 times.

The topic *Information about the new season* during the period 2018-02-27 to 2018-03-10 represents the new fashion collection for summer and spring 2018. Users have shared pictures of the merchandises from the lookbook. The most retweeted posts during the period were the above tweet (Figure 4-4), which was retweeted four times. The content only reflects the information regarding the new collection without any personal perspective involved. The hashtags used are also related to the collection. The hashtag #hmstudio represents the name of the released collection, and the hashtag #SS18 is a shortening for the Spring Summer fashion season in the year 2018.

#### 4.1.4 The topic: Nicki Minaj

Ugly holiday sweaters or sultry Santa dresses?  
We asked @nickiminaj 10 questions – you  
don't wanna miss the answers! Read the full  
#HM story: [hm.info/1a6lq](https://hm.info/1a6lq) #NickiMinaj



Figure 4-5 The tweets had the highest number of retweets in the topic Nickiminaj. The post on the left was retweeted 12 times and the post on the right was retweeted 1363 times.

In the topic NickiMinaj, we found the hashtag #Nickiminaj among the most popular hashtags and retweeted content. The famous artist Nicki Minaj has been collaborating with H&M on a Christmas campaign, and she has designed a limited-edition collection for the party season. Thus, customers can afford fashion clothes and project a higher social profile through the celebrity (Page, 2012, Marwick, 2013). Furthermore, this also enhances the social status of the brand H&M. Therefore, this goes against the Watt and Dodds (2007) and Bakshy, Mason, Hofman and Watts (2001) perspective of the diminishing power of celebrities of manipulating mass ideas. In the first occasion, users retweeted the content 12 times. The material refers directly to the audience of Nicki Minaj, where the interest lies in her perspective on fashion. While the second tweet was retweeted 1363 times. In this tweet, the choice of hashtags is vital, because it's a level of mediation where the hashtag #hm in combination with #NickiMinaj frame the topic and give it public visibility.

#### 4.1.5 The topic: Holiday Sale



*Figure 4-6 The tweet had the highest number of retweets in the topic Holiday Sale. The post was retweeted 91 times.*

In the topic *Holiday Sale*, the hashtag #holidays was most frequently mentioned during 2017-12-01-2018-01-01. The above post was retweeted 91 times and contained the hashtags #hm, #imgmodel, #fashion, #style, #holidays, #Christmas, #Newyear and #shopping. However, the emphasis is the “just in time for the holidays”, where the holidays are usually associated within stressed period create that emotional relief to suggest the information is worth diffusing.



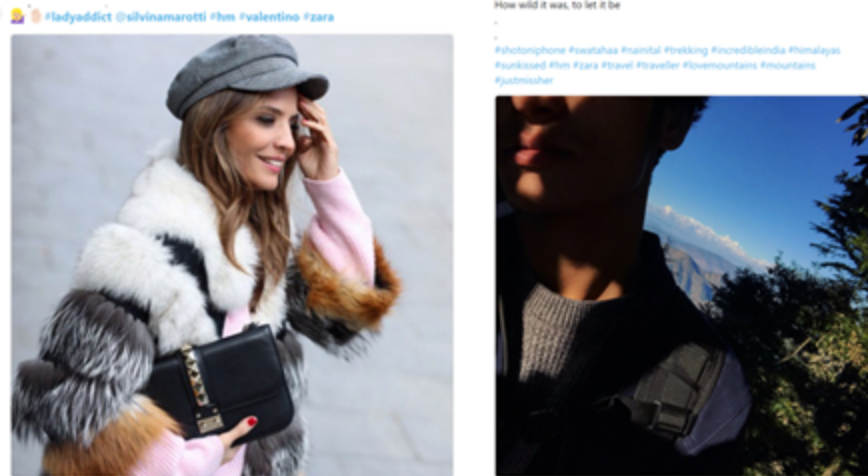


Figure 4-7 The tweet includes the hashtag #zara, which was frequently mentioned during the holidays.

In the topic *Holiday Sale*, the hashtag #zara with regards to H&M’s main competitor was frequently mentioned during the holidays. The same hashtag can be used in different contexts. For example, there are two tweets that have been retweeted several times (Figure 4-7). In the first tweet the hashtag, #zara, refers to the merchandises in the outfit, while in the second post, the user set up a connection between his memorial moment and the hashtag, #zara. We have noticed that the picture reproduces the brand in various ways since it shows the user on vacation, where the situation is not centered around the brand rather the brand is just a part of the expression. Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) argue that branded merchandises become vital when hashtags emphasize them in special occasions, such as graduation ceremony, wedding vacation or birthday party. The commodities of the brand are a small element of the picture but the they still make the event meaningful.

#### 4.1.6 The topic: Sale of New Season

So good I had to share! Check out all the items I'm loving on @Poshmarkapp from @ElenaZeena #poshmark #fashion #style #shopmycloset #89thmadison #hm #zara: [bnc.it/focc/PHEeJu76UK](https://bnc.it/focc/PHEeJu76UK)

Figure 4-8 Tweet (shown above) had the no retweets in the topic Sale of New Season.

In the topic *Sale of New Season*, the hashtag #poshmark and #fashion was ranked in the top five in combination with the hashtag #hm during the period 2018-01-16-2018-04-09. We have noticed that all the

tweets with #poshmark are generated by @Poshmarkapp, which is a fashion website. The Tweets (figure 4-8) are commonly able to offer publicity to what the users of the fashion website like, while the website, poshmark.com is also benefit from the publicity on Twitter. Although most of the tweets have applied the same template, we can discern what the users like about the 2018 fashion trend. However, in the light of the low number of retweets of most of the posts with #poshmark, it is difficult to reveal the value creation of this topic.



Figure 4-9 Tweets (shown above) had the highest number of retweets in the topic Sale of New Season. The post on the left was retweeted 239 times and the post on the right was retweeted 277 times.

During the period 2018-01-16-2018-04-09, the most retweeted post was associated with the new Spring collection of H&M. The focus of the content are the pictures takes for the new collection, while the only hashtag used in both posts is #hm. They were found relevant by the audience as suggested in that the first post was retweeted 238 and the second was retweeted 277 times.

#### 4.1.7 The topic: Capitalism of H&M

Därför är det billigt på HM; kapitalismens slavarbetare utnyttjas grovt och kläderna som HM inte får sålt bränns. Så fungerar den kapitalism som ättaklövern försvarar men som vi, tillsammans med världens utsugna, föraktar och bekämpar. [svt.se/myheter/utrike](http://svt.se/myheter/utrike)  
... #HM #kapitalism



Usvett betalt i textilföretagens nya läglöneparadis  
De tjänar runt 60 kronor om dagen och får varken sjukersättning eller betald semester. Utbrett missnöje råder bland etniska sömmerskor som syr kläder åt sv...  
svt.se

Figure 4-10 Tweet (shown above) had the highest number of retweets in the topic *Capitalism of H&M*. The post was retweeted 4 times.

During the period 2018-02-05-2018-02-05, hashtags surrounding the topic *Capitalism of H&M* was most frequently used. However, the tweets during the period were not retweeted as frequently as in the topics in the category of *sale*. The topic refers to a scandal regarding burning clothes which received a lot of negative attention. The highest number of retweets was three, which was attained by a tweet written in Swedish. The author expressed a negative attitude towards the brand H&M and their capitalistic approach. The topic faded away rather quickly, which can, in this case, depend on the low number of retweets. As Marwick (2013) mentioned, retweeting is a way of information diffusion since the original tweet is spread to a new set of audiences and since the engagement regarding retweets ceases the topic loses value.

#### 4.1.8 The topic: H&M vs. Street Art



Revok | This is how H&M tries to assault  
Street Artists rights

> A retweet would be very nice! <

#graffitiart #streetart #graffiti #hm #handm  
#boycothm #boycothandm #revok  
#copyright #lawsuit @hm

Figure 4-11 Tweet (shown above) had the highest number of retweets in the topic *H&M vs. Street Art*. The post was retweeted 45 times.

During the period 5/2-15/2, the news regarding the disagreement between H&M and the artist Jason Revok Williams became public. The dispute was about the usage of his work in a video campaign developed by H&M. The graffiti painted by Williams was shown in the background of the video. H&M filed a lawsuit against the artist for the illegal graffiti, which raised negative publicity on Twitter among users against H&M. The author of the most retweeted post projects a negative attitude towards H&M for assaulting the rights of street artists.

#### 4.1.9 The topic: Outfit of the Day



Figure 4-12 Tweet (shown above) had the highest number of retweets in the topic *Outfit of the Day*. The post was retweeted 41 times.

In the topic *Outfit of the Day*, the hashtag #OOTD refers to the statement outfit of the day, which is used to project clothes the user is wearing the day of the tweet. The author of the tweet is wearing merchandise from H&M and other brands, which have been hashtagged in the post. The post has been retweeted 41 times, which is an indication the author shows good taste (Marwick, 2013). Aside from showing the actual clothes, the author explains the outfit of the day in words as well as where other users can get the same look. Thus, the content is a combination of *sale* and also self-promotion since she puts further meaning to the merchandises when she adapts them to her style and taste.

#### 4.1.10 The topic: Racist Commercial

Mother of #HM hoodie model responds to backlash, tells us to 'get over it'  
[bit.ly/2CNRdtc](http://bit.ly/2CNRdtc)



.@hm this is inappropriate, offensive, and racist. Why is the white kid "a jungle survivor" and the black kid the "coolest monkey in the jungle"? How do you think this is okay? REMOVE this and the clothing piece. This is completely distasteful! #racist #hm  
[www2.hm.com/en\\_gb/productp](http://www2.hm.com/en_gb/productp) ...

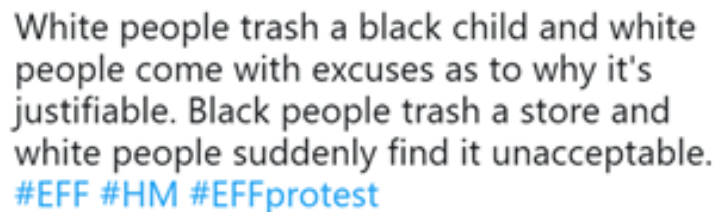


Figure 4-13 Tweet (shown above) had the highest number of retweets in the topic *Racist Commercial*. The post on the left was retweeted 4698 times and the post on the right was retweeted 2022 times.

Berger and Milkman (2013) mention expressions associated with awe, anger, and anxiety are a potential driver in spreading information. The words used in most of the tweets surrounding the topic *Racist Commercial* are associated with negative emotions. The topic is about the H&M commercial featuring a young black child, which is wearing a sweatshirt with the text “Coolest Monkey in The Jungle”. The ad raised a lot of public discussions on social media, and the brand was considered racially insensitive (West and West, 2018). In the topic *Racist Commercial*, the first post refers to the comment of the mother of the young boy in the commercial stated and was retweeted 4698 times.

During a brand crisis, people usually get more critical towards corporate misbehavior, (Godey et al, 2016; Pace, Balboni & Gistri, 2017), which can, in this case, be the reason for the high frequency of retweets. The second post is characterized by negative expressions, where the author criticizes the commercial of HM, and it has been retweeted 2022 times. The emphasis lies on the point, on which the user urges the brand to take away the ad. We could argue that the users who retweeted this post have been to endorse the author publicly.

#### 4.1.11 The topic: Vandalistic news



White people trash a black child and white people come with excuses as to why it's justifiable. Black people trash a store and white people suddenly find it unacceptable.  
#EFF #HM #EFFprotest

*Figure 4-14 Tweet (shown above) had the highest number of retweets in the topic Vandalistic news. The post was retweeted 29 times.*

During the period 2018-01-12-2018-01-16, the topic *Vandalistic news* referred to a protest that emerged as a side effect from the criticized commercial “Coolest Monkey in the Jungle”. The highest number of retweets was 29, where the author expresses a revolted attitude towards the incident of the commercial in comparison to the protest. The topic is associated with negative emotions.

## 4.2 The traffic volume of the #hm hashtag

We proceed to outline the traffic volume of tweets including #hm hashtag over the time from 2017-12-01 to 2018-04-09 (Figure 4-15). We have combined tweets in every two days in the study of the traffic volume of tweets. Therefore, there are 60 intervals in the research period. The volume of tweets including the #hm hashtag fluctuates drastically over the time. In contrast with the stable traffic volume of tweets in the study of the #LouisVuitton hashtag (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016), the peak volume of tweets associated with the #hm hashtag attains 4360, while the minimal number of tweets is 97. It is intriguing to know what causes the high traffic volume of tweets in the timespan. As, the similar content, is predominant in @replies and retweets (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016, Arvidsson, 2016), we wonder if the high frequent imitation or interaction around the #hm hashtag prompts others, such as crowds or brand community. Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) state that brand public is the formation of publicity on Twitter so that the @replies and retweets are a type of brand public. Thus, we should investigate whether brand public somehow prompts brand community or crowds in the certain timespan.

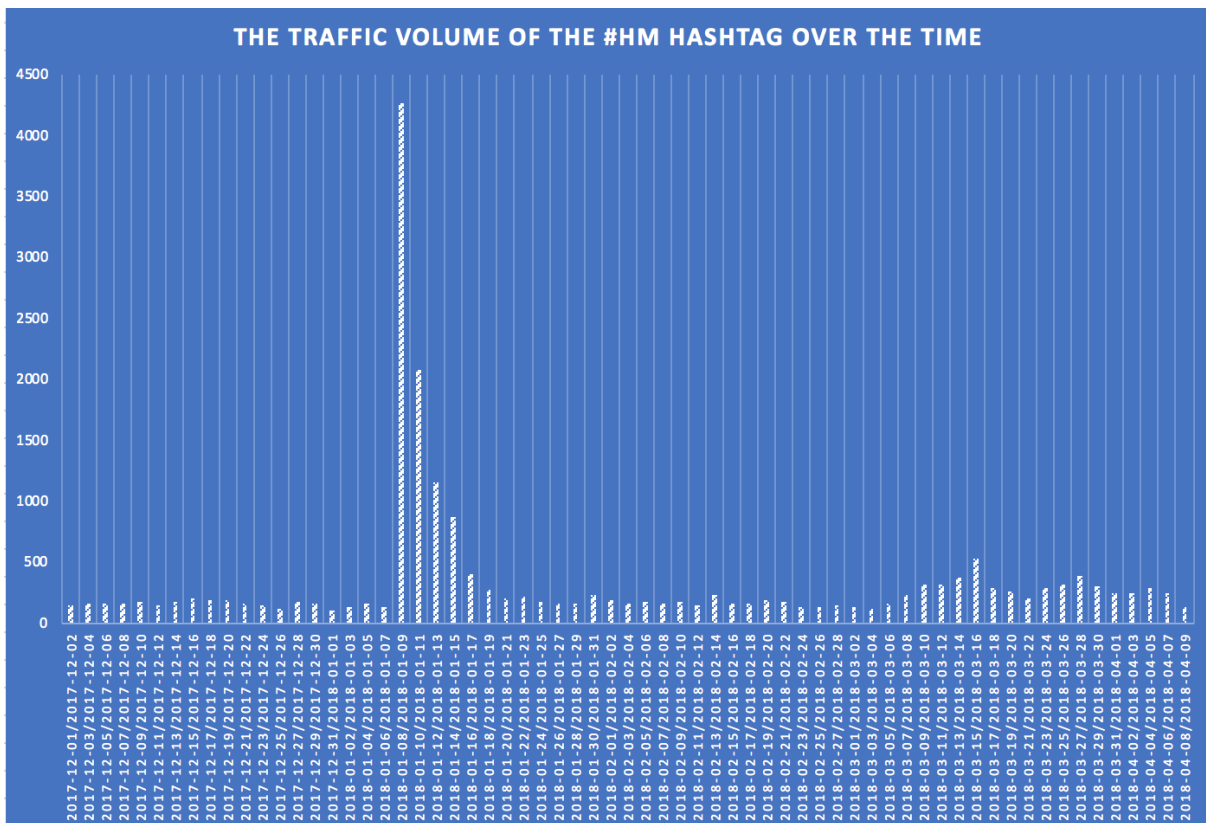


Figure 4-15 The traffic volume of the #hm hashtag over the time from 2017-12-01 to 2018-04-09

When we researched the co-hashtags with #hm in the timespan, in which the traffic volume shifts drastically, we have found that the most popular co-hashtags with #hm hashtag are #racist, #hmhoodie,

#coolestmonkeyinthejungle, and #boycotthm. These co-hashtags imply that consumers discontent with H&M's brand image. In other words, those negative terms such as boycott imply that there is a gap between what H&M has claimed and what consumers have perceived. In the light of the high volume of these co-hashtags, we insist that the dissatisfaction is not a random idea possessed by a couple of consumers. Instead, a multitude of consumers has a coherent alternative image of H&M. We are sure that the coherent alternative image of a brand is generated by the practices of brand public, when a variety of the Twitter users published the similar meaning by those hashtags. To research how the coherent alternative images of a brand is generated is a way to understand the value creation of brand public.

#### 4.2.1 The relationship between the traffic volume of the #hm hashtag and the top 5 popular co-hashtag list

Apart from the high volume of tweets with the #hm hashtag, we come to review the top 5 popular co-hashtag list (Appendix A) over a set time. We are aware that the change of the number of tweets with different co-hashtag in the popular hashtag list is corresponding to the trend of the traffic volume of tweets with the #hm hashtag. For example, the number of tweets containing the #racism hashtag, which is the most popular hashtag in the interval 2018-01-08 to 2018-01-09, is 196, while the trend of tweets attains the pinnacle. On the contrary, the number of tweets containing the #ootd hashtag, which is the most popular hashtag in the interval 2018-03-03 to 2018-03-04, is 8, while the trend of traffic volume is staying the trough.

What we find in the popular co-hashtag list confirms the function of co-hashtag, by which a topic in relation to the brand becomes visible (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). According to Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016), the brand hashtag not only serves as a stage, on which every topic associated with the brand can gain public's attention, but the brand hashtag also builds a bridge whereby the different topics occurring in everyday connects to the brand. In our study, topics should be under the spotlight and be bound up with a brand by means of the co-hashtag.

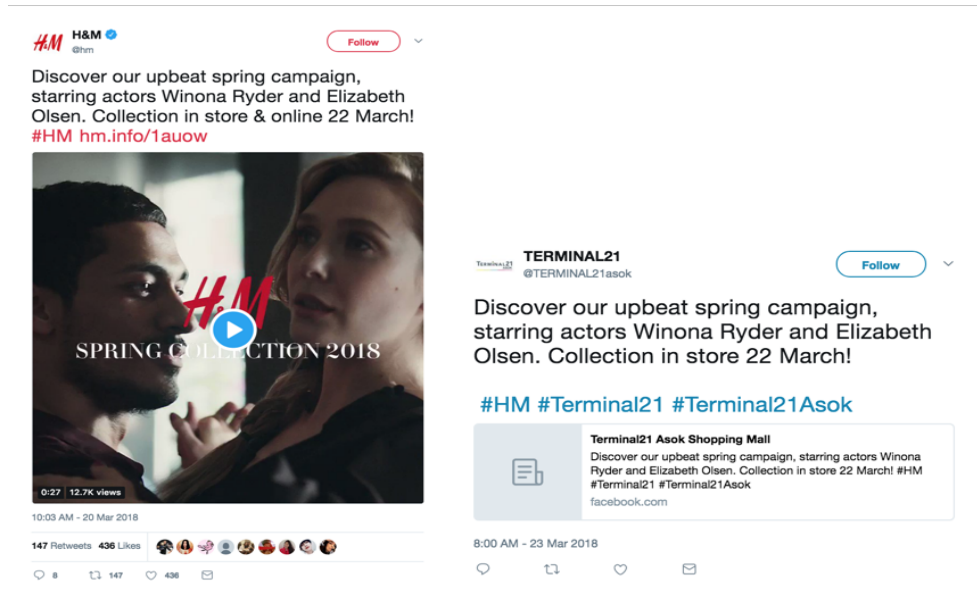


Figure 4-16 (From left to right): the tweet of the H&M official account on 2018-03-20; the retweet of the Twitter users, Terminal21 on 2018-03-23

Moreover, the Twitter users not only entail the existed co-hashtags, but they also are prone to add a new hashtag when they talk about a certain topic. It is consistent with that the members of the brand public can define a new hashtag when they discuss a particular topic (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). For example, H&M’s official account published a tweet concerning the promotion of a new series, on the 20th of March, in which there is only one hashtag #hm (Figure 4-16). When the Twitter account, @TERMINIAL21asok, retweeted the post, it has added its name, #Terminal21, to the retweet. From @TERMINIAL21asok’s perspective, the campaign of H&M is bound up with itself, and its name, as well as a co-hashtag is supposed to be discussed in the topic of H&M’s campaign. Based on the new co-hashtag, the Twitter user, @TERMINIAL21asok, not only tends to advocate for the spring campaign launched by H&M, but it also prompts to promote itself in the retweet. Adding the new hashtags, #Terminal21 and #Terminal21Asok enables the Twitter user to confer a new information, itself in this case, into the topic. Meanwhile, the topic associating with the brand H&M is probably able to embrace more meanings.





Figure 4-17 (from left to right): The tweet of @OxAmOxO with #fashion hashtag on 2018-03-31; The tweet of @TjpAbdul with #fashion hashtag on 2018-01-09

When we move on and check the hashtag itself, we have confirmed that the same hashtag has not at all the same meaning on the different topics. When we compared a post with a #fashion hashtag on the 9th of January with that on the 31st of March, we have discerned that the contents of tweets are saliently different (Figure 4-17). In the tweet on the 9th of January, the Twitter user, @TjpAbdul, has criticized H&M's racist crisis and attempted to expand the criticism toward the entire fashion industry. By contrast, the content of tweet on the 31st of March has included the information with respect to the sale.

Meanwhile, the #fashion hashtag conveys different meanings in these tweets. The first tweet implies that fashion is to refer to the shallow and racist meaning at the expense of the ethical equality. Given the topic of *Racist Commercial*, the #fashion hashtag in the first tweet refers to a negative meaning and is associated with an arrogant practice ignoring the ethical equality. On the contrary, the #fashion hashtag in the second tweet confers a significantly positive implication. Through this narrative, the Twitter user attempts to imply that they have a good taste of the apparel consumption. The #fashion hashtag in the second tweet does not convey any satiric or critical discourses, which is full of the #fashion hashtag in the first tweet. This finding is to confirm that hashtag is an ambient affiliation, whereby a diversity of discourses is able to relate to the brand, H&M.

## 4.3 The value process in the connective action

The value creation observed in the data is the connective action through retweets of posts that contain the hashtag #hm in combination with co-hashtags. In the topic *H&M vs. Street Art* and *Racist Commercial*, the process of connective action has been found. In the topics within the categories of *sale* and *news*, we were not able to identify any processes of value creation in connective actions.

### 4.3.1 Self-organizing network and retweets

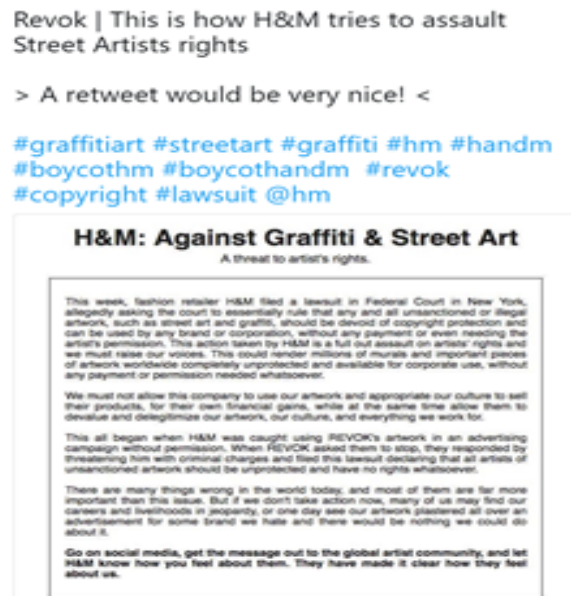


Figure 4-18 Tweet (shown above) was posted during the period 5/2-15/2, where the topic H&M vs. Street Art was publicly deliberated. The post was retweeted 45 times.

In the topic *H&M vs. Street Art*, we follow the tweet with the highest number of retweets (Figure 4-18). The discussion is organized by the hashtag #hm in the relationship with the co-hashtags. The author of the tweet encourages others to retweet by saying “> a retweet would be very nice <”, and this together with the mediation attracts and sustains continuity of certain kinds of practices. This is seen as a collaboration of tweets, where users engage through either retweets or liking the post to do good. (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

A connective action is formed without any formal organizing, instead users drive forward the connective action by personal efforts (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). The change is connected by a mediation that attracts others to retweet, and in the original tweet, the author uses the hashtags #revok and #boycotthm.

Bennett & Segerberg (2012) argue that the connective action is held together by weak ties and little engagement, which are also the characteristics of brand public. While, in brand communities, the members are held together through the communication of other like-minded people (Özbölük, Yunus Dursun, 2017). In the public environment of Twitter, the user emphasizes the topic *H&M vs. Street Art* and the focal brand by using the hashtags #hm and #revok. The user may or may not have any social ties to others that use the same hashtags. Therefore, the hashtags by themselves do not create a form of a collective identity. However, when users retweet a post, they are usually part of the social network and have some connection to the author of the original tweet. Thus, the engagement formed around retweets creates a stronger tie between the retweeter and the author of the original tweet. The Twitter users are dependent on others reaction to the content shared with the social network. The user's reaction is shown through sharing, retweeting or liking the post (Fenton, 2008). The essential part of connective action is the action of sharing because the personalization results in information diffusion across new social networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

#### 4.3.2 Collective identity in a connective network

In the topic *H&M vs. Street Art*, the majority of the users who have tweeted or shared information about the event have some forms of connection to the street art community. They themselves are artists, or they are a part of their social network. In brand public, there is no development of common values or a collective identity formed around the brand. Furthermore, the brand does not refer to collective belonging rather a motivation for publicity (Arvidsson and Caliendo, 2015). However, within the topic *H&M vs. Street Art*, users find others that share the same collective identity through publicity of tweets.



Lets see if the international graffiti and streetart community can whip up a shitstorm against @hm over their greedy and insane lawsuit against @REVOK1 over the copyrights of this illegal artwork in Brooklyn #hm #revok #boycotthm #copyright #graffiti #streetart #corporategreed

*Figure 4-19 Retweet (mentioned above) contained their personal perspective on the topic of H&M vs. Street Art and was retweeted 11 times.*

The retweet (Figure 4-19) encourages other people affected by this matter, thus driving other people to take action by writing “lets see if the international graffiti and streetart community can whip up a shitstorm

against @hm". As Fenton (2008) argues for the how new social movements lack membership within a community and do not produce universal values and goals other than to drive for social action (Fenton, 2008). However, when the retweets are shared by individuals personally affected by the illegal artwork, the users become homogenous rather than people who want to share their perspective and experience in relation to the topic.

In a brand community, according to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) users develop a shared understanding of the brand. In the topic, we can see formations of collective knowledge through an assembly of various tweets; "this is how H&M tries to assault Street Artists rights", "they issued an apology, but they are trying to pull a fast one here" and "keep boycotting H&M". Fenton (2008) describes it as a loose group created by a connective network to build a movement. The formation of brand public establishes an aggregation of diverse perspectives around the same topic, and as a result, the information diffusion speeds up the struggle around the *H&M vs. Street Art* topic.

#### 4.3.3 Driving further meaning to the brand

Wow. What a horrible company @hm is.

They not only used Revok's art in an ad, but when he told them they can't do that.. THEY FILED A LAWSUIT AGAINST HIM.

#BoycottHM #HM #fashion #graffiti #art  
#boycott

*Figure 4-20 Retweet (shown above) adds his own negative perspective on the brand and was retweeted 4 times.*

In the retweet (Figure 4-20), the author projects a stronger negative attitude towards the focal brand H&M by writing "Wow. What a horrible company @hm is." In the process of connective action, the user drives further meaning to the brand by adding personal experience to the topic which could potentially weaken brand (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). In the retweet, the user supports the original tweet by continuing in the same direction as the original tweet "this is how H&M tries to assault Street Artists rights" by adding "they not only used *H&M vs. Street Art*'s art in an ad but when he told them they couldn't do that.. THEY FILLED A LAWSUIT AGAINST HIM". So, the author of the retweet adds further meaning by writing that they are doing much worse than just assaulting the rights of artists.

The users that continue to support this view will connect with others that share the same identity. The shared identity is not formed around the focal brand, H&M, as in a brand community, instead through the joint effort created from the topic. The topic creates an engagement that builds a group of tweets; which refers to both the social network of the original tweets and the network of the users who have retweeted the post. This can be seen in the group polarization suggested by Sunstein (1999), which arises when a group discussion provokes members to move towards the same goal. In the case of brand public, when the user retweets a post the user publicly agrees with the original tweet and prompts the topic towards one direction.

#### 4.3.4 The power of connective action

H&M offers apologies and withdraws it's claim on Revok.  
 That is just the right thing to do @hm!  
 #hm #handm #revok #copyright #lawsuit

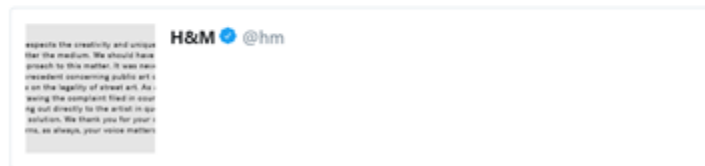


Figure 4-21 Tweet (shown above) indicates the accomplished goal of the connective actions and it has been retweeted 4 times.

The above tweet (Figure 4-21) was posted by the author of the original tweet "Revok | This is how H&M tries to assault Street Artists rights > A retweet would be very nice! <", which shows connective actions may have contributed in the withdrawal of the lawsuit against Revok. The tweet indicates the end of the topic *H&M vs. Street Art*. The topic occurs in a very short interval, from 2018-02-05 to 2018-02-15. Chadwick (2007) argues the importance of a quick and spontaneous formation of a group. The users in a digital network can quickly organize into a social movement if necessary, while, they can also act as individuals without any strong ties in a network (Chadwick, 2007). Users that can organize promptly are vital to the processes of connective actions since the network can create a common goal for the sake of movement. On the 15th of March, H&M publicly apologized for its claim on Revok. Following this statement, the topic *H&M vs. Street Art* became used significantly less in the following weeks. As a result of the achieved common goal, the engagement among the users calms down. The same characteristics can be seen in an online brand community, where the activity of the member can be enhanced during a temporary occasion. When the period ends the engagement of the members can change (McAlexander et al, 2002; Thomas, Schau and Price, 2011).

#### 4.3.5 Not acting properly to the direction of the connective network

Mother of #HM hoodie model responds to backlash, tells us to 'get over it'  
[bit.ly/2CNRdtc](https://bit.ly/2CNRdtc)



Figure 4-22 Tweet (shown above) was highest ranked during the topic Racist Commercial and was retweeted 4698 times.

Another interesting point we found was that even though the individuals within the group drives the actions in one direction, there will still be few individuals arguing against the trend (Sunstein, 1999). In the topic of *Racist Commercial*, the tweet with the highest number of retweets is about how the mother of the young black boy defended the actions of H&M (Figure 4-22). The tweet was retweeted 4698 times, which indicates that the tweet contains some form of relevant information. The tweet raises a discussion by writing “Mother of the HM hoodie model responds to the backlash” but the author also projects a personal view by adding that she “tell us ‘to get over it’”. Holt (1995) argues for the adaption individuals take within the group rather than personalizing their practices. These can be seen in brand communities as well, wherein individuals instead adjust to the rest of the group rather than acting against them to create collective goals (Özbölül, Yunus and Dursun, 2017). However, in a brand public, the users are driven by personal actions rather than collective, which can, in this case, explain why users choose to act against the direction of the group.

And here we are giving a damn smh RT  
@Blavity: Mother of #HM hoodie model  
responds to backlash, tells us to 'get over it'  
[bit.ly/2CNRdtc](http://bit.ly/2CNRdtc)

Figure 4-23 In the tweet (shown above) the author expresses a negative attitude towards the mothers respond to the backlash. The tweet has been retweeted two times.

Acting against the collective group can result in being a target for hate. In an online environment, users can be anonymous and do not need to project their real identity. Therefore, the system allows users to freely express their thoughts and opinions (Granitz and Wards, 1996). The retweet (Figure 4-23) projects a negative attitude towards the mother of the hoodie model by writing “And here we are giving a damn smh”. The shortening “smh” stands for “shaking my head”. The logic of connective action forms a sense of “we” against “them”. Therefore, in a brand public, users are more likely to express their personal view even though they might act against the direction of the group. It is also natural for the movement to work against those who disagree. The author of the above tweet might feel that it is okay to act out against the mother because she does not belong to the movement.

#### 4.3.6 Connective action in the category of *self-presentation*

In the topic *H&M vs. Street Art* and *Racist Commercial* within the category *self-presentation*, the users co-create meaning through their added perspective and experience on the matter. The connective action arises when the users within the social network move towards a point in a given direction. The topic creates an engagement that forms a group of tweets; the social network of the original tweets and the network of the users who have retweeted the post. However, in the topics within the categories of *sale* and *news*, we were not able to identify any value creations of connective action in brand public. The users post isolated tweets from each other in the categories for the purpose of publicity rather than coming together for a cause. Arvidsson & Caliendo (2015) research the meaning of brand public within the high-status brand Louis Vuitton, where the hashtag was associated with the practices of mediation. They captured a different perspective of the brand public, since the information published on Twitter around Louis Vuitton wasn't associated with topics such as *H&M vs. Street Art* or *Racist Commercial*. Therefore, our findings indicate another perspective on brand public.

#### 4.3.7 Summary of the value-creation process of Connective Action

In the value-creation process of connective action, we have identified how users within a brand public create social changes. We have created our own model to explain how the users create value through the combination of the self-organizing network, retweets and the hashtags (Figure 4-24).

### **Self-organizing Network**

A self-organized network is driven by personal actions from different participants that come together. There is no central organizational actor or direct leadership, rather a personal motivation to create a change, supporting someone in need or being the voice of someone (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). In the topic *H&M vs. Street Art*, the tweet "Revok | This is how H&M tries to assault Street Artists rights > A retweet would be very nice! <" started the movement. However, the author doesn't become a central organizational actor of the movement. Thus, private actions are built on a different set of personalized expressions by other users, such as "keep boycotting H&M" or "they issued an apology, but they are trying to pull a fast one here.", which creates a self-organized network. The value emerges when diverse users share their expressions and build a self-organized network to create a social change.

### **Retweets**

The act of sharing on social media explains how personal actions can be communicated to external networks. Bennet & Segerberg (2012) describe sharing as the essential element of connective action since it distributes the content among users and to a new audience. Sharing takes a different form depending on the platform. For instance, on Twitter, users can retweet, like or comment on each other post. In the movement of *H&M vs. Street Art*, one user encouraged others to retweet by adding "A retweet would be very nice!" to the tweet. When a retweet is distributed to another network, value is created since the message of the original tweet has now reached a new set of users.

### **Hashtags**

Arvidsson and Caliandro (2015) emphasize the importance of hashtags since they aggregate a different set of personalized expression on the brand. Our findings suggest that the change is connected by a mediation that attracts others to retweet by using hashtags such as #revok and #boycotthm that will push the movement forward.



## The value-creation process of Connective Action in Brand Public

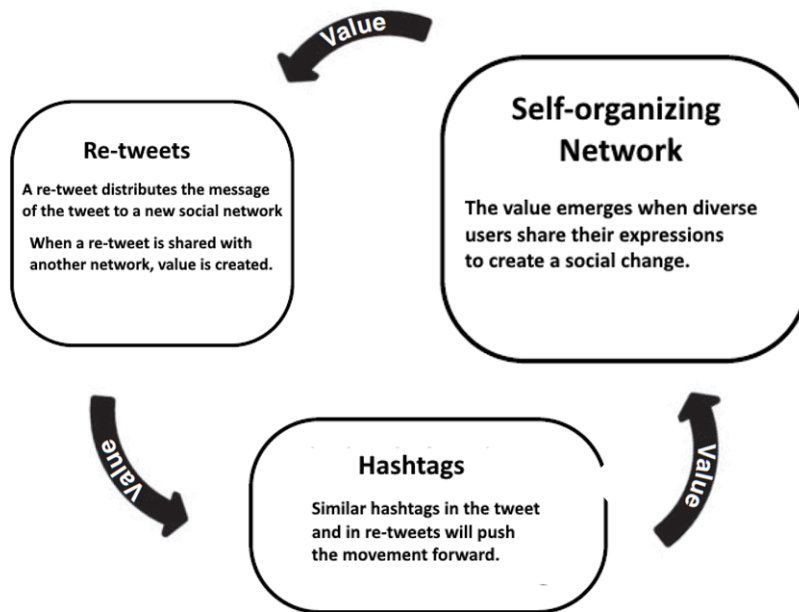


Figure 4-24 The value-creation process of Connective Action in Brand Public shows how self-organizing network, retweets and hashtags interact.

### 4.4 Affectivity

Papacharissi and Oliveira (2012) point out that the initial feedback about news can embrace strong emotion. The affect prompts the imitation of others in brand public (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). The stronger affect would be attached to the feedback about the news, the more comments are diffused by means of hashtags (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012). In turn, the affect will ferment and become intense with the reiteration of the emotion-filled content (Arvidsson et al., 2015). A multitude of Twitter users, whose turnover is high, assembles a crowd on Twitter by means of affect (Arvidsson et al., 2015).

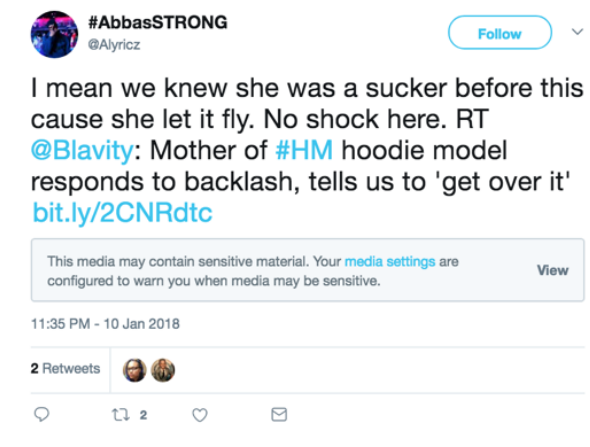


Figure 4-25 The original tweet posted by @Blavity (Left-Top); The retweet posed by @TimmyJig (Right-Top); The retweet posed by @Alyricz (Left-Down); The retweet posed by @Mike (Right-Down)

The Twitter account, @Blavity, initially has published news associated with the topic of *Racist Commercial* (Figure 4-25). Their narrative is neutral rather than with significant emotional proclivity. The free of affect in the news is consistent with the prevailing western news model (Papacharissi & Oliveira. 2012). The news is a pre-mediation of the affective movement. Because of the tweet, in which the Twitter account, @Blavity, published the response of the mother of the young model in the H&M racist turmoil, the retweets incorporate negative affect. The following Twitter accounts apply the negative words such as "damn",

"sucker", and "LMAO" to express their feelings towards the event. The negative affect undergirds the diffusion of the news by means of #hm hashtag.

There is a total of 4698 retweets published over time. The most of retweets are akin to the samples (Figure 4-25), in which the Twitter users have published both comments and the original tweet. The unfavorable emotion is accumulated, with retweeting the similar content on Twitter over time. When we have checked the feedback on the first day, in which the Twitter users frequently used LMAO, laughing my ass off, the Twitter users have expressed how shocked they felt about the news. However, the Twitter users, who retweeted on the second day, have criticized the model's mother and express the furious emotion by the contents such as "see? I been asking where are the parents", "told y'all this was what was happening his mother ain't care", and "laughing my \*ucking ass off". The negative feeling is much stronger in these retweets in comparison with the counterparts in the previous day. In the third day, the furious emotion reaches the pinnacle in the retweets including "this is the last word on this". With the increasingly intense emotion, hundreds of thousands of retweets regarding the news were published around the HM hashtag. Retweeting equips the Twitter users with an affective collection, which would drive the Twitter users to a crowd.

According to Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016), the members of brand public are not supposed to develop a collective identity with the focal brand. However, through strengthening the affect, brand public has laid a strong foundation for the development of a collective identity, which ends up with a crowd. Because the collective affect triggers the imitations which are prevailing in brand public, the function of the hashtag is to make the original news visible and retweeting is to amplify the emotion. In turn, the crowds, in which members have strong feelings of solidarity, would be generated on Twitter.

#### 4.4.1 The different characteristics of affect

The discussion mentioned above sheds light on that affect plays an important role in the transition from publics to crowds. The information distribution is a vital phase of this transition. We try to disclose the characteristics of affect in the information diffusion, by answering the following questions: where the emotion occurs; and, what kinds of tweets facilitate the occurrence of the information diffusion. Although Berger and Milkman (2013) emphasized that both the positive and negative feeling facilitate the imitation, Hansen and his colleague (2011) exclude the effects of the positive emotion from the topics of the category *news*. Because all topics related to the category *self-presentation* are associated with a negative image of H&M, we have chosen to focus on the categories of *sale* and *news*. We applied the topics of *Information*

about the new season and *Holiday Sale* corresponding to the categories of *news* and *sale* in order to settle down this conflict about whether the positive affect leads to information distribution.

We have applied the word lists and keywords in context (referring to KWIC) to analyze the impact of the favorable emotion on triggering imitation in the different categories including *news* and *sale*. Based on NVivo, we have identified unique words in the tweets and then calculated the number of times that the words appear. In turn, we have applied a word cloud where the size of the word corresponds to how frequent the words are used by different Twitter users. The bigger size of the words' fonts appears in the word cloud, the higher frequency of the words is mentioned in the tweets.



Figure 4-26 From left to right: the word cloud of the top 50 words appearing in the tweets concerning the topic of *Holiday Sale*. The word cloud of the top 50 words appearing in the tweets concerning the topics of *Information* about the new season.

When we observed the figure of word cloud in the topics of *Holiday Sale* (Figure 4-26), most of the words do not contain any emotional tendency. They are rather neutral. Applying words such as "Christmas", "fashion" and "sale" is to attain the dissemination of cognitive information. A couple of emotional words including "cute" and "best" scatters in the number of neutral terms. It is clear that *cute* and *best* had referred to a pleasant feeling when the Twitter users wrote the texts such as "Check out H&M Pink Cable Sweater with Bow Size 14 #cute". Since the tweets with the positive affect has frequently been retweeted, we may claim that the positive affect plays a role in the information diffusion. What we have observed is consistent with that the favorable affect facilitates the information diffusion in the category of *sale*, which is the segment of non-news. In the light of the size of word fonts, we have discerned that the effects of the instrumental words outweigh that of the positive emotion. The role of the positive feelings played is not as

important as that of instrumental words. Instead, the positive affect is a supplement in the process of the information diffusion.

When we checked the word cloud on the topic of *Information about the new season* in the reference of the news segment, except for "creative", all words, which are used in the tweets, are neutral. We have exemplified that the terms primarily serve as a cognitive function in the tweets. The word, "pfw", which is the acronym of the Paris fashion week, introduces the place where the H&M fashion show was held. The words "spring" is related to the new fashion trend in the 2018 spring and summer. Apart from the word, *creative*, we have been aware that neither of these words is affective. Nevertheless, the word, *creative*, clearly refers to the positive emotion. The attribute of affect changed when we read through the text including *creative*:

Do you need some promo staff at the Ideal Home Show? #idealahomeshow #promostaff  
#homedecor #homeinspo #homestyle #ideas #hmhome #hm #ss18 #interiorstyle  
#Granddesigns #design #creative

Based on the tweet, it is obvious that the Twitter user has applied a positive word to express the unfavorable emotion. The emotion is diffused with repetitively retweeting. As we assigned the topic of *Information about the new season* into the category of *news*, we cannot reject Hansen and his colleagues' statement. On the contrary, what we found supports the assertion that only the content with the negative affect encourages the word-of-mouth information to diffuse in the segment of *news*.

#### 4.4.2 The extent of affect



Figure 4-27 From left to right: the word cloud of the top 50 words appearing in the tweets concerning the topic of Racist Commercial. The word cloud of the top 50 words appearing in the tweets concerning the topics of H&M vs. Street Art.

The extents of emotion on Tweets also influence the imitation as Berger and Milkman (2013) assert that the strong affect prompts the information distribution. We have applied the word cloud charts (Figure 4-27) to compare the information diffusion in the topic of *Racist Commercial* with that of *H&M vs. Street Art*. We have discerned the terms including "offensive", "disgusting" and "never" refer to an aggressive emotion in the word cloud of *Racist Commercial*, while the word such as "f\*ck" in the word cloud of *H&M vs. Street Art*. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word, "disgusting" denotes "a strong feeling of dislike" and the term, "offensive", implies to "making an attack" (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2018). The affect attached to these terms is stronger than that with "f\*ck", by which the Twitter users merely express the unpleasant feeling (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2018). When we checked the tweets on the topic of the *Racist Commercial*, such as "People know the history of racist using the term 'monkey' to demean people of African descent and @hm pulls a stunt like this. This ad is seen as inappropriate, offensive, disgusting and racist", we have noticed that the aggressive terms do not appear alone. The conflation of terms including "inappropriate", "offensive", disgusting", and "racist" generates stronger affect in comparison with when these words appeared separately. On the contrary, the Twitter users merely apply "f\*ck" to the tweets on the topic in relation to the H&M lawsuit. So, the affect in the topic of *H&M vs. Street Art* is less intense than on the topic of the *Racist Commercial*. In the light of the number of retweets, the information is diffused wider on the topic of *Racist Commercial*. We may state that the firm affect adhering to the tweets about *self-presentation* facilitates the information distribution.

In sum, through analyzing the retweets of the news posted by @Blavity, we have introduced one type of value creation of brand public. The emotion by means of retweeting becomes stronger. The affective intensity results in the aggregation on Twitter, crowding. Besides the category of *news*, the value creation also takes place in the categories of *sale* and *self-presentation*. Nevertheless, the attribute of the affect influences the value creation. Based on our observation, the negative affect facilitates the information diffusion, which is an important intermediate of value creation. Only in the category of *sale* does the positive affect plays a role in the information distribution. In addition, the stronger affect adheres to the tweets, the bigger crowd around the focal brand would be. We have disclosed the value creation by means of individual or collective affect, which is one of the attributes of brand public. As the participation of brand public results in the appearance of micro-celebrity (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016), the micro-celebrity is another value generated by brand public. We are going to move on to discussing the occurrence of micro-celebrity by means of brand public in the next section.

## 4.5 The creating value of brand public: Micro-celebrity

### 4.5.1 The ordinary account vs. the verified account

Prior to analyzing the value creation of brand public, we need to testify the important role the ordinary users played, in comparison with the offline celebrity. A verified account, which is a feature on Twitter, enables us to distinguish the offline celebrity from a multitude of ordinary Twitter users. Twitter (2018) illustrates that the verified account is able to stand for authentic celebrities in music, fashion, government and media areas. On the contrary, ordinary Twitter users can only manage the Twitter account without the badge of the verified account. In addition, there can be protected settings configured by Twitter users. In contrast with the public Tweets, the protected tweet is merely visible for a small and selective group (Twitter, 2018), so that we have to assign them into a group “others” in this study of brand public.

According to Marwick (2013), the practice of micro-celebrity takes place by means of replying message on Twitter. Researching the distribution of the types of accounts which received @replies is an eligible way, by which the importance of ordinary accounts can be demonstrated. We have checked the distribution of different types of Twitter accounts (Figure 4-28), whose tweet have been replied to ten times or more. The share of verified account (36%) is significantly lower than that of the ordinary account (49%). What we have found is consistent with that a mass of individuals plays a crucial role in the cascade of influence. In other words, in general, it is not significant that the celebrity users are able to exert more influence on social media compared to the ordinary practitioners (Marwick & Boyd, 2011).

For the sake of validity, we have proceeded to review the distribution of different accounts gaining @replies in different categories. Based on the topics of *Racist Commercial* and *General fashion information* with regard to the categories of *self-presentation* and *news* respectively, the share of ordinary accounts significantly outweighs that of the verified accounts (Figure 4-28). Especially, only the ordinary accounts have received @replies in the topic of *General fashion information*. We wonder if the ordinary Twitter users can outperform the verified counterparts in *the ambience affiliation*, wherein user’s activities are attached, and a variety of tweets constitutes a loose network. We can be aware that the extent, to which different types of topic trigger the appearance of micro-celebrity, is also different. The topic in relation to outbreaking events such as a crisis facilitates the occurrence of micro-celebrity, in the wake of many @replies taken place on Twitter. However, micro-celebrity is not easily able to take place in the daily or regular topics in the light of the low number of @replies in the topic associated with *General fashion information*. We may consider that the anomaly crises are the mediation. As the Twitter users responded the mediation by means of brand public, micro-celebrity takes place.

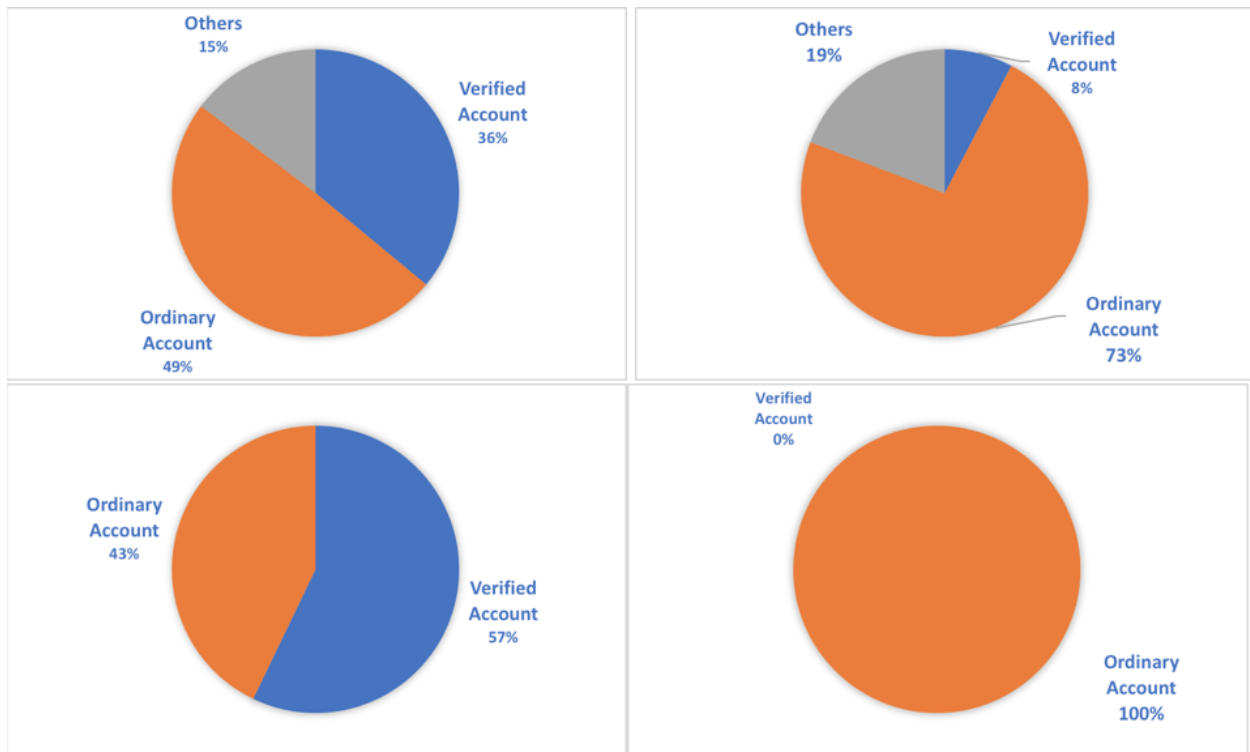


Figure 4-28 The distribution of different types of Twitter accounts with @reply ten times or more in #hm hashtag database (Left-Top); The distribution of accounts with @reply five times or more about the topic of Racist Commercial (Right-Top); The distribution of accounts with @reply once or more about the topic of Holiday Sale (Left-Down); The distribution of accounts with @reply once or more about the topic of General fashion information (Left-Down) (Source: Twitter.com) The verified account denotes where Twitter company has verified the Twitter users as the authentic celebrities in music, fashion, government and media areas. The ordinary account denotes where the Twitter users are regular but allow anyone to get access to their posts.



Notwithstanding that the ordinary accounts outperform in the categories, *self-presentation* and *news*, the verified accounts become predominant in the category, *sale*. Based on the distribution of accounts getting @reply once or more about the topic, *Holiday Sale* (Figure 4-28), we have discerned the phenomenon: The verified accounts, which are the celebrity practitioners, become of more importance of the influence in the topic of *Sale Holiday*. What we have found supports that the celebrity practitioners are concerned with the promotion (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Meanwhile, we have been aware that the celebrity practitioners, who are offline celebrities in a particular area, also have an opportunity to become an online micro-celebrity if they have adequate @Replies. In other words, not only the ordinary Twitter users but also the offline celebrities can become the micro-celebrity practitioner during some circumstances. The offline celebrities also strive to become an online micro-celebrity practitioner.

In terms of influence on the social media, the argument between Marwick and Boyd (2011) and Watt and Dodds (2007) becomes congruous in the light of the different topics. We have noticed that the influences of the ordinary accounts are significant in the categories, *news*, and *self-presentation*, whereas the effects of the verified accounts become salient in the category, *sale*. In sum, both the ordinary Twitter users and the offline-celebrities can become the micro-celebrities in different networks.

#### 4.5.2 How to become micro-celebrity

We consider that micro-celebrity easily takes place in the category of *self-presentation*. Our research on the value creation of brand public primarily focuses on H&M's racist turmoil with respect to the topic of *Racist Commercial*. Initially, the traffic number of tweets (Figure 4-15) pertaining to H&M's racist turmoil provides the insight that the hashtags in relation to a topic makes more Twitter users join the discursive network. The number of tweets concerning the crisis was 251 on the time interval 2018-01-06 -- 2018-01-07 and shifted to 530 in the next time interval (2018-01-08 -- 2018-01-09). Due to hundreds of thousands of tweets erupting, it makes sense that there is an affiliated network with hashtags including #hmracist, #racism, #hmhoodie, #coolestmonkedyinjungle in the topic of *Racist Commercial*. The affiliated network makes the discourse metadata searchable and visible. These hashtags appeal to more discourses aggregating around the topic concerning H&M's racist crisis. Meanwhile, the hashtag maintains the discursive network, in the light of the high number of tweets (more than 100 tweets) kept till the 14th of January.

There are hundreds of thousands of posts on the topic of *Racist Commercial*. Apart from the redundant tweets, the majority of Twitter users have only once or twice published comments on the topic instead of having a conversation. Meanwhile, what the Twitter users tend to express is akin to each other. On this topic, Twitter users spoke out about their attitudes toward the mediation and conveyed their criticism. Based

on questions such as “@hm Do U guys really need this #racist way to make #buzz on your brand?”; “Wouldn’t it be racist if @hm only considered using a white boy to model this hoodie, thus intentionally giving the black boy a disadvantage?”; and “@hm please explain why a black boy was selected to model a hoodie that says ‘Coolest Monkey in the Jungle’?”, they have incessantly challenged the H&M brand with respect to the mediation, the young black model wearing a H&M’s hoodie with “coolest monkey in the jungle”. In order to gain consensus, their tweets clearly disclosed their dissatisfaction.

When we have read through a variety of tweets regarding the H&M’s racism topic, those tweets are full similar phrases or even the same words such as “disgust”, “racism”, “offensive”, and “f\*cking”. Moreover, the contents of the various tweets, in which users have accused H&M of neglecting Black Lives Matter are similar. What entailed by Twitter users is consistent with the strategy of the most popular book’s authors. According to Marwick and Boyd (2010), a writer commonly thinks of those who will read the book so that s/he is writing and striving to cater to them. The Twitter users should also consider what makes their tweets popular. Through meeting the mass’s preference, Twitter users have established an artificial self-image, which others are willing to endorse. We exemplify this statement by a Twitter account, @SirMaejor. His profile introduces the Twitter user as an actor and model, @SirMaejor, constantly focuses on the themes including LGBT, Black Lives Matter, and the anti-weapon campaign. He is not concerned with the H&M racist turmoil, but he has also posed several tweets regarding Black Lives Matter, such as “planning for the African American Wellness 5K Walk”. When he applies tweets to discuss those themes, other users can be aware of the image of his Twitter account. If his behaviors of are inconsistent with what he claims, it would be hypocritical, and the artificial self-image would be collapsed followingly.

Although the conversations rarely take place in brand public, the different Twitter users uses retweets and @replies to take over the interaction to endorse the images they agree on. The retweets and @replies are around the hashtag, *ambient affiliation*. For example, @ArianelaSelene is an ordinary account focusing on the minority health, health education and social justice. A post on the 8th of January is stating that H&M is distasteful due to this inappropriate hoodie commercial. Whereas the content of the post was no different to others which criticized the H&M racist turmoil, it gained 2200 retweets over time. As the statement includes “#hm don’t stop here”; “F\*ck #hm”, Twitter users tend to articulate their ideas or comments regarding H&M by means of retweeting. Retweeting referring to a vehicle of brand public is consistent to the Western habit of citation (Papcharissi & Oliveira, 2012). The author of the original post, @ArianelaSelene, is credited by retweeting and then that makes her a micro-celebrity practitioner.

Meanwhile, adding several new hashtags in the tweets prompts to expand the discursive network and is probably able to draw much more attentions. These new hashtags serve as new ambient affiliations, based on which the new audiences are attracted. In turn, the more retweets or @replies are generated by the discursive network, the easier the micro-celebrity is created. When we checked the retweets of @ArianelaSelene, we have exemplified this statement. In @ArianelaSelene's tweet, notwithstanding, she applied the #hm hashtag and #racist hashtag. Apart from these two hashtags, the retweets of her have included other hashtags such as #unacceptable, #EverydayRacism, or #Clout4Kids. These new hashtags can trigger an interlocking effect. When other audiences are concerned with the retweets of @ArianelaSelene by means of new hashtags, the influence of @ArianelaSelene is amplified. @ArianelaSelene ended of a micro-celebrity practitioner in the topic of *Racist Commercial*.

Could @ArianelaSelene has maintained the micro-celebrity status since she gained the status? The answer is clearly, no. When we check her account now, she just has 141 followers on the 4th of April and there is a couple of retweets of her tweets. We can attribute micro-celebrity to an ephemeral status on Twitter. It is not the end point when the ordinary Twitter users obtained the micro-celebrity. On the contrary, it is a starting point since which the ordinary Twitter has to protect the artificial self-image. As Marwick (2013) described a micro-celebrity practitioner, Adam Jackson has to devote all of his free time to keep his status. When he stops one day, no one would remember him in the next day. When @ArianelaSelene has kept silence after her popular tweet, both her comment and herself are engulfed by the overwhelming data.

In order to maintain the micro-celebrity status, the ordinary Twitter users have to maintain relationship with their audiences, while they strive to appeal to new audiences. Keeping the visibility is the way to maintain the micro-celebrity status. As Veronica Belmont (Marwick, 2013, p59) illustrated: "I am actually super, super lucky with my fans because there is definitely a feeling of a conversation going on, as opposed to me just broadcasting things"

Both retweets and @replies, as well as publics, enable the micro-celebrity practitioners to be visible on Twitter. We have exemplified the importance of the visibility by @SirMaeior's tweets. @SirMaeior is continuing to post a variety of tweets in terms of different themes. Most of the tweets contains various hashtags. Through the number of tweets, he would expand his social territory and communicate with others. From his followers' perspective, they are in favor of his feedback, in comparison with other famous movie stars. His fans are willing to communicate with him because they expect his feedback. Therefore, it is not surprising that @SirMaeior would lose this advantage if he stops posing a variety of tweets or feedbacking.

As mediations is the preparation of brand public (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016), mediations can trigger a symbolic interaction by means of the *ambient affiliation*, the hashtag. Moreover, the hashtag is commonly able to connect the brand to the private conversation in public. Individuals, who want to appeal to followers, try to make up an artificial self-image. The hashtags make the self-image under the spotlight and keep in touch with others. Therefore, the micro-celebrity practitioners are subjected to visibility and communication. In the wake of interruption of either of them, the micro-celebrity status would fade away.

Marwick and Boyd (2010) argue that micro-celebrity is a factor, by which social status game works on the social media. Researching the practices of micro-celebrity is to disclose a fraction of the social status game on Twitter. In order to understand the role of micro-celebrity played, to analyze the social status game on Twitter becomes necessary in this thesis.

## 4.6 The value-creation of brand public from a postmodernism perspective

### 4.6.1 Cultural capital on Twitter

The previous analysis of the micro-celebrity has shed light on the research of the social status game. As retweets and @replies prompt to raise the social status on Twitter (Marwick, 2013), the tweets getting the highest retweets and @replies are to stand for “good tastes” from Bourdieu’s perspective. Through reviewing the contents of those tweets (Figure 4-29), we can disclose the underlying cultural capital. We have selected several topics in three categories in order to establish a whole picture concerning cultural capital on Twitter. We have focused on the topic of *H&M vs. Street Art* in the category of *self-presentation*, while the topic of *Information about the new season* represents the category of *news*. In the end, the topic of *NickiMinaj* can stand for the category of *sale*.

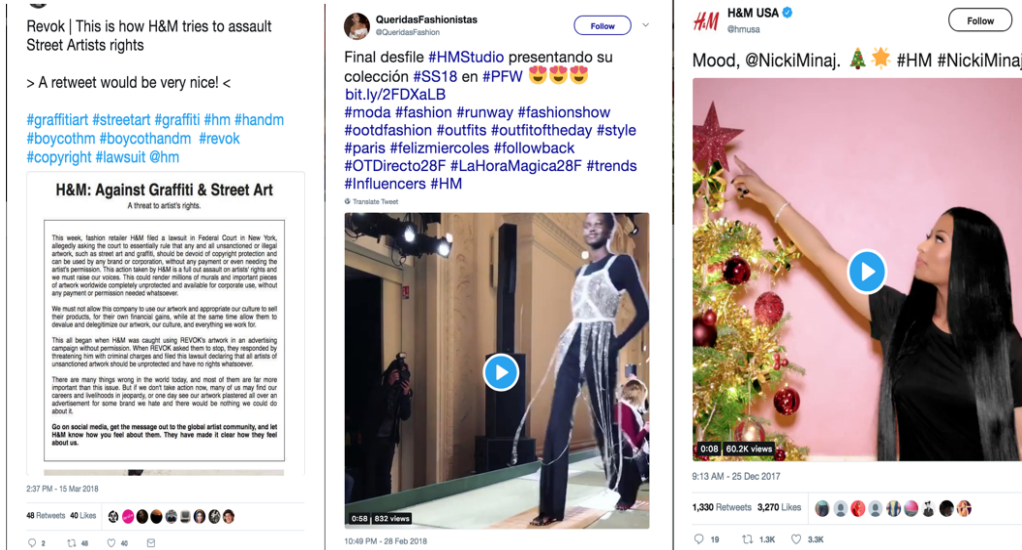


Figure 4-29 From left to right: 1. the ordinary account with the highest retweet has criticized H&M concerning H&M's lawsuit against the street artist. 2. The tweet made a comment on the H&M 2018 Spring & Summer fashion show. 3. It was announced by H&M's USA account while the Christmas commercial would star in Nicki Minaj.

Based on these tweets gaining the highest retweet in different categories, we have discerned that the most prevalently cultural capital is associated with egalitarianism and diversity. The elite group on Twitter is prone to advocate egalitarianism and diversity. As cultural capital commonly represents the practices of consumption rather than the object of consumption in modern society (Holt, 1998), cultural capital on Twitter focuses on the meanings which are attached to object rather than the object itself. It is consistent with that the meanings of objects become heterogeneous in the adjusted notion of tastes (Holt, 1998). For example, In the topic of *H&M vs. Street Art*, the Twitter user did not rebuke H&M's merchandises. They merely unsatisfied with H&M's notion, based on which the street art is not a masterpiece such as classical art such as painting, sculpture or even photography. This notion is not in favor of egalitarianism, which is the prevalently cultural capital on Twitter. The elite group on Twitter is prone to disparage this ideology and H&M, with which the ideology stands. The elite group applies brand public to rebuke the ideology and H&M which stand for this ideology. Moreover, based on the video clip attaching, the tweets regarding the topic of *Information about the new season* and *NickiMinaj* try to imply the diversity. When H&M organized their 2018 Spring and Summer fashion show, they have recruited African models. H&M has collaborated with the Afro-American singer, Nicki Minaj, and made a Christmas commercial. What these tweets stressed is consistent with cultural capital, diversity. These tweets are the medium of publicity of the social identity.

The elites' tweets are probably able to appeal to more and more followers, who tend to manifest that their tastes are as good as the elite group. Retweeting and replying are the effective ways, by which the followers

distinguish themselves from the average Twitter user. In terms of the topic, *H&M vs. Street Art*, one Twitter user not only agree with the original tweet by means of retweeting, but he also discussed the side effect of H&M's lawsuit which is strangling the art and damage the fashion industry. Based on his narrative, we have discerned that he insisted that every kind of art is of equal importance. He also implied that even the vandalistic street art has an opportunity to become a classic masterpiece such as "I love Cesar" or "Brutus was right" in Latin. Through the sensible discussion, He successfully manifested his distinction by means of brand public on Twitter. Embodying the social status on Twitter is the value of brand public.

The similar cases abound in other topics. In terms of the topic *Information about the new season*, Twitter users positively responded to the *news* of the new season fashion show. The appraisals include that "they love some things in the show" or they think @QueridasFashion, the original Twitter account, is "extraordinary!". Moreover, different Twitter users replied to @hmosfera like terms, "superminaj", "beautiful", or "I want this GIF" under the topic, *NickiMinaj*. Their endowments are the way, by which they are following the elite groups on Twitter. We may consider that what Twitter users @reply and retweet is the *pecuniary emulation* driven by the theory of tastes. The *pecuniary emulation* on Twitter is the value creation of brand public. As replying to the original accounts is distinct from the average users, Twitter users are able to climb up the Twitter's social ladder.

Nevertheless, due to the fact that the topics are ephemeral on Twitter, we have not found the *invidious comparison*, by which the elite group is prone to get rid of the followers in the social status game. We wonder if the fast transition of topics is one kind of *invidious comparison*. Because of the fast information transition on Twitter, the occasion, in which different social fractions consume an identical topic, becomes rare. The elite group need not deliberately consume a different object to manifest their distinction.

#### 4.6.2 The social status game on Twitter

Based on the analyses above, we try to reveal the characteristics of the elite group on Twitter. The cultural capital compared with economic situation is a dominant determinant of the elite group in the democratic society (Holt, 1998). Nevertheless, the offline celebrities are affluent, whereas the ordinary people cannot obtain much wealth in real life (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). Given the prevailing cultural capital on Twitter, diversity and egalitarianism, the elite group on Twitter should be capable of drawing a multitude of audiences. We come to exemplify the statement by comparing the identical tweet posed by @hm with @hmphilippines (Figure 4-30). H&M refers to a fast fashion brand in the developed countries such as Sweden, the United States, and Germany so that H&M cannot be capable of drawing much attention in the developed countries. By contrast, H&M serves as a fashion icon in the developing countries such as the

Philippines, so there are many audiences of @HMphilippines in the developing countries. The different offline impressions project the various images of H&M accounts on Twitter. When @hm and @hmphilippines have published the same content respectively, the numbers of retweets are significantly different. In the light of both economic capital and cultural capital, the elite group on Twitter should be affluent in the offline world, while they have a legion of audiences on Twitter. We have attributed the elite group on Twitter to the micro-celebrity who simultaneously are an offline celebrity. Because the ordinary people cannot acquire wealth over one night, they cannot become part of the elite in a short period.



Figure 4-30 From left to Right: 1. The tweet posed by @HM (12 retweets and 149 likes); 2. The tweet posed by @HMPhilippines (211 retweets and 4319 likes)

Given the conception of the elite group on Twitter, we have adopted a model of Bourdieu’s classification of lifestyle in order to analyze the *pecuniary emulation* by means of brand public. It is clear that the habitus which consists of economic capital and cultural capital determines the individual behaviors (Bourdieu, 2010, [1984]). A variety of tastes is the barometer of the distinction, by which the habitus can be embodied on a particular field. In turn, the tastes organically composite the lifestyle. According to Trigg (2001), the status mobility rests on both economic capital and cultural capital, though cultural capital plays a vital role in the social status game. The different lifestyles are corresponding to both kinds of capital in the different quantities.

		Cultural Capital	
		+	-
Economic Capital	+	A: The Offline celebrity who becomes the Micro-celebrity practitioners	B: The Offline celebrity who is not the micro-celebrity practitioners
	-	C: The ordinary Users who becomes the Micro-celebrity practitioners	D: The ordinary Users who is not micro-celebrity practitioners

*Figure 4-31 The model of Bourdieu's classification of lifestyle (Source: Rosengren 1995)*

The model of classification of lifestyle simplifies the Bourdieu's status game by means of four possible combinations of cultural and economic capital (Figure 4-31). The block A, as well as the elite group, denotes that people with the high amount of economic capital and cultural capital entail a series of behaviors. The celebrity practitioners who are movie stars with a number of fans on Twitter are assigned the block A. The celebrity practitioners not only are affluent in real life, but they also gain a considerable reputation on the social media such as Emma Watson, who is the movie star. Meanwhile, most of Emma Watson's tweets have more than 1000 retweets. The characteristics of the block A is consistent with what Marwick (2013) describes in terms of the elite group on Twitter. On the contrary, the block D is entailed by the ordinary people who have a small influence on the social media. The block A is the opposite of block D. According



to Trigg (2001), it is impossible for the individual in the block D to escalate into block A, in the light of the restrict delimitations of economic and cultural capital. In other words, ordinary people are barely able to become a celebrity over one night.

The rest of diagonal blocks, blocks B and C, refer to that people are only acquire in one capital, the economic capital or economic capital respectively. The block B is entailed by the individuals with high economic capital, who have the top income, stock investment, etc. Though they hold an amount of wealth in real life, they are not a big name on the social media. Their influence on Twitter is insignificant. Not many audiences on Twitter are willing to follow what they advocate. The individual, who enact block C, is associated with the micro-celebrity practitioners, who are the ordinary Twitter users on Twitter, in the light of Marwick and Boyd's statement. The ordinary practitioners, as well as the micro-celebrity individuals with the block C, have a significant influence on social media, whereas they are still ordinary people in real life.

### **Social mobility**

Instead of static, the social mobility takes place in the model of classification of lifestyle. As Trigg (2001) analyzes a small business family is prone to invest in children's education for the sake of the status mobility (From block B to block A), the occurrence of the social mobility is also prevailing on Twitter. The Twitter users in block B apply the practices of brand public to embody that they have adopted and endowed the prevailing culture.

This kind of social mobility occurs in the topic, *Racist Commercial*. The verified accounts, @MickyBeisenherz and @TheVoiceNews have commented on the topic, *Racist Commercial* (Figure 4-32). The comments are akin to the other tweets around the topic. Nevertheless, their tweets did not gain many retweets. @MickyBeisenherz applied a caricature to summarize what it happened in that week. He tried to connect the H&M racist turmoil with the other racist event in order to appeal to more audiences on Twitter. Meanwhile, @TheVoiceNews cited an article concerning the diversity to trigger others' interest. Neither of them has attained the aim in this case, but these tweets reveal the attempt to *pecuniary emulation* by means of brand public. Their comments referring to brand public try to offer the publicity of the higher social status. We have discerned that their strategy of the social mobility on Twitter. The offline celebrity practitioners have exploited their offline resources such as high income or fans to enhance their social status on Twitter. Based on this strategy, the offline celebrities, who refer to Block B, strive to attain the Block A. Brand public is the vehicle, by which the offline celebrities in block B strive to reach block A.



Figure 4-32 From left to right: 1. The tweet posted by @ MickyBeisenherz; 2. The tweet posted by @ TheVoiceNews

Moreover, the rise of the “new middle class” sheds light on the cross-mobility among different blocks on Twitter (Trigg, 2001, p112). He states that the new middle class has appeared in the wake of the development of service industries. As bourgeoisie was not able to adapt to the predominant lifestyle, the new middle class cannot be compatible with the current lifestyle. They are prone to entail a new cultural symbol in order to improve the existing taste hierarchy (Trigg, 2001). Based on the new taste hierarchy, the new middle class can take advantage of the economic capital and manifest the distinction from the mass. The individuals in block B are probably able to become a new middle class in the context of Twitter.



Figure 4-33 The tweet posted by @buffalosouljah1

For example, @buffalosouljah1, who was a winner of The Zim Dancehall Awards, has posted a tweet (Figure 4-33). In contrast with the mainstream cultures, diversity and egalitarianism, he has predicted that the H&M racist turmoil is ephemeral and African Americans would forget their curses and criticisms. He as well as the *new middle class* try to become a maverick for the sake of the distinction. He conveys this unique idea by means of brand public. If his statement could gain other Twitter users' supports, his tweet would be able to appeal to more and more audiences. In turn, he would attain the social escalation on Twitter. In sum, if the different discourse concerning the ideology successfully manifests the individual distinction, there is a *new middle class* on Twitter. The *new middle class* is aware that they cannot take a considerable advantage from the current taste hierarchy. They attempt to change the mainstream taste by means of speaking out their idea, in order to manifest their distinction. Brand public is the way of the speaking out their idea on Twitter. If the individual successfully to manifest the distinction, obtaining the higher social status (Block A) is the creating value of brand public. In turn, becoming the new middle class on Twitter is the value creation of brand public.

When Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) researched on #Louis Vuitton, they have concluded that a brand serves as a material intermediate in a multitude of the private networks, in which the various identities are supposed to be manifested. Based on the research #hm, we have been aware that the number of private network with respect to the brand not only reveals diverse identities, but it also becomes a space where a new social status game occurs. We have revealed the current cultural capital on Twitter, diversity and egalitarianism, which are the foundation of the social status game. We also found that both the wealth in real life and the power of influence on Twitter play a role in the social status game on Twitter. Based on the model of Bourdieu's classification, we have illuminated the value creation of brand public with respect to the status mobility on Twitter. It is possible that brand public is a way of *pecuniary emulation*, by which individuals manifest the next higher social status.

## 4.7 Discussion

In our research, we can conclude brand public is a preliminary to another consumer behavior, crowds. Individual and collective emotion not only lays a strong foundation for the brand public but they also prompt individuals to manage a movement with connective action. Nevertheless, the practices of brand public never become crowds until it becomes affect-intensive.

The affect that has been observed in brand public is weaker than in the crowds. Our study has revealed the transition from publics, as well as the practice of brand public, to the crowds with the emotions fermenting. By following the users on Twitter and the shared personal perspectives around the brand H&M, we can see that the users' comments on a specific event reflect their emotions. When the network users perceive that the affect adheres to the messages, the audience is prone to strengthen emotion for the sake of the self-expression. As a result, a sense of connectedness is established. Based on the sense of connectedness, all participants serve as protesters engaging in the online movement which appears on Twitter. The stronger affect attaches to the tweets of the users, the faster transition occurs.

Our findings suggest that the given transition from the practices brand publics to crowds by means of different affect is subject to the various topics that emerge in the categories *news*, *sale* and *self-presentation*. Nevertheless, the favorite feeling only prompts the information distribution in the categories of *sale*. The negative emotion facilitates the information diffusion in the category of *news* and *self-presentation*, in which Twitter users tend to convey their attitudes, opinions, and ideas regarding the brand, H&M. Twitter users are prone to be a protester.

Brand public is not only able to lay a strong foundation for the crowds, but it also can prepare for the development of brand community in some social movements. Some of the users carry characteristics developed in a community, which can come out in a brand public such as Twitter. In brand public, there is an interplay of users that come together in large numbers through sharing their personal experience or retweeting others posts. Thus, brand public prompts the Twitter users who share a set of isolated perspective to generate a collective idea.

An intriguing finding that supports the connective action is the users that interacted with others during the topic *H&M vs. Street Art* were either artist themselves or have a connection to the people in the street art community. People with the same sense of collective identity are brought together in brand public. Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) argue that in brand public the development of a collective identity does

not exist, which is consistent with our findings. The collective identity has not been created but on the occasion where people are critical against a brand, people will support others that identify with the same collective meaning. A brand public may lay a foundation for a brand community. A community can continue to foster members passion, traditions, rituals and bringing them together after the certain topic. (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Granitz and Wards, 1996; McAlexander et al, 2002; Thomas, Schau, and Price, 2011).

Brand public is defined by a diverse set of personal experience and perspective shared among users rather than interacting with each other (Arvidsson and Caliendo, 2016). Furthermore, the brand public enables the Twitter users to respond to a certain topic fast (Chadwick, 2007). A quick and spontaneous movement can be observed on the critical topics, *Racist Commercial* and *H&M vs. Street Art*, which happened in a short period. The topic *Racist Commercial* occurs from 2018-01-08 to 2018-01-23 and the topic *H&M vs. Street Art* occurs from 2018-02-05 to 2018-02-15. In these fast movements, some users are always active, whereas others occasionally become active in specific events associated with one theme. This is consistent with the characteristics of brand public that some users only participate once or twice. For instance, racial justice activists struggle against the critical topics, both *Racist Commercial* and *H&M vs. Street Art* on a regular basis, while other users only engage in either *Racist Commercial* or *H&M vs. Street Art* randomly and become calmed down after their engagement.

There is very little interaction among the users in the brand public. However, the hashtags associated with the mediation facilitates the development of private conversation that can be seen publicly. There are 300 million active users monthly on Twitter, where a variety of tweets contains the same hashtags and includes similar meanings. The hashtags enable the groups of tweets to be visible, searchable, and discernible (Page, 2012). The visibility offers an excellent opportunity to endorse each other in the group by means of retweets and @replies. Both retweeting and @replying allow for the communication on Twitter. Meanwhile, the hashtags relentlessly appeal to new audiences in the private conversation. The development of symbolic interaction on Twitter results in the appearance of micro-celebrity.

Micro-celebrity reflects people who have a significant influence on the internet. Both ordinary Twitter users and celebrities in the real world can become a micro-celebrity if they can appeal to adequate audiences. Nevertheless, characteristics of the micro-celebrity practitioners are different in the different categories. For example, we have noticed ordinary Twitter users are easier to become micro-celebrity practitioners in the category of *self-presentation*, whereas the verified users, referring to the celebrities in the real world, readily become the micro-celebrity practitioners in the category of *sale*.

Our research has also focused on the posts with the most retweets, because the number of retweets is an indication of the *good taste*. The authors of the tweets that manifest their *good tastes* are the ones who condemned the H&M lawsuit against the street art and that advocating for Afro-American singer, Nicki Minaj, on Twitter. The elite group on Twitter is in favor of cultural capital, diversity and egalitarianism. The diversity and egalitarianism are consistent with Holt's (1998) adjusted theory of tastes wherein a conglomerate of cultural capital, as well as habitus, determines the practice of consumption. The practice of consumption illuminates the good tastes on the field.

According to Bourdieu's theory of tastes, different tastes have organically composited a particular lifestyle. We have applied the model of Bourdieu's classification of lifestyles to discuss the different social groups on Twitter. The elite group (referring to Block A) is the offline celebrities attaining micro-celebrity, in reference to the affluence fortune and the considerable influence on Twitter. On the contrary, block D stands for the no-name people in the real life and Twitter. The block C represents regular Twitter users, who have become the micro-celebrity practitioners on Twitter, while the block B indicates the offline celebrity without the significant influence on Twitter.

The social status game is somewhat dynamic. The paradigm of Bourdieu's classification of lifestyles sheds light on social mobility by means of brand public. We have disclosed that the group in block B applies different strategies in order to attain the *pecuniary emulation* referring to the value of brand public. The first way is to adapt to the good tastes at the mercy of the predominant cultural capital, as the bourgeoisies have invested in their children's education for the sake of the *pecuniary emulation*. Nevertheless, the *new middle class* is in favor of the second way, by which they would have changed the mainstream tastes.

## 5 Conclusion

We have applied the netnography method to collect 20775 tweets in the timespan from 2017-12-01 to 2018-04-09. Based on the database, we have gained insights on how the value drive from connective action and the circulation of affectivity. Furthermore, expounding micro-celebrity and the social status game enables us to understand how brand public generates values on Twitter. We have analyzed personal expressions through the content of tweets, hashtags and retweets in order to disclose how users come together in order to create the values in brand public.

Brand public is characterized by loose social networks and weak ties among the users. From the users' perspective, the function of brand public is to create visibility and publicity. This has evolved Twitter to a popular communication tool to spread news, opinions and endowments. Our findings suggest that users seek more personalized ways to engage in brand public which result in connective actions among the users. The connective actions are based on personalized content that are shared among users in different networks. The value of brand public is created when the content reaches new users (Bennett & Segeberg, 2012). The act of sharing on Twitter explains how the personal actions can be communicated to external networks through retweets. By sharing personal perspective and experience publicly, people engage in social movements.

In the value creation of connective action, brand public emerges as a preparation of the development of a community and a crowd. Due to brand public, inactive users can become active by driving actions through the combination of the self-organizing network, retweets and hashtags. In brand public, when diverse users share their expressions to influence a social movement they create value, a self-organizing network. There is not a direct leadership that drives the movement, rather the personal actions carried out by each user and this creates a self-organizing network. When a retweet is distributed to another network, the value is created since the message of the original tweet has now reached a new set of users. The hashtags also play a crucial role in the value creation of brand public, when we consider that they assemble a variety of personalized expressions concerning the brand, H&M.

The connective action sheds light on how a brand public drives social movement. Our research focuses on how the value emerges from the formation of a self-organizing network, retweets, and hashtags in relation to the topics that make social changes. Such understanding is essential if we can obtain a perspective on some forms of public engagement through digital networks.

Brand public marks a new distinct shift for social movements since they can develop rather quickly. Based on our observation, Twitter users are not concerned with the long-term commitment as we could see that the topics faded away quickly. With these kinds of movements, the social ties and interaction become strengthened. When the news fades away, the interaction between the users go back to the loose network. In summation, the extent of interaction among Twitter users changes with a social movement. For future research, we suggest that researcher study the formation of social movements in brand public and if commitments between the participants can be established in brand public.

This study has shown that the development of brand public has allowed for more open approaches to participate in a movement and the ability to reach out to users easier. Therefore, it is essential to understand the unifying and distinguished elements that can be found in brand public in comparison to brand communities. Collective identity is a value created in brand communities, where the process of interaction, tradition, moral obligation and rituals strengthens the shared passion for the brand. Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) reject the formation of a collective identity in brand public. Our study finds that users that share a collective identity can carry the identity with them when they participate in brand public. For instance, members in a brand community commonly have a collective identity. When the members with the collective identity participated in brand public, they still can share their collective identity with each other in brand public. However, further research is needed to investigate how the brand public can benefit from participants who have the developed collective identity somewhere else.

Brian Massumi (2009) firstly refers affect to emotion and desire, which stem from an array of micro-shocks occurring in daily life. The affect is a preliminary to the occurrence of both publics and crowds on Twitter (Stage, 2013). Publics are the association, which stems from the pre-mediation (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). Publics are the practices of brand public when publics are associated with a brand. The appearance of the crowds needs to be more affect intensive in comparison with that of publics. Brand public plays a vital role in the information diffusion whereby the emotion is probably able to become intense. Stage (2013) assumes that publics serve as an intermediate, by which the strong emotion leads to the appearance of the crowds in the end. Therefore, the generation of the crowds is the result of that the practices of brand public make affect intensive.

Analyzing the different retweets on the topic of the *Racist Commercial* that represents the advertising by H&M featuring the young black boy, equips us to disclose somehow the occurrence of the crowds. The Twitter users offered publicity of their emotional towards the news concerning H&M, and then the emotion would be perceived by other Twitter users. Due to brand public, the negative feeling continues to ferment



with relentless retweeting and @replying. Twitter users with the unfavorable feeling become the members of crowds with the feelings of solidarity. In turn, crowding takes place on Twitter.

The study sheds light on how to prevent a damage of brand reputation in the future. The disappointed feeling of stakeholders toward a brand commonly demolishes the reputation of the brand (Roper & Fill, 2012). It is necessary to research how to protect the brand reputation from the diffusion of the negative emotion. This study has revealed the process, in which the consumers have spontaneously organized a crowd due to discontent with the brand. Based on our research, the brand can save its reputation by means of controlling brand public as well as information diffusion. Although we have discussed that the extent of affect plays an essential role in the information distribution as well as publics, this study does not illuminate the specific manner by which the brand can slow down the deterioration of the brand. The manners are worthwhile to be addressed in the future research.

As brand public is a vehicle by which the diverse identities are manifested (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016), there is a multidimensional status game on Twitter. Bourdieu (2010, [1984]) has expounded the social status game by means of cultural capital. As different cultural capital composites habitus, the field referring to a platform allows the different habitus to be embodied. Bourdieu (2010, [1984]) names the manifestation of the elite groups' habitus on the field as a "good taste". Holt (1998), moreover, has adapted Bourdieu's theory of tastes to the social shift. He has asserted that the *good taste* should be represented by the consumption of object, rather than the object itself. For the sake of this social movement, the heterogeneous practices of cultural groups take place.

With the advent of Web 2.0, both diversity and egalitarianism serving as the cultural capital determine the good taste in the multidimensional status game on Twitter. An aggregation of a multitude of isolated posts as well as brand public is the way to embody cultural capital, diversity and egalitarianism on Twitter. According to Marwick (2013), *Good taste* is pinpointed by the number of retweets and @replies. Based on Holt's adjusted theory of tastes, the contribution of this study is to reveal a model of the social hierarchy on Twitter by means of the model of Bourdieu's classification of lifestyles. Based on the social hierarchy on Twitter, we have noticed that *pecuniary emulation* takes place by means of brand public, so that the *pecuniary emulation* is the value created by brand public in the end.

Given a hashtag serving as a field, both celebrities in real life and ordinary people strive to gain more visible on Twitter, in order to attain the *pecuniary emulation*. We have offered an insight that both visibility and conversation play pivotal roles in the establishment of micro-celebrity. If fulfilled, both the regular people

and the celebrities would attain micro-celebrity. Nevertheless, only the stars who possess the offline asset would obtain the lifestyle of the elite group on Twitter. This study has laid a strong academic foundation for the research of the consumer culture in the online social media. Brand public is a primary vehicle, by which individuals engage in the social status game on Twitter. From this perspective, our study expands the notion of brand public. In addition, the future research would be interesting if it can corroborate our insight concerning the relationship between the visibility and the fulfillment of micro-celebrity.

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# Appendix A: The top five popular co-hashtags list

Time interval	TOP1	TOP2	TOP3	TOP4	TOP5	
2017-12-01	2017-12-02	fashion* 10**	ootd 10	nickiminaj 7	style 7	holiday 5
2017-12-03	2017-12-04	fashion 10	ootd 6	ebay 4	christmastir 3	fashionblogge 3
2017-12-05	2017-12-06	ootd 11	fashion 9	zara 9	ad 3	casual 3
2017-12-07	2017-12-08	huslemental 8	kenzo 8	photography 8	ootd 7	homeless 6
2017-12-09	2017-12-10	ootd 13	dress 9	fashion 7	christmas 4	zara 4
2017-12-11	2017-12-12	fashion 10	ootd 5	fashionblogg 3	gym 3	ad 2
2017-12-13	2017-12-14	fashion 11	style 7	ootd 5	mood 4	africa 3
2017-12-15	2017-12-16	fashion 14	pratapengar 5	fashionblogg 4	ootd 4	aktier 3
2017-12-17	2017-12-18	fashion 15	ootd 12	christmas 6	ebaydeals 5	aktier 4
2017-12-19	2017-12-20	fashion 13	ootd 9	style 8	aktier 4	christmas 3
2017-12-21	2017-12-22	fashion 21	zara 8	style 6	ootd 6	instagood 4
2017-12-23	2017-12-24	fashion 15	ootd 9	scam 5	style 5	fashionblogge 4
2017-12-25	2017-12-26	fashion 10	christmas 8	style 5	nickiminaj 3	zara 3
2017-12-27	2017-12-28	fashion 8	ebay 5	ootd 5	style 5	bb11 4
2017-12-29	2017-12-30	fashion 12	ootd 10	style 6	ebay 4	model 4
2017-12-31	2018-01-01	fashion 10	ootd 6	style 5	newyear 4	zara 3
2018-01-02	2018-01-03	fashion 12	ootd 7	style 7	topshop 5	zara 5
2018-01-04	2018-01-05	fashion 17	ootd 10	zara 5	fashionblogg 5	mango 5
2018-01-06	2018-01-07	fashion 18	ootd 7	style 5	hmconscious 3	rayban 3
2018-01-08	2018-01-09	racism 196	hmracist 190	racist 156	boycotthm 127	coolestmonke 25
2018-01-10	2018-01-11	hmracist 150	hmhoodie 141	coolestmonk 79	racism 60	racist 58
2018-01-12	2018-01-13	eff 125	hmracist 70	hmhoodie 46	coolestmonk 36	racism 34
2018-01-14	2018-01-15	eff 64	hmracist 57	coolestmonk 50	hmhoodie 50	southafrica 40
2018-01-16	2018-01-17	eff 28	coolestmonk 22	southafrica 19	fashion 17	racism 15
2018-01-18	2018-01-19	racist 21	gossip 16	racism 16	coolestmonk 9	apologizes 8
2018-01-20	2018-01-21	racist 30	gossip 29	apologizes 23	kentstate 23	fashion 17
2018-01-22	2018-01-23	racism 21	hmhoodie 20	racist 19	badvertising 18	wtf 18
2018-01-24	2018-01-25	fashion 13	zara 8	mensfashion 6	ootd 6	3pointplus 4
2018-01-26	2018-01-27	fashion 26	celebrity 16	style 16	divided 9	ootd 9
2018-01-28	2018-01-29	fashion 13	ootd 7	style 6	zara 6	ebay 5
2018-01-30	2018-01-31	fashion 20	pratapengar 12	aktier 11	ootd 9	style 5
2018-02-01	2018-02-02	fashion 19	zara 14	style 13	denimismyca 10	ootd 8
2018-02-03	2018-02-04	fashion 18	style 9	zara 6	ootd 5	fashionblogge 4
2018-02-05	2018-02-06	denimismyca 9	fashion 6	mode 5	kapitalism 3	ootd 3
2018-02-07	2018-02-08	denimismyca 14	fashion 10	ootd 9	zara 7	fashionblogge 4
2018-02-09	2018-02-10	fashion 17	zara 12	ootd 9	denimismyca 5	fashionblogge 5
2018-02-11	2018-02-12	fashion 14	ootd 8	featureme 6	zara 6	style 5
2018-02-13	2018-02-14	fashion 24	style 11	allivesmatte 6	smithonian 6	racisthoodie 6
2018-02-15	2018-02-16	fashion 11	denimismyca 8	ootd 7	zara 7	retail 4
2018-02-17	2018-02-18	fashion 10	hmbaby 7	denimismyca 5	rastaochdall 5	adventuresina 4
2018-02-19	2018-02-20	fashion 10	love 9	ootd 6	casual 6	chanel 6
2018-02-21	2018-02-22	gibraltar 9	hmfashion 8	denimismyca 7	ootd 5	hmchallenge 4
2018-02-23	2018-02-24	ootd 10	gibraltar 9	fashion 8	zara 7	supreme 4
2018-02-25	2018-02-26	fashion 11	hmbaby 8	ootd 7	style 7	hmdenim 7
2018-02-27	2018-02-28	fashion 15	ootd 12	hmstudio 6	fashionblogg 5	ss18 4
2018-03-01	2018-03-02	fashion 9	pfw 9	paris 6	hmstudio 5	fashionblogge 4
2018-03-03	2018-03-04	ootd 8	fashion 7	hmbaby 7	style 6	blogger 4
2018-03-05	2018-03-06	fashion 9	hmdenim 8	homestyle 4	love 4	ss18 4
2018-03-07	2018-03-08	poshmark 51	hmconscious 8	awesome 7	ootd 7	goingout 7
2018-03-09	2018-03-10	poshmark 161	ootd 10	ss18 8	zara 6	freepeople 8
2018-03-11	2018-03-12	fashion 174	style 173	poshmark 172	zara 9	freepeople 5
2018-03-13	2018-03-14	fashion 202	style 192	poshmark 186	anthropogie 8	revok 5
2018-03-15	2018-03-16	fashion 215	style 178	revok 59	streetart 46	boycotthm 39
2018-03-17	2018-03-18	fashion 168	style 159	poshmark 156	streetart 7	revok 6
2018-03-19	2018-03-20	fashion 158	style 156	poshmark 150	forever21 13	bananarepubl 6
2018-03-21	2018-03-22	fashion 85	style 84	poshmark 82	causal 8	ootd 4
2018-03-23	2018-03-24	fashion 174	style 171	poshmark 168	jcrew 9	forever21 6
2018-03-25	2018-03-26	fashion 188	style 174	poshmark 171	zara 11	ootd 7
2018-03-27	2018-03-28	fashion 194	style 186	poshmark 179	ootd 179	zara 8
2018-03-29	2018-03-30	fashion 184	style 178	poshmark 176	zara 10	ootd 6
2018-03-31	2018-04-01	fashion 116	style 114	poshmark 110	zara 7	ootd 7
2018-04-02	2018-04-03	fashion 127	style 117	poshmark 112	zara 4	casual 3
2018-04-04	2018-04-05	fashion 142	style 133	poshmark 131	ootd 11	zara 7
2018-04-06	2018-04-07	fashion 149	style 144	poshmark 139	zara 7	ootd 5
2018-04-08	2018-04-09	fashion 50	style 47	poshmark 45	21km 8	scklm2018 3

\*: the top five popular co-hashtags with #hm hashtag

\*\* : the frequency of co-hashtags in the time intervals