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ABSTRACT
This study explores fashion bloggers’ practices in establishing themselves as persona-fied brands and obtaining the celebrity status. Comparing between 20 U.S. and Taiwanese bloggers this research builds on social practice theory to examine how the fashionable amateurs perform micro-celebrity strategies under the influence of cultural institutional works.

INTRODUCTION
The development of social media has changed the landscape of branding and the dialogue about consumption. Some key consumers in the field, such as fashion bloggers, have attracted significant attention as they play an increasingly important role in shaping the fashion industry (Mora and Rocamora 2015). Prior research has studied how they obtain social capitals (McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips 2013), negotiate with the fashion industry (Pedroni 2015), create and redefine markets (Dolbec and Fischer 2015; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013), and influence consumers through creating eWOM (Kulmala, Mesiranta, and Tuominen 2013). Though these studies highlight the significance of fashion bloggers, none of them investigate such an influence under different cultural and institutional contexts. As fashion is a cultural-specific social construct, it is critical to investigate the differences in practices among bloggers of various cultural backgrounds.

Fashion bloggers are important because of their micro-celebrity status and their influence on their followers. In the course of becoming celebrities, they often go through the practices of establishing themselves as persona-fied brands where they carefully articulate their personas with an artistic sense of fashion and taste. To exercise their practices, they have to negotiate with the institutional boundaries, which they have to establish, and are constrained by. Prior study suggests that personification of a brand involves associating human characteristics with brandable qualities within the person (Dion and Arnould, 2015). For bloggers to brand themselves through a persona consists of negotiating the presented self between themselves and the followers, as well as the fashion institutional works by and large. In this study, I propose to examine the practices of bloggers in negotiating their roles toward branded persons from the standpoint of practice theory and institutional works to understand how such practices are developed and formed in two different cultures. Specifically, the study analyzed 10 American and 10 Taiwanese bloggers as an indicative contrast between the East and the West. Among the long list of cultural values, the divergence of high-low context, individualism-collectivism and power distance have all been motivated to explain the difference in communication style, identity construction, relationship establishment, and the role of power in the society (Shavitt et al., 2006). It is unclear how individuals negotiate their practices under different institutions. The fashion industry sets an appropriate context for its steady development in online consumption (Salonen, Näränkäinen and Saaritjarvi 2014) and its developing institutional works in two different cultures.

To focus on the practices within the institution, the practice-theoretical view is adopted. Practice theory defines practices as routine ways of doing things, relating to objects and others, and describing and interpreting the world (Shove and Pantzar 2005). Consumer researchers have focused on many of these practices (Schau, Muniz and Arnould 2009). Recent research on institutional work has highlighted that certain types of practices are common to individual actors contribute to building institutions, whether intentional or not (Lawrence and Sudbury 2009). Practices include establishing shared understandings, procedures and engagements (Schau et al., 2009).

In this paper, the framework of practice theory is applied to analyze how individual bloggers negotiate their ways to become branded persons.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Institution and Practices Theory
The possibility of connecting with others who share similar interests is one of the most valuable outcomes of the development of social media. In the past decades, the market has been witnessing a growing number of individuals who present themselves online and have become “celebrities” that offer many of the features of brands. Persona-fied brands, i.e., branded persons through persona, have become particularly significant in the field of fashion industry. Part of this process is to carefully cultivate their self-presentation to deliver a desired impression on others (Vohs, Baumeister, and Ciarocco 2005). Prior study on digital self-presentation suggests that individuals tend to exercise favorable self in response to the audiences’ preference of self-concept, personality styles and social roles (Jensen and Gilly 2003; Schlenker 2003).

The fashion industry, which has long been Western-centric, has embraced the bloggers in recent years (Pham 2013). It is going through some level of institutionalization of certain key features to include them (Findlay 2015). Bloggers help to establish and redefine boundaries of the institutional works at the market-level in the fashion industry even by their micro-level practices (Dolbec and Fischer 2015). However, these institutional works as such are different in the East and are still largely under development (Pham 2013). Institutional works that constitutes routine practices, norms, and rules that serve to guide and constrain the behaviors of individuals in the fashion industry are somewhat different across the countries. The transactional and social roles of fashion bloggers and their practices can be a reflection of the larger institutional works, but can also be their own practices that they are trying to establish in the institutions.

The differences in cultural values between the East and the West have been well documented in the consumer research literature. Heavily influenced by Legalism, Confucianism and Taoism, people from Eastern cultures, Taiwanese for example, mostly hold incremental beliefs that subscribe to self-cultivation, authorities and the harmony of groups. This is distinct from Western cultures, US for example, where emphasis is on individual uniqueness and people hold an entity belief that talents and values are static (Rattan et al., 2012). Paradigms, such as high and low context, individualism-collectivism and power distance have all been motivated to explain the difference in communication style, identity construction, relationship establishment, and the role of power in the society (Shavitt et al., 2006). It is unclear how individuals negotiate their practices under different institutions. The fashion industry sets an appropriate context for its steady development in online consumption (Salonen, Näränkäinen and Saaritjarvi 2014) and its developing institutional works in two different cultures.

Personified Brands and Micro-Celebrities
There are some existing practices in establishing online personas that have been previously studied. Exploring the characteristics of chef-persona, Dion and Arnould (2015) identified the two main practices in managing branded persons. They suggest that there are two facets embedded in persona-fied brands, alchemists and artists. Alchemists embodied the skills and know-how of the industry, whereas artists embraced the artistic sensibility. Brands can be man-


METHODOLOGY


THE BLOGS ARE PRIMARY FEMALE FASHION BLOGS THAT DISCUSS CLOTHES, BEAUTY, AND RELATIVELY NICHE TOPICS AS OF 2007 AND 2011. ALL BLOGGERS APPEAR TO HAVE OBTAINED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CAPITAL THROUGH THEIR PRACTICES, SUCH AS SPONSORED ITEMS AND FASHION SHOWS’ INVITATIONS (MCQUARRIE ET AL. 2013), WHICH IS AN INDICATION OF THEIR LEGITIMIZED ROLES IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY.


ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

IT IS AN INTERACTIVE PROCESS TO REDEFINE ONESELF FROM AN AMATEUR BLOGGER AND ENGAGE CUSTOMERS TO A FASHIONABLE PERSONA WITH CELEBRITY CHARACTERS WHO IS WELL CONNECTED IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY. THE RESULTS SUGGEST THAT FASHION BLOGGING IN TWO COUNTRIES SHARE SIMILAR NORMS AND VALUES TO A CERTAIN EXTENT BUT THE PRACTICES TO DEVELOP THEIR PERSONAS AND LEGITIMIZE THEIR ROLE AS RECOGNIZED FASHION BLOGGERS VARY BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES.

ENGAGED CUSTOMERS VERSUS BRAND-PERSONA


IN CONTRAST, TAIWANESE BLOGGERS EMPHASIZE FAR MORE ON THE PRIVATE SELF IN THEIR CULTIVATED PERSONAS. ON A SIMILAR TOPIC ABOUT EARRINGS, A BLOGGER POSTED 10 PICTURES, WHICH SHE TOOK FROM HER HOME STUDIO AND WITH BOTH THE PRODUCTS THEMSELVES, AND THE SELF-PORTRAIT PICTURES FROM VARIOUS DIFFERENT ANGLES. SHE ALSO INCLUDED A LENGTHY DESCRIPTION WITH PERSONAL STORIES STARTING FROM HER BREAKFAST: “HAVE ANY OF YOU TRIED MACHA WITH LEMON JUICES? THEY TASTE REALLY NICE! I’VE TOLD YOU THAT I’VE BEEN CRAZY ABOUT LEMON JUICES LATELY. I DRINK IT EVERYDAY UNTIL THIS MORNING I THOUGHT IT’S JUST TOO MUCH AND DUG OUT MY MACHA POWDER...” (B. 21/06/2015). TAIWANESE BLOGGERS NEVER REALLY RESTRICTED THEIR FASHION BLOG POSTS TO STYLING ONLY. THESE BLOGGERS SEPARATE THEMSELVES FROM THE “REAL” COMMERCIAL BRANDS AND SEE THEMSELVES MERELY AS VEHICLES OR ENDORSERS FOR THEM. THEY ARE ENGAGED CUSTOMERS WHO HAVE A GOOD SENSE OF FASHION AND HAPPEN TO
enjoy sharing. Unlike U.S. bloggers who see the potential of separating the art from the artwork, Taiwanese bloggers are the artists that piece everything together.

The examples can be seen as a mere exercise of difference in communication style. Taiwanese bloggers, being in a high-context society, realize the need to provide excessive external cues to help the readers understand the contents, whereas U.S. bloggers, being in a low-context society, tend to present straightforward and simple messages. However, they may also signify the influence of different belief systems. Taiwanese culture subscribes to the incremental belief that roles of bloggers may be to guide and help the readers to change, learn and become a better self. The authority of bloggers is established through providing detailed account on how to become like them by including non-fashion related information. Conversely, the American bloggers are more of brands whereby like-minded people gather and share similar interests. Readers are not following the bloggers to self-cultivate but to seek inspiration to construct their identity.

Publicize the Private versus Privatize the Public

The differences in defining personal brands can also be signified by the displays of private and public personas. U.S. bloggers tend not to write anything personal. If there is personal information or private matters, they are often shared only after a professional persona has been established. The private information is there to add some personal touch to carefully cultivate the human aspects of the brands: “My mom rented a beach house for the holidays so we spent Christmas right near the ocean with all my cousins, aunts, and uncles. Took a few photos so I thought I’d share them with you.” (W. 29/12/2014) Taiwanese bloggers, on the other hand, do not make such a distinction. The blogs often started from a site that shares personal information and only has slowly grown into the status where they hold social capital in fashion and can be seen as opinion leaders. Their personas are the image of girls next door that they proactively reject the celebrity status and insist on being merely commoners.

This becomes even more obvious when comparing the strategic self-disclosure and interactions with the followers by the bloggers from the two countries. U.S. bloggers generally do not engage in conversations with the followers on their blog posts. Most of the comments on the blogs are either spam or affectionate comments from the followers, which bloggers rarely reply. If there is a need to address the audience, the forms of dialogues and interactions often appear to be more public and in the forms of broadcasting, similar to that of celebrities: “Many of you have asked and many have noticed that I haven’t mentioned [code for boyfriend] in a long time.” (W. 27/02/2015) Conversely, Taiwanese bloggers interact frequently with the followers. Most of the observed bloggers reply every single comment on their blogs with either private or public messages and answer the questions in detail. The readers often feel so comfortable with the bloggers and may interact with them as friends. Once a blogger shared with the readers that she is going for a trip to Japan, many made similar comments: “Would you be able to buy a brand product that has been previously mentioned by the blogger for me? I can transfer you the money.” (Q. 05/05/2015) This highlights the distinction between two cultures in terms of how the power can be established. There seem to be a paradoxical “leadership” exhibited by Taiwanese bloggers as they try to maintain both distance and closeness by combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness.

Although all bloggers’ posts are narcissistic by nature, and the ones from Taiwanese bloggers are perhaps even more so as they tend to include an excessive amount of selfies in their posts, Taiwanese bloggers strive to be inclusive with their readers and deeply embed themselves in the network.

Bloggers Attain Institutional Roles

These practices then contribute to the development of institutions (or lack thereof) of fashion communities. U.S. bloggers treat their followers as fans and organize their communities as brand communities. The communities are places for fans to share each other’s passion in fashion and affections in the bloggers themselves and to interact with one another. This type of brand community often does not require the presence of the bloggers themselves, i.e., the brand, because the brands in this context represent a symbolic value. The readers often comment on each other and help answer each other’s questions. In terms of the bloggers’ roles in the fashion industry, it is apparent that U.S. bloggers have been considered as real celebrities who have legitimate followings.

On the other hand, Taiwanese bloggers are part of the fashion communities; they are the leaders but are also the moderators. They are the star participants and often treated as the most knowledgeable and senior members of the communities by their readers. The communities are not formed around the personas but around the love for fashion, where bloggers are merely the most well regarded members. Most people when they show affections, they would comment on the appearance or the personalities of the bloggers rather than their fashion sense. The roles of bloggers in the fashion industry in Taiwan are closer to that of endorsers or spokespersons where they proactively explain and promote the items with detailed descriptions. These bloggers are opinion leaders by sharing their personal experiences on using the items.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to explore the core mechanisms of how bloggers attain their roles through their micro-celebrities activities and how the practices differ between two cultural institutions. The result shows that practices in response to distinct cultural institutional are important factors to consider in understanding the formation of persona-fied brands. Fashion bloggers and blogs have been extensively studied in the past where their significance in the articulation of the fashion industry and the culture has been proven (Mora and Rocamora 2015). However, most of the studies have been western-centric (Pham 2011); our study highlights that Eastern values, i.e., Taiwanese in our example, can detect a different process of practices formulation in how fashionable and stylish personas are supported and created.

It appears that the usual assumption of distinction between the ‘frontpage’ (i.e., the public persona) and ‘backstage’ (i.e., the private persona) does not always apply in persona-fied brands. It is true that one can never truly understand the authentic ‘real’ self as the promoted ‘public private self’ is always staged and well articulated (Marshall 2010). However, when the external institutions have yet been established, the practices of such a distinction may prove to be challenging. In the case of our study, fashion bloggers in the Western fashion industry have been recognized as real forces in shaping and guiding fashion (McQuarrie et al. 2013). In the context where practices of micro-celebrities have been legitimized, the bloggers can present their personas with branded personas in mind and only carefully reveal the private self for improving authenticity (Marwick 2011).

In contrast, these practices of micro-celebrities are still under development in Taiwan where only those who have well-established expertise in societal functions can become celebrities. Celebrities are those with ‘real’ skills and knowledge in certain fields. Senses of
fashion and style are regarded as good taste but not a real profession of its own. Under these circumstances that institutions of fashion is still a work in progress, the practices of persona-fied brands based on good taste is more challenging as the bloggers will have to contribute to shaping the larger institutional works while attempting to claim their own power.

Our final key finding is that the communities around fashion bloggers in the two cultural institutions are bounded by the practices that they have created. The shift between public and private is continuously (re-)defined through interactions between bloggers, their readers and the overall institutions. This interactive process is inherent in all practices of persona-fied exercises. The results are limited by the specific blogs and context chosen. While fashion bloggers provide a rich and relevant narrative in which to study social practices and cultural institutions, this research should be extended to other contexts as well as longitudinal studies to explore how the practices can continuously shape the institutions and how the institutions would change the practices in return.

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From “Moving Consumption” to “Spacing Consumption:”
In Search of Consumption Geographies
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ABSTRACT
Based on an ethnographic study of a multi-sited festival this analysis highlights the spatial aspect of mobile consumption. By operationalizing the new mobilities paradigm via a non-representational approach this paper elaborates the concept of spacing consumption as the process whereby practices of consumption emerge as embodied performative and political.

INTRODUCTION
Over the last decade, human sciences have been trying to capture the supposedly increased mobility of society as a result of the flows and movements of people, objects, things, and ideas (Sheller and Urry 2004, 2006). Consumer research studies have been receptive toward this view of the world by producing several conceptual and empirical investigations that emphasize “mobile consumption issues in their worldwide and historical context” (Brembeck, Cochoy, and Moisander 2014, 1).

Consistent with the approach that Brembeck, Cochoy and Moisander (2014) refer to as “moving consumption,” consumer research scholars have analyzed the “embodied sensibilities” of consumers dealing with “mobile-things” (Hansson 2014) and the importance of time and temporality in unpacking the mobile aspects of consumption (Figueroed and Uncles 2014; Dholakia, Reyes, and Bonoff 2014). This present paper aims to produce a further step in the investigation of the mobile nature of consumption phenomena by offering the theoretical concept of “spacing consumption.” This concept captures the mobility of consumption activities in their relationship with their local context by better appreciating the inherent spatial dimension of consumption mobilities. In this effort, the paper resonates with recent work that emphasizes the role of space and place in consumption (Chatzidakis, Maclaran, and Bradshaw 2012; Chronis 2008; Chronis, Arnould, and Hampton 2012; Debenedetti, Oppewal, and Arsc 2014).

To fulfill its aim, this paper identifies non-representational modes of inquiry as an appropriate way to operationalize the new mobilities paradigm in the context of consumer research. In line with recent attempts within the marketing literature to appreciate aspects of consumption activities that are more than representational (Canniford and Bajde 2016; Hill, Canniford, and Mol 2014;), mobilities are seen here as the liaison between consumers and the space produced by them.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
The theoretical framework for this paper explores the borders between mobilities and non-representational perspectives. An increasing number of studies in consumer culture theory have endorsed different types of relational ontologies (Canniford ans Bajde 2016). The new mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry 2004, 2006) represents an approach that is underpinned by a relational ontology as it promotes an understanding of society and the lived experiences of people (and consumers) not as fixed and given but as constantly played out from the relationships between their movements and trajectories. Furthermore, the new mobilities paradigm highlights the significance of materiality, bodily experiences, and emotions in determining how people are connected to their environment and how they make sense of it.

The ideas of mobility and on-the-move consumers have been “trickling down” into consumer research in different fashions. Some studies have endorsed this view by relying on Baumann’s (2000) perspective of liquidity and immateriality as a way to analyze “mobile” travelers negotiating identities via food consumption (Bardhi, Östberg, and Bengtsson 2010), or some studies see it as a way to understand possessions with regard to global nomads (Bardhi, Eckhardt, and Arnould 2012). Other studies, instead, have embraced the spirit of the new mobilities paradigm theoretically and methodologically. For example, Hansson (2014) illustrates consumers’ experiences of bringing items home from the store, highlighting the value of their “embodied sensibilities” during their trajectories in urban space. Figueredo and Uncles (2014), through their inquiry into temporal management and structuration of consumption, offer a conceptualization of the temporal dimension of consumption mobilities. Similarly, the temporality of consumption experience is illustrated through the lens of mobility in Dholakia, Reyes and Bonoff’s (2014) analysis of the mobile media permeating the contemporary consumption space.

The present study extends this debate and appreciates the spatial character of consumption mobilities by identifying three different “modes” through which mobile consumption practices are articulated. These modes stress the aspects of embodiment, performativity, and political dispositions of consumers. Here, performativity refers to the expressive enactment of consumption practices whereby consumers articulate a mise-en-scène of bodily movements as a means of engaging in a communicative relationship with other consumers and the environment. Political dispositions, instead, understood in terms of affects through the ideas proposed by Spinozian philosophy, refers to experiential bodily states, or rather the deeply rooted emotional forces that drive the actions of consumers’ bodies and can eventually become a tool to express social differences.

Situating at the core of the new mobilities paradigm is the idea that contemporary society is “in play,” engineered through the movements of people and things that travel across space. Spatiality is indeed implicit in the very concept of mobility. A stimulating angle that combines focuses on both mobility and spatiality can be found by drawing from non-representational theories (Cadman 2009; Lorimer 2005; Nash 2000; Thrift 2000), which have recently been introduced in marketing theory (Hill et al., 2014) to highlight the emotional consumption geographies stretching beyond the realm of sight and visuality (Henshaw et al. 2015). Non-representational theories can be used in this respect in order to envision a research methodology that encourages spatial research practices (Vannini 2015, 4).

METHOD
In order to capture the spatial character of the mobilities implicit in consumption activities, this study identifies consumption practices as its unit of analysis. Following Beyes and Steyaert (2011, 47), this effort intends to complement the established attention to visual and verbal self-reported accounts of participants by gaining insights into the materiality and performativity of spatiality. In line with a non-representational approach to research (Vannini 2015), a “performativity ethnography” (Cadman 2009, 6) has been carried out. This resonates with Hill and colleagues’ (2014, 14) call for ethnographers “to expand on research sites, contexts and samples by seeking out