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What makes fashion consumers 'click'? Generation of eWoM engagement in social media

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Abstract

Purpose – This study investigates the perceived exposure of fashion consumers to different types of fashion brands' social media marketing (SMM) actions in social media, and its relationship with the intention to engage in electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM) behaviors.

Design/methodology/approach – The empirical study uses a survey with a stratified random sample of 241 Indonesian members of fashion social media brand communities. The research design includes nineteen types of SMM actions and three types of eWoM engagement behaviors, and investigates their relationship using point-biserial correlation.

Findings – Generation of intention to engage in "pass-on" and "endorsement" eWoM has different drivers and serves different purposes. The findings suggest that endorsement engagement is contingent on the consumer's perceived exposure to marketing action stimuli, while pass-on engagement is driven by cognitive-inducing actions.

Research implications – This study extends current theory on SMM strategy and its relationship with eWoM engagement with a theoretically grounded conceptualization of eWoM engagement behaviors through the use of one-click social plugins.

Practical implications – The study offers guidelines for fashion brands to effectively design their SMM strategies by identifying specific drivers of consumers' intention to engage in eWoM.

Originality/value – This study identifies sources of generation of eWoM engagement behavioral intention from a fine-grained analysis of marketing actions across various fashion social media brand communities. Besides, it extends the applicability of the "mere exposure" effect to the SMM context. The research pioneers the study on fashion consumers' eWoM engagement behaviors in Indonesia, a country with one of the largest social media populations.

Keywords brand community; electronic word-of-mouth engagement; fashion; Indonesia; social media marketing, perceived exposure.

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Social networking sites heavily influence consumer culture, bringing the notion that consumption becomes an exchange of information (Beer and Burrows, 2010). Fashion companies and brands have quickly embraced social media, driven by the potential benefits of the new marketing channels, such as rapid identification of trends and direct engagement with customers. Fashion is a concept that reflects style and material possession (O'Cass, 2004); thus, fashion consumption is influenced by symbols and images, affirming identity and social belonging (Altuna *et al*., 2013). Social media are vehicles for self-expression (McCrea, 2013); therefore, they are appropriate tools for fashion brands to engage with consumers online. As a result, fashion and apparel brands currently have the largest median audience size across all industries in social media (White, 2016). Social media facilitate fashion promotion, and practitioners concur with the view that the future of fashion is democracy, acknowledging the ability of the industry to adapt to – and together with – consumers (Conlon, 2016).

Consumers establish relationships and create bonds with a brand on the basis of their perceptions about the brand and its characteristics (Veloutsou and Moutinho, 2009). In social media, consumers and companies connect and engage through brand communities (Zaglia, 2013). Consumer engagement with a virtual brand community describes the nature of participants' specific interactions and/or the interactive experiences between consumers and the brand, and/or other members of the community (Brodie *et al*., 2013). One important form of consumer-brand engagement behavior is word-of-mouth (WoM), which refers to the process of conveying information from person to person (Jansen *et al*., 2009). WoM influences consumer choices (Chu and Kim, 2011), and positive WoM transmission can be an important indicator of brand relationship quality or brand personality appeal (Tho *et al*., 2016).

When brands create their social media brand communities (SMBCs) and deploy their social media marketing (SMM) activities, their main objective – as well as the expected outcome – is to achieve brand awareness by creating positive WoM (e.g. Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). EWoM, or electronic WoM, refers to "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2004, p. 39). EWoM differs from traditional advertisements in that it consists basically of non-commercial messages created by consumers (Wu and Wang, 2011). Consumer participation in SMBCs may shape the perception of consumers about the brand through eWoM (e.g. Jansen *et al*.,

2009). Therefore, social media networks act as a socialization agent that facilitates eWoM, enabling peer-to-peer communication (Chu and Sung, 2015; Wang *et al*., 2012).

The increasing and ubiquitous use of SMM emphasizes the importance of SMM actions to foster engagement and improve WoM (e.g. Hoffmann and Fodor, 2010). Nevertheless, firms have generally lacked formal eWoM planning. Instead, their use of social media does not follow any clearly established SMM strategy and is carried out with little acumen about the new ways to interact and engage with customers (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014).

Furthermore, while prior research has demonstrated the positive effects of eWoM engagement on consumer attitudes and their decision-making process (e.g. Jansen *et al*., 2009; See-To and Ho, 2014; Wang and Yu, 2015), a fundamental aspect of eWoM – eWoM generation – is still largely understudied (Liu *et al*., 2017), and usually overlooked within the fashion industry. Wolny and Mueller (2013) pioneer the research on generation of fashion consumer eWoM engagement behaviors in social media, using traits from a motivational perspective, but research has yet to address the relevance of specific marketing actions by fashion brands in social media. In addition, the study of eWoM in SMBCs mostly focuses on developed countries, neglecting emerging markets such as Indonesia.

Indonesia, with a population of around 250 million – the fourth most populous country in the world – has not been an exception to the increasing global penetration of social media. Despite having a relatively low Internet penetration rate (34%), Indonesians have quickly embraced social media, with a current total of 79 million active social media users, more than 80% of whom access social media through mobile devices (Kemp, 2016). As of 2014, Indonesia had 69 million active Facebook users, making it the fourth country with the largest Facebook user base in the world (Singapore Post, 2014). Jakarta, the capital city, is recently crowned as the most tagged city in the "story" feature of Instagram (Instagram, 2017). The three most-popular social media platforms in Indonesia are Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (eMarketer, 2016a).

Businesses in Indonesia have been fast to adapt to the affinity of Indonesian consumers with social media. Indonesian brands and retailers are using social media not only as marketing tools, but also as direct sales channels (Gilliam, 2015). Indonesian fashion consumers are mostly young adults who use social media – predominantly Instagram – and follow digital retailers that sell apparel and fashion accessories (eMarketer, 2016b). Many of the largest fashion brands in Indonesia use Instagram as a means to direct traffic to their site, while smaller brands might not even have a physical store, selling their products directly through Instagram (Gilliam, 2015). With an emerging middle-class population, the demand

for fashion, clothing, and apparel is growing significantly in Indonesia – an expected 7.4% in 2017 (PwC, 2015).

In addition to the response of retailers to the emergence of social media, Indonesians like to socialize. *Nongkrong* is a local term that refers to sociability and has a close resemblance with the idea of "hanging out". *Nongkrong* involves spending time interacting with family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers and others (Moore, 2013). Indonesians embrace online communication as a form of *nongkrong* with social networking, which is currently the preferred form of socialization in Indonesia (Ipsos, 2012). Desire for social interactions is one factor that may motivate consumers to engage in eWoM behaviors (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2004). Given the socialization-oriented use of social media in Indonesia, the Indonesian case has high potential for the study of eWoM engagement behaviors for marketing purposes.

However, despite the rapid adoption of social media in Indonesia by businesses and consumers and the prominent role of SMM in fashion consumption in the country, several problems have yet to be addressed from both academic and managerial perspectives. More specifically, researchers and practitioners lack: (a) evidence of how Indonesian fashion consumers engage in eWoM behaviors with fashion brands in their SMBCs, and (b) knowledge about the effect of fashion brands' SMM actions on consumers' intention to engage in eWoM behaviors.

From the above, the purpose of this study is to investigate the intention to engage in eWoM behaviors within and across various fashion SMBCs from a strategic perspective. To do so, the research investigates Indonesian fashion consumers' intention to engage in eWoM engagement behaviors within SMBCs under the lens of consumer exposure to marketing stimuli. In particular, the study focuses on two types of social media eWoM engagement behaviors: pass-on or recommendation behavior (e.g. "sharing" or "retweeting") and endorsing behavior (e.g. "liking", "loving", or "favoriting"). Accordingly, the study aims to cover two main research objectives: first, to investigate the type of SMM actions – or marketing messages – of fashion brands in their SMBCs that Indonesian consumers perceive they are more exposed to; second, to analyze and understand which SMM actions generate higher intent to engage in eWoM behaviors among Indonesian consumers.

The remainder of this study is structured as follows. Section 2 highlights the importance of consumer exposure to marketing stimuli and the effect of SMM actions on consumer attitudes and behaviors. It also explores the concept of SMBCs and explains how fashion brands use SMBCs to deploy their marketing actions. Section 2 further examines the development of consumers' eWoM engagement behaviors resulting from brand-consumer interactions in

SMBCs. Section 3 describes the research design, methodology and measurement instrument. Section 4 details the results of the analysis, and Section 5 discusses the main findings from the research. Section 6 draws the main theoretical and practical implications from this study. Finally, Section 7 draws some concluding remarks and suggests avenues of future research.

Theoretical background and research questions

Consumers' exposure to social media marketing actions

Early literature on traditional – i.e. offline – marketing channels acknowledges the relation between consumers' exposure to brands, products or other marketing stimuli (e.g. logos, labels, and marketing actions) and the consumer decision-making process. For instance, one widespread strategy in traditional media is advertising repetition, which aims to enhance the ability of consumers to recall information in order to influence consumer opinions (Yaveroglu and Donthu, 2008).

It is now common knowledge that familiarity with a stimulus is an important determinant of stimulus recall (Becknell *et al*., 1963) because the frequency of exposure to a stimulus has an effect on an individual's perception process (Solomon, 2009). As a result, the frequency of exposure to a stimulus affects individual's choices; in other words, individuals prefer stimuli to which they are exposed more frequently (Becknell *et al*., 1963). Further, Zajonc (1968) demonstrates that exposure to a stimulus can enhance the liking or preference for that stimulus, independently of cognitive evaluations. This is known as the "mere exposure" phenomenon. "Mere exposure" refers to a condition that makes the stimulus accessible to the individual's perception. Consequently, an individual's familiarity with a stimulus leads to favorable attitudes towards the stimulus – i.e. preference and liking (Harrison, 1977). The positive exposure-affect relationship has been a recurring topic in marketing and advertising literature (Bornstein and D'Agostino, 1992), under different stimuli and rating procedures (Pliner, 1982; Bornstein and D'Agostino, 1992), and has been supported in various domains, including pictures of faces (Harmon-Jones and Allen, 2001), edible substances (Pliner, 1982), tourism destinations (Bojanic, 1991), or web ads (Yoo, 2008). Therefore, repeated exposure to a product with the objective of fostering a positive affection for the product is a common approach in advertising (Ruggieri and Boca, 2013). Marketers seek to increase the amount of marketing communications – i.e. exposure to marketing stimuli – because higher exposure increases consumers' attention and familiarity with a brand or label (Bialkova and van Trijp, 2010). Thus, we posit that increasing the frequency of exposure towards a specific SMM action, which acts as a marketing stimulus, will likely lead to positive attitudinal responses

towards the SMM action.

Perceived exposure, perceived intensity, or perceived frequency of exposure to the stimulus is a close concept to frequency of exposure. Perceived exposure refers to an individual's recall of the frequency of exposure to a certain stimulus and has already been used as well in the context of brand-generated social media messages (Gao and Feng, 2016). Perceptions of brand posting activity in online contexts, such as forums, give an approximate match of actual activity of the brand (Albert *et al*., 2014). Thus, perceived exposure is an alternative and low-cost measure, especially when compared to collection of data about actual exposure. Furthermore, perceived exposure might also measure attentional bias towards advertising (Feighery *et al*., 2006).

Fashion brands and social media brand communities (SMBCs)

Social media are transforming fashion consumption, as fashion spreads through network effects (Wolny and Mueller, 2013). Companies and fashion brands have responded to the emergence of social media by creating their online brand communities, including SMBCs (Brogi *et al*., 2013; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis. 2014). A brand community is "an enduring, self-selected group of consumers, sharing a system of values, standards and representations, who accept and recognize bonds of membership with each other and with the whole" (Veloutsou and Moutinho, 2009, p. 316). Brand communities have three different components or markers (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001): (1) consciousness of kind; (2) shared rituals and traditions; and (3) moral responsibility. Consciousness of kind is the intrinsic connection that members feel towards one another and the collective sense of difference from outsiders; rituals and traditions perpetuate the community's shared history, culture, and consciousness; and moral responsibility refers to an obligation to the community as a whole and to its individual members.

SMBCs are special cases of online or virtual brand communities created using social media platforms (Habibi *et al*., 2016). Some of the triggers that may prompt an individual to join, or participate in, the online brand community are the need to reduce information asymmetry and searching costs, as well as the perception of the bias inherent to the nature of commercial information (Brodie *et al*., 2013).

Based on the *N-REL* framework (Ananda *et al*., 2016) for the assessment of brands' strategic marketing decisions and actions, Ananda *et al*. (2017) investigate the relationship between consumers' perceived exposure to SMM actions and the actual intensity of fashion brands' SMM actions in SMBCs. *N-REL* proposes two types of active SMM actions – the

framework also identifies "passive" actions related to marketing research and analytics – that can be implemented by companies: "representation" and "engagement". Representation-centered actions focus on marketing communications about the brand and its products, whereas engagement-centered actions aim at directly engaging audiences – including customers, opinion leaders, and influencers – and encourage consumers' co-creation or content-sharing. Ananda *et al.* (2017) identify 36 different generic representation and engagement actions in social media, seventeen of which they identify as rarely used by fashion brands. The results of Ananda *et al*. (2017) suggest that consumers perceive that fashion brands are intensely communicating messages about product promotion and access to the brand's online shop or catalog, as well as other actions that function basically as sales promotion – e.g. price discounts, product sneak-peeks and campaign previews. These messages are representation actions, which reflect a traditional transaction-centered marketing approach. On the other hand, engagement actions that reflect a relationship-oriented marketing approach are less prevalent in fashion SMBCs (Ananda *et al*., 2017).

Social media consumer engagement and eWOM

Engagement is a central concept in brand communities. Consumer brand engagement goes beyond a mere behavioral response, and also comprises cognitive processing and affection; as such, consumer brand engagement is "a consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity during or related to consumer-brand interactions" (Hollebeek *et al*., 2014, p. 154). Consequently, the behavioral dimension of consumer brand engagement that occurs as a consequence of SMBC interactions manifests as consumer behavioral responses to a brand's post in SMBCs.

Understanding behavioral engagement in SMBCs involves knowing how users or consumers respond to content posted by the brand. Social media networks are bidirectional communication channels that make tools available for users to express their reactions and respond to any content posted to the platform. These tools include the social plugins (e.g. "like", "retweet", "share", "comment", etc.) usually embedded as click-based buttons on social media platforms. Users can then share their interest or convey their attitude about content posted by anyone using these buttons (Swani *et al*., 2013). Even though these social plugins vary across different social media platforms, they share common underlying motivations and cognitive processes. For instance, Facebook's *"*Like*"* button manifests users' positive affective responses or emotional relationship (Vernuccio *et al*., 2015), and has a

similar purpose to the "Favorite" button on Twitter, or "Pin" on Pinterest. Therefore, similar mechanisms define a few sets of response behaviors. For example, Dhaoui (2014) proposes four types of consumer engagement in a Facebook brand community: (1) endorsement of the brand and/or the values expressed in the content – e.g. "liking"; (2) feedback, or replies from users to content published by the brands; (3) conversation with/among Facebook users; and (4) recommendation – i.e. passing on or sharing online content with other users.

Companies may use different metrics of consumer responses to social media posts as proxies for consumer behavior-related performance, and metrics from different social media platforms can refer to the same objectives (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). For example, the number of reblogs in blogs, number of shares in social networks, number of "retweets", or number of posted reviews, may serve as eWoM measures. In the same way, affective-response metrics, such as the number of likes on Facebook, favorites on Twitter or pins on Pinterest, may also serve as indicators of eWoM. Conceptually, eWoM in social networks comprises three different objectives: opinion seeking, opinion giving, and opinion passing (Chu and Kim, 2011). Consumers with high levels of opinion-seeking behaviors tend to search for information and advice from others, while consumers with high levels of opinion-giving behaviors – known as opinion leaders – exert influence on others' attitudes and behaviors. Opinion-passing behaviors are more likely to occur in online social environments, as the unique characteristics of the Internet and social media – e.g. the social plugins – facilitate multidirectional communication and rapid diffusion. Thus, opinion passing, or "pass-on behavior", is an enhanced dimension of eWoM in social media (Chu and Kim, 2011).

Although passing along marketing messages is a clear indication of social media eWoM engagement, there are some additional considerations about the social media behavioral responses that constitute eWoM engagement. Liking is also considered akin to eWoM because users automatically share the messages they like with each other (Swani *et al*., 2013). If a certain user clicks on a "Like" button on a post, other users that visit the post might see that the user liked it, and a story might even appear on the user's timeline showing that he or she liked the post (Facebook, 2016). This is consistent with Hennig-Thurau *et al*.'s (2004) idea that, by liking a post, consumers declare their endorsing statement without leaving a comment (Facebook, 2016). Alboqami *et al*. (2015) share this view and consider both "favorite" (a form of endorsing behavior) and "retweet" (a form of recommendation behavior) as measures of eWoM engagement on Twitter, although they state that the latter is a stronger indicator of eWoM. Liu *et al*. (2017) consider not only "sharing" and "liking", but also "commenting" as eWoM behaviors on a brand page in Facebook.

In this research, eWoM engagement covers the two types of behavioral engagement that involve the use of "one-click" social plugins: "pass-on" and "endorsement". The one-click behaviors provided by plugins such as "Like" or "Share" require less effort and reduce cognitive load, compared to other types of behavior, such as commenting or replying (Swani *et al*., 2013; Liu *et al*., 2017). Albeit similar, there are also slight differences between the cognitive load associated with the use of "Like" and "Share" buttons, as the latter – if not broadcast – may require an additional effort to select specific recipients or add an extra message (Liu *et al*., 2017). Pass-on engagement relates to recommendation behaviors, such as: sharing a post on Facebook or a video on YouTube; retweeting a tweet on Twitter; reblogging on a blog; or reposting on Instagram or a blog. Endorsement engagement denotes affective responses, covering behaviors such as: liking a post on Facebook, a "gram" on Instagram or a video on YouTube; adding a tweet as favorite on Twitter; or pinning a "pin" on Pinterest. Additionally, this study considers an aggregate measure of eWoM behavioral engagement consisting of either pass-on, endorsement, or both types of eWoM engagement behaviors.

Perceived social media marketing activities are effective in developing relationships with customers and building brand loyalty within an SMBC (Ismail, 2017). Nonetheless, few studies explore how different types of marketing actions, messages or content posted by brands in social media may drive eWoM engagement. Swani *et al*. (2013) measure the relation between three types of Facebook message strategies – corporate branding, emotional content, and direct call to purchase – and the number of likes the message receives, but they do not evaluate pass-on behaviors. Alboqami *et al*. (2015) examine different characteristics of marketer-generated content on Twitter and how they may lead to eWoM. Liu *et al*. (2017) examine the effect of appeal, vividness and interactivity of social media communication strategies on eWoM behaviors on Facebook brand pages. However, these studies focus only on one platform and do not offer any in-depth analysis of the different strategic SMM actions, most notably regarding engagement actions, which are unique to social media marketing. Therefore, there is no empirical evidence on whether specific brands' strategic actions are more likely to result in consumer eWoM engagement behaviors in social media environments – more specifically, in fashion brand SMBCs. Hence, this study poses the following research questions:

RQ1. What type of SMM actions by fashion brands drive higher (a) pass-on, (b) endorsement, and (c) aggregate intention to engage in eWoM behaviors?

RQ2. What is the relationship between fashion consumers' perceived exposure towards fashion brands' SMM actions and their intention to engage in eWoM behaviors?

This study builds on the categories of SMM actions for fashion brands proposed by Ananda *et al*. (2017) to analyze the relation between perceived exposure to different types of SMM actions by fashion brands in SMBCs and intention to engage in eWoM behaviors, using a sample of Indonesian fashion consumers. The following section presents a research design aiming to shed a light on this topic by investigating the extent to which SMM actions by fashion brands foster intention to engage in eWoM behaviors.

Research design and methods

Sample demographics and data collection

The research applies a quantitative approach using data collected from a survey to Indonesian consumers who are members of at least one fashion SMBC. The target respondents are members of brand-initiated fashion SMBCs (i.e. not consumer-initiated SMBCs). The survey consists of an online self-administered questionnaire distributed via mobile device to a panel of respondents obtained with the collaboration of JakPat, one of the leading marketing research companies in Indonesia. The company has access to more than 134,000 respondents across Indonesia. Upon the sample requirements provided by the authors to ensure representativeness, JakPat selected the participants following a random stratified sampling method.

The stratified random sampling includes 65% of the respondents in the 15-30 years old bracket, 20% in the 31-35 years old bracket, and the rest above 35 years old. The respondents include 54% and 46% of male and female respondents, respectively, 84% of them being fashion online shoppers and the rest being members of brand-initiated fashion SMBCs who have not made any fashion purchase online. As the majority of the Internet users in Indonesia reside in Java Island and urban areas (e.g. APJII, 2015), about 85% of the respondents are from major cities in the island of Java, and the rest are from major cities in Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and Bali. The characteristics of the sample are similar to those of Indonesian Internet, social media, and online shopping audiences (BMI Research, 2014; eMarketer, 2015; Lukman, 2013).

G*Power 3 (Faul *et al.*, 2007) helped to ensure that the sample size was larger than the minimum required for the study. A priori power calculation for one-tailed point-biserial correlation model with statistical power of 0.8 and a medium effect size of 0.3 (Cohen, 1988), corresponding to a coefficient of determination of 0.09, yields a minimum sample size of 64.

A total of 250 Indonesian members of any fashion SMBC participated in the study. Even though JakPat automatically dropped invalid respondents, 9 additional invalid responses with the same levels of perceived exposure across all SMM actions were discarded after inspection of the dataset. Therefore, the final sample comprises 241 respondents.

Measurement instrument and data analysis

The proposal of Ananda *et al*. (2017) provides empirical basis for the measurement of SMM actions, adapted to the context of fashion brands. The overarching idea of the instrument relies on how frequently fashion brands perform different SMM actions, but also considers the perceived exposure to those actions by consumers. The final questionnaire includes 19 measurement items for fashion brands' SMM actions from Ananda *et al*. (2017), summarized in Table 1. The measurement instrument includes 15 representation actions and 4 engagement actions; the underrepresentation of engagement actions follows Ananda *et al*.'s (2017) finding that 17 out of 36 actions were rarely or never used by fashion brands, 15 of which were engagement actions.

The questionnaire does not consider specific types of fashion products (e.g. luxury, mass-market, fast-fashion, etc.), company size, or country of origin of the brand. The questionnaire also includes real examples of social media content to illustrate the different marketing actions. Three experts selected the examples from content posted on the public official social media page of different fashion brands in different social media platforms. The questionnaire items were formulated in English, then translated to Indonesian, and pre-tested by two Indonesian marketing experts.

For each SMM action, and using real examples of content posted by fashion brands in social media, respondents were asked about the perceived frequency of their exposure to each type of action – i.e. "How frequently do you perceive that the fashion brands you follow post this kind of content?", adapted from Meirick (2005). The responses to perceived exposure were measured in a Likert-7 scale, ranging from "never" to "always".

Insert Table 1 around here.

The measurement of eWoM engagement – or, more precisely, behavioral intention to engage in eWoM – aims to capture consumers' likeliness to respond to each type of SMM action using one-click social plug-ins. Participants were asked to provide a "Yes/No" response to the questions "Would you share/retweet/re-post this type of content?" (intention to engage

in pass-on eWoM behaviors) and "Would you like/fav/pin this type of content?" (intention to engage in endorsement eWoM behaviors).

Data analysis involves, as a first step, calculation of the average of perceived exposure to SMM actions and the level of intention to engage in eWoM behaviors generated by each SMM action. While the latter aims to answer RQ1, the former may allow confirmation of findings in prior studies in the context of Indonesian consumers and also helps answer RQ2. The dataset includes three types of eWoM engagement: pass-on, endorsement, and aggregate eWoM engagement – which includes either pass-on, endorsement, or both. A second step aims to answer the second research question and uses point-biserial correlation to analyze the relation between perceived frequency of SMM actions and intention to engage in eWoM behaviors.

Results

Perceived exposure to fashion brands' social media marketing actions

Regarding perceived exposure, the results are consistent with previous studies. Table 2 summarizes the findings of the research. The overall average of perceived exposure to SMM actions is 4.056. There are four coincidences among the top five actions: "access to the brand's e-shop/e-commerce site" (SMMA01), "free products or price discounts" (SMMA16), "publishing casual socialization content" (SMMA09), and "product promotion" (SMMA02) – the exception being "promoted posts" (SMMA10). Besides, there is one particular outlier in the lower band that slightly contradicts the results of Ananda *et al*. (2017) – "reporting or posting offline promotional events" (SMMA05). Because Ananda *et al*. (2017) do not provide country-specific data for each SMM action, we cannot discard that the discrepancy might be specific to Indonesian consumers, which is worth investigating further. Interestingly, three out of the four engagement actions – "sharing personalities' or influencers' posts and endorsements of the brand and its products" (SMMA18), "giveaway contests or competitions" (SMMA19), and "content about personalities or influencers" (SMMA06) – fall within the top ten actions regarding perceived exposure but none of them are among the top five.

Insert Table 2 around here.

Social media fashion consumers and eWoM engagement

SMM actions generate an average of 22% intention to engage in pass-on eWoM behaviors.

Actions that generate higher levels of intention to engage in pass-on behaviors (more than 40%) refer to "free products or price discounts" (SMMA16, representation) and "giveaway contests or competitions (encouraging winners to share their experiences on social media)" (SMMA19, engagement). The rest of actions show levels below 30%. The results show higher levels of intention to engage in endorsement eWoM behaviors (average of 51%, peaking at values higher than 60%) for "access to the brand's e-shop/e-commerce site" (SMMA01, representation) and "free products or price discounts" (SMMA16, representation). Generation of aggregated eWoM behaviors (average level of 62%) is led by "free products or price discounts" (SMMA16, representation), "giveaway contests or competitions" (SMMA19, engagement), "access to the brand's e-shop/e-commerce site" (SMMA01, representation), and "casual socialization" (SMMA09, representation) (more than 70%). Interestingly, content about the brand (expertise, values, culture or achievements) also appears to generate relatively high intention of aggregate eWoM (66% or above).

Despite the relatively low values, point-biserial correlations (r_{pb}, Table 2) confirm the positive relation between consumers' perceived exposure towards SMM actions and intention to engage in eWoM behaviors in most cases, with some exceptions: "access to the brand's e-shop/e-commerce site" (SMMA01) and "promoted-post/ad-banners" (SMMA10) (pass-on engagement); "content about brand's expertise, values and culture" (SMMA11), "encouraging customers to share their brand experiences" (SMMA17), and "sharing personalities' posts and endorsements of the brand" (SMMA18) (endorsement engagement); and "promoted-post/ad-banners" (SMMA10) (aggregate eWoM engagement).

Linearity plots of eWoM engagement (Figure 1) also show the positive relation between consumers' perceived exposure towards SMM actions and their intention to engage in eWoM behaviors. However, there is a clear distinction between the influence of perceived exposure to SMM actions on pass-on engagement and endorsement/aggregate eWoM engagement. From Figure 1, perceived exposure accounts for 41% of the variance explained of aggregate eWoM engagement and 47% of endorsement engagement, but roughly 11% of pass-on engagement behaviors.

Insert Figure 1 around here.

Discussion

Save for a few subtle differences, mentioned earlier in the results section, the findings of this study in the Indonesian context share common views with generic fashion consumers and

substantiate the proposal and findings of Ananda *et al.* (2017) on the topic of consumers' perceived exposure to SMM actions.

Concerning RQ1, the results show that the intention to engage in eWoM behaviors is contingent on the type of SMM action. Marketing messages like "free products or price discounts", "giveaway contests/competitions", "access to the brand's e-shop/e-commerce site", or "publishing casual socialization content" seem to generate higher levels of overall intention to engage in eWoM behaviors, followed by content linked to the brand's identity – expertise, values, culture or achievements. For endorsement engagement, "access to the brand's e-shop/e-commerce site" and "free products or price discounts" are the two most engaging SMM actions. The latter, together with "giveaway contests or competitions", stand out from the rest in driving pass-on engagement intent.

The results indicate that Indonesian fashion consumers are more prone to engage in eWoM behaviors with fashion brands in their SMBCs mostly through endorsing behaviors. Markers of brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001) may explain this result. Shared rituals and traditions are mainly present in brand-initiated SMBCs – the focus of this study – whereas consciousness of kind and moral responsibility are more dominant in consumer-initiated SMBCs (Zaglia, 2013). Therefore, members of consumer-initiated SMBCs actively give and share advice, while members of brand-initiated SMBCs participate mainly for utilitarian purposes, such as information search. Consequently, members of brand-initiated SMBCs are expected to engage less in passing along the marketing messages. This finding may complement the results of Rossmann *et al*. (2016), who find that customers in product communities (e.g. fashion communities) are interested in sharing vivid and entertaining information in the form of positive affection (i.e. liking). Furthermore, the cognitive load and effort associated with each type of eWoM engagement behaviors might also help explain this finding, as endorsement behaviors are purely based on one-click actions, whereas pass-on behaviors may require additional steps, such as selection of recipients or adding customized messages.

In regard to RQ2, the results suggest that consumers' perceived exposure towards a brand's SMM action correlates positively with their intention to engage in eWoM behaviors, predominantly in endorsing behaviors. This finding is in line with the effect of exposure to marketing stimuli on the generation of more favorable attitudes (Becknell *et al*., 1963; Harrison, 1977). However, this result is not conclusive because variations in the complexity and sequence of the stimulus, as well as the moment of measurement, may affect the likelihood that an exposure or contrasting effect will occur (Harrison, 1977). In addition, and

as a note of caution about this finding, prior research shows that overexposure to stimuli may result in satiation – i.e. boredom, producing a downturn in the frequency-affect curve (Bornstein *et al*., 1990; Bornstein and D'Agostino, 1992). As such, overexposure may result in wear-out effect; that is, the exposure might have no significant effect on consumers or may even have a negative effect at a certain level of exposure (Calder and Sternthal, 1980; Schmidt and Eisend, 2015). Given the need for provision of a constant flow of new content inherent to social media consumption, which translates into an ever-changing nature of content posted by brands in social media platforms, the likeliness that overexposure to the same stimulus happens is low, but further research is required on whether overexposure to specific types of content – i.e. types of SMM actions – might produce the same effect.

The study finds a negligible effect of perceived exposure to brands' SMM actions on the intention to perform recommendation behaviors. Intention to engage in pass-on eWoM behaviors does not seem to relate to consumer's perceived exposure, but rather to the specific type of the SMM action. In this research, cognitive-inducing actions that deliver messages targeting at fulfilling consumers' needs for pre-purchase information – e.g. information about the brand, product, pricing, promotions, or sales – generate relatively higher intention to engage in pass-on behaviors. This is consistent with the idea that the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement in brand communities is built through value-laden relationships by sharing information and experiences (Brodie *et al*., 2013). This finding is also in line with the notion that the main motivation of a large number of consumers to join brand communities is information search (Zaglia, 2013). The results suggest that fashion consumers might tend to engage less in passing along the brand's messages in a brand-initiated SMBC, but they might effectively develop pass-on behaviors if the posted messages fulfill their information-search needs.

An additional interpretation of this result is that SMM actions that aim to drive consumers to the brand's online shop, or those that focus on sales, price information or product promotions, cater to Indonesian consumers' appeal. This finding implies that Indonesian consumers welcome fashion brands' initiatives to use social media as sales channels and as sources of pre-purchase information. They also embrace initiatives that allow them to read online reviews and conduct online product research before confirming their offline or online purchases (Lubis, 2014). As a consequence, many retailers are starting to sell goods based primarily on social media recommendations, contributing to the surge in social commerce exchange activities (Chadha, 2016; Harsono, 2016).

Finally, the predominance of shared rituals and traditions in SMBCs may explain why actions related to brand stories and images around the community, as well as casual socialization content, generate relatively high intention to engage in eWoM behaviors. This community marker includes celebration of the history of the brand, and brand-related stories emphasize the distinctiveness of the brand, its innovation and expertise, as well as important events and personages (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

Research implications

Theoretical implications

This study provides a theory-grounded conceptualization of eWoM engagement behaviors in SMBCs based on the use of common embedded one-click social plugins. The research covers two types of eWoM engagement behaviors ("pass-on" and "endorsement") that are distinctive of social media. This formulation enriches prior proposals to measure SMM or eWoM performance (e.g. Hoffman and Fodor, 2010; Wolny and Mueller, 2013).

The research also extends current theory about the drivers of intention to engage in different eWoM behaviors in SMBCs, particularly in the fashion sector, from an integrated SMM strategy perspective. The research identifies specific SMM actions performed by fashion brands (SMM content or messages delivered to their social media audiences) that are more likely to generate consumers' intention to engage in eWoM behaviors in the SMBCs.

Additionally, this study extends the applicability of the "mere exposure" effect to the SMM context. The "mere exposure" theory (Zajonc, 1968; 2001) has already been covered and tested in traditional marketing research. The findings of this study confirm that fashion consumers' perceived exposure (as a proxy of actual exposure) to a SMM marketing action may affect positively their intention to engage in eWoM behaviors – primarily, the affective component of eWoM engagement through endorsing behaviors.

From a theoretical perspective, even though the underrepresentation of engagement SMM actions from N-REL in this study is justified by the rare implementation by fashion brands of most of the engagement actions listed in Ananda *et al.* (2017), the results show differences between two of the engagement actions – "encouraging customers to share their brand experiences" (SMMA17) and "giveaway promotions or contests" (SMMA19) – and the other two, related to engaging with third parties – influencers or celebrities (SMMA06, SMMA18). The former two exert an open call to action from the members of the SMBC and drive higher intention to engage in eWoM pass-on behaviors. However, the latter two, while distinct from the rest of the representation actions that pivot primarily around the brand, might stand

conceptually in a middle ground between representation and engagement. This finding might suggest the need for a revision of the categorization of SMM actions in the N-REL framework.

Finally, from a methodological standpoint, the study proposes a generic research design that allows easy replication in different industrial contexts or cultural settings. Furthermore, the study provides empirical evidence of fashion consumer eWoM engagement behaviors in Indonesia, a country with one of the world's largest and most enthusiastic social media populations, as well as a marketplace for the fashion industry with high growth potential that is largely overlooked by scholars in SMM.

Managerial implications

Metrics of eWoM engagement (number of reposts/shares, number of likes, number of reblogs) enabled by various social media plugins are easily retrieved from social media platforms. In general, fashion brands still fall short of optimizing their marketing actions to increase eWoM engagement with consumers in their SMBCs. One way to assess the effectiveness of their SMM efforts would be to perform an analysis of historical data to determine which SMM actions are effectively generating eWoM behaviors. However, this method involves devoting valuable time and resources to data generation, with the added uncertainty of whether the company is correctly implementing its SMM strategy. In a way, this course of action resembles the trial-and-error approach that many companies are still using in their SMM strategy, a course of action that is prone to hinder the company's ability to timely respond to market changes and might even taint the brand if the chosen strategy is not the right one. On top of this, many companies that use eWoM metrics of social media activity are unable to track the performance of their marketing efforts and still lack faith in the data they gather for measuring WoM in terms of value or meaningfulness (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014). This study offers alternative means to effectively design and deploy the brand's SMM strategy from the start, providing evidence about specific and essential drivers of consumer eWoM engagement generation.

Therefore, the findings of this study provide fashion brands and marketers with an understanding of how to strategically plan their SMM actions. By connecting SMM actions and eWoM engagement behaviors, the study may be of use for managers to plan their SMM strategy and actions aiming at specific eWoM engagement behaviors. Furthermore, this research may be especially beneficial for fashion brands with limited resources and inability to perform post-hoc data analytics. The results of the study may help brands save time and

effort when determining and implementing their eWoM engagement strategies in social media.

Two main lines of managerial implications derive from this study. One of them relates to the nature and purpose of the two different eWoM behavioral engagements ("pass-on" and "endorsement"), while the other is associated with the different drivers of said eWoM behaviors.

First, consistent with the idea that consumer brand engagement comprises cognitive processing and affection (Hollebeek *et al*., 2014), the different nature of pass-on and endorsement engagement results in different purposes for each of them. Pass-on engagement serves to fulfil cognitive or information search purposes, whereas endorsement engagement might better serve consumer affective purposes.

Second, different drivers may be more likely to generate each of the eWoM engagement behaviors. This study finds that the intention to engage in endorsement eWoM behaviors has a significant relationship with the fashion consumer's perceived exposure to marketing actions. On the other hand, the intention to engage in pass-on eWoM behaviors seems to be contingent on the type of each SMM action; more specifically, generation of pass-on eWoM seems to be induced by informative or cognitive-inducing SMM actions in the case of Indonesian fashion consumers.

The different nature, purpose and drivers of the two types of eWoM engagement suggest the existence of two complementary ways fashion brands or marketers may enhance eWoM engagement through their SMBCs. First, fashion brands aiming at rapidly spreading their marketing messages beyond their SMBCs should use SMM actions that induce cognitive evaluation by consumers; for example, by giving relevant pre-purchase information and funneling direct sales though their SMBCs. In addition, it is worth noting that Indonesians are rational consumers who hunt for bargains, and Indonesian shoppers actively seek out promotions and deals (Rastogi *et al*., 2013); therefore, fashion brands selling in Indonesia should adopt SMM strategies with a strong emphasis on sales and price promotions, in order to generate higher pass-on engagement. This can be achieved either from direct promotional offers or by actively engaging users through participation in promotions via contests in the SMBCs.

Second, if fashion brands or marketers aim at fostering consumers' promotion or advocacy of the brands' messages with personal referrals or endorsements throughout their social networks, then they could leverage the intensity or frequency of their corresponding SMM actions. However, considering that the complexity and sequence of presentation of the

stimulus may affect the effectiveness of the message, fashion brands should meticulously plan their marketing actions to maintain the effectiveness of their marketing messages. Thus, besides an increase of the frequency of posted content for each action, brands might want to consider variations of stimulus attributes; for example, by periodically changing their campaign themes, alternating the type of posts (e.g. text, pictures or videos) or changing the sequence in which they publish content associated with each type of SMM action.

A relevant implication for fashion brands is the prominent role of SMM actions that promote brand image and sense of community in the generation of eWoM endorsement engagement. Endorsing behavior has a strong affective component, and because fashion consumers acknowledge the importance of branding to fashion codes (Auty and Elliott, 1998), brands may keep producing content celebrating the history of the brand or stories about the brand to increase consumer loyalty and identification with the brand. Heightened affection towards the brand may also lead to brand love, which involves strong identification with the brand and the brand community that can further foster positive WoM behavior among fashion consumers (Ismail and Spinelli, 2012). Brand lovers develop high levels of attachment to the brand, positive responses and evaluations of the brand and passion for it (Vernuccio *et al*., 2015). Furthermore, the study also offers guidelines regarding social community values, suggesting that brands should occasionally post casual socialization and greeting messages (e.g. “We wish you happy holidays!”, “To all Moms, we love you!”) to create a friendly atmosphere and make their online presence on social media resemble online communities or networks of friends (He *et al*., 2013).

Conclusions and future research

Social media are perfect vehicles for generation and propagation of eWoM. SMBCs are gaining relevance as marketing strategy platforms and they have proven their usefulness for eWoM generation (Hutter *et al*., 2013; Barreda *et al*., 2015). Social media marketers and practitioners focus on the importance of eWoM engagement metrics as key SMM strategy performance indicators (Wong, 2014). Nevertheless, the relation between SMM strategies and generation of eWoM engagement is still largely understudied, in particular within the fashion industry. Moreover, this dearth of research is especially alarming in Indonesia, one of the emerging markets where social media have contributed to the rapid emergence of important and new marketplaces. From a local view, the implications of this study might be critical for the development of social commerce in Indonesia, where society and consumers are

experiencing a deep transformation enabled by the growth of online retailing and social commerce activities (Chadha, 2016; The Jakarta Post, 2017).

This study provides an assessment of how different SMM actions by fashion brands affect consumer responses, particularly focusing on different eWoM engagement behaviors. The research provides empirical evidence of drivers of intention to engage in eWoM behaviors and identifies two eWoM engagement behaviors ("pass-on" and "endorsement") as a result of SMBC consumer-brand interactions, from a strategic perspective. Pass-on engagement relates to recommendation behaviors, whereas endorsement engagement relates to positive attitudes, such as preference and liking. This research provides fashion marketers and practitioners with further understanding about how to strategically plan their social media content and messages, and assesses the expected impact of their SMM actions in pass-on and endorsement engagement.

Furthermore, this study pioneers the study of the effect of repeated exposure to marketing stimuli in SMM and SMBCs. It provides empirical evidence that a consumer's perceived exposure to SMM actions tends to have an effect on the development of positive attitudes and affective responses. On the other hand, the research shows that consumer's cognitive motivations – rather than perceived exposure – seem to be more prone to generate pass-on engagement, and therefore trigger recommendation behaviors.

The study is not exempt from limitations. First, the research explores social media eWoM engagement based on the mere exposure effect; nevertheless, prior research in different contexts shows that the effect of repeated exposure on message effectiveness may decay over time, or has a curvilinear relationship (Calder and Sternthal, 1980; Anand and Sternthal, 1990; Schmidt and Eisend, 2015). Accordingly, further research on the impact of perceived exposure to SMM actions should consider possible moderating factors, such as an individual's exposure level or familiarity with the stimulus (e.g. Harrison, 1977; Schmidt and Eisend, 2015); familiarity with a focal brand is a construct that may influence the effect of message repetition on attitudinal responses (Campbell and Keller, 2003), and therefore its effect on eWoM engagement behaviors is worth exploring. Furthermore, the study uses a sample from generic members of fashion SMBCs, but fashion covers a highly diverse range of brands and market segments, which means that consumers have different motivations. For instance, need for uniqueness and self-presentation are two main reasons for luxury fashion consumption (Amatulli and Guido, 2011; Bian and Forsythe, 2012), and luxury brands may also cover aspirational needs in social media, not necessarily connected with their current target market (Kennedy and Bolat, 2017); conversely, consumers' perception of low price is among the

main drivers of fast-fashion consumption (Byun and Sternquist, 2008; Gabrielli *et al*., 2013; Cook and Yurchisin, 2017). As such, consumer reactions to SMM actions may vary across different fashion brands. Therefore, future studies may find it worthwhile to investigate the effect of consumers' cognitive motivations on eWoM engagement behaviors with specific fashion brands.

Second, regarding the research design, future research may consider alternative approaches to complement the results of this research, such as content analysis of brands' public posts in their SMBCs. While this method can accurately provide information about both SMM actions and aggregated actual eWoM engagement metrics (total number of likes, favorites, shares, etc.) of each post, the main challenge is that most content posted by fashion brands in their SMBCs is mainly visual (e.g. pictures and videos), which hampers automated content analysis.

Third, the dependent variable in this study measures consumers' intention to engage in eWoM behaviors, which may be used as a proxy of actual eWoM engagement behaviors. Several social psychological models commonly used in social science research consider behavioral intention as the most important predictor of actual performance of the behavior (e.g. Ajzen, 1991). The use of a proxy measure has evident practical purposes, but also different limitations: first, the link between intention and behavior is not exempt from criticism (e.g. Bagozzi, 2007), and past research identifies different variables affecting the intention-behavior link (Sheeran, 2002; Sheeran and Webb, 2016); second, although the research design situates respondents in a context that is close to reality – i.e. expressing their predisposition to share/retweet/re-post or like/fav/pin the different examples, engaging with social media content in a real situation – sharing, liking, etc. – has additional consequences in the form of an immediate response from the social media platform that may be visible to others, such as the person's name appearing in the list of people who have liked the content, making the content public in the person's timeline or public profile, etc., all of which may affect the self-presentation of the individual, which in turn may translate into lower eWoM engagement levels or discrepancies between the intention to engage in eWoM behaviors and actual eWoM engagement behavior. A possible workaround to solve this problem would be to conduct the survey under real conditions – i.e. having respondents log in their social media accounts and observe their actual eWoM engagement behaviors with the different content.

Finally, two promising avenues of future research from the findings in this study are the analysis of the relation between SMM actions and other eWoM behaviors beyond one-click social plugins, such as "commenting" or "replying", in order to fully understand generation of

eWoM engagement, as well as the investigation of "if" and "how" eWoM engagement in social media can translate to other desired behaviors, such as offline WoM or actual purchases.

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Table 1. Items of fashion brands' SMM actions (adapted from Ananda *et al*., 2017)

Type of action	Action	Code
Representation	Providing access to the brands' e-shop/e-commerce site	SMMA01
	Providing product promotion content (e.g. picture or videos about products)	SMMA02
	Providing upcoming product sneak-peeks	SMMA03
	Providing exclusive campaign previews	SMMA04
	Reporting or sharing posts of product launch, offline stores, or other offline promotional events (e.g. live-streaming of fashion weeks)	SMMA05
	Providing content on brand's expertise, values, and culture	SMMA07
	Publishing customers' purchases (to encourage others)	SMMA08
	Publishing casual socialization content (e.g. greetings)	SMMA09
	Publishing promoted-posts or ad-banners	SMMA10
	Providing content associated with brand´s culture and values not directly related to the brand's field of expertise	SMMA11
	Showcasing brand achievements, results, innovation, news, or success stories	SMMA12
	Customer appreciation (e.g. thanking customers for the purchases)	SMMA13
	Sharing activities and news of retailers/business partners	SMMA14
	Posting content about brand profile and corporate information	SMMA15
	Offering free products or price discounts	SMMA16
Engagement	Posting content about personalities (e.g. celebrities) or influencers	SMMA06
	Encouraging customers to share their brand experiences	SMMA17
	Sharing personalities' or influencers' posts and endorsements of the brand and its products	SMMA18
	Giveaway promotions or contests (encouraging winners to share their experiences on social media)	SMMA19

Table 2. Perceived exposure and intention to engage in eWoM behaviors for each SMM action

SMM action	Frequency scale (average)	Type of eWoM engagement					
		Pass-on		Endorsement		Aggregate eWoM	
		%	r_{pb}	%	r_{pb}	%	r_{pb}
SMMA01	4.813	19	.083	63	**.118***	73	**.112***
SMMA16	4.531	45	**.287****	61	**.234****	77	**.251****
SMMA09	4.523	29	**.177****	57	**.119***	71	**.132***
SMMA02	4.515	15	**.135***	54	**.189****	62	**.268****
SMMA10	4.361	19	0.077	46	**.132***	56	.105
SMMA18	4.257	18	**.167****	46	.093	54	**.117***
SMMA08	4.199	20	**.165****	49	**.185****	60	**.189****
SMMA19	4.178	43	**.310****	53	**.154****	73	**.297****
SMMA06	4.104	19	**.189****	56	**.287****	64	**.313****
SMMA03	4.041	20	**.169****	56	**.207****	65	**.240****
SMMA17	4.025	20	**.244****	42	.06	55	**.163****
SMMA12	3.942	27	**.261****	55	**.239****	66	**.284****
SMMA11	3.934	25	**.236****	59	**.227****	69	**.270****
SMMA04	3.905	16	**.280****	54	**.307****	61	**.324****
SMMA13	3.842	16	**.230****	55	**.180****	62	**.194****
SMMA14	3.788	16	**.196****	42	**.199****	48	**.209****
SMMA07	3.577	25	**.275****	49	.105	66	**.277****
SMMA15	3.303	19	**.325****	36	**.286****	47	**.380****
SMMA05	3.232	11	**.279****	37	**.255****	42	**.262****
Mean	4.056	22		51		62	

*Significant at $p<0.05$

**Significant at $p<0.01$

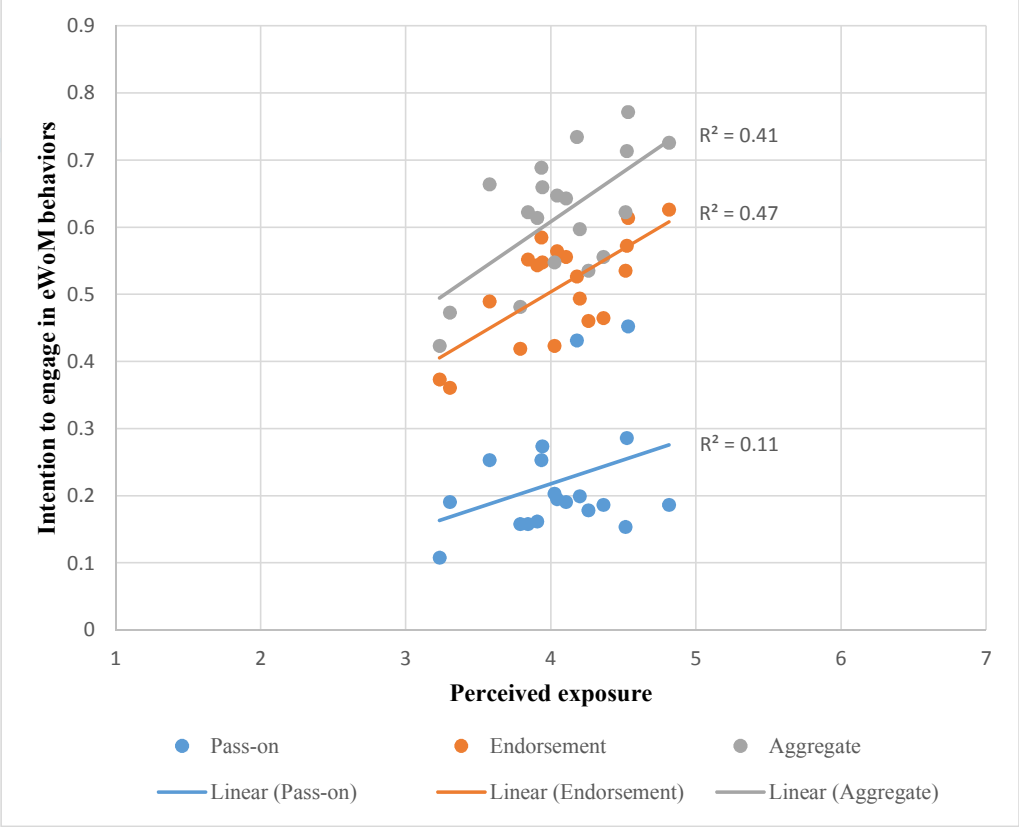

Figure 1. Perceived exposure to SMM actions vs. intention to engage in eWoM behaviors

What makes fashion consumers 'click'? Generation of eWoM engagement in social media

Abstract

Purpose – This study investigates the perceived exposure of fashion consumers to different types of fashion brands' social media marketing (SMM) actions in social media, and its ~~relation~~relationship with the intention to engage in electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM) behaviors.

Design/methodology/approach – The empirical study uses a survey with a stratified random sample of 241 Indonesian members of fashion social media brand communities. The research design includes nineteen types of SMM actions and three types of eWoM engagement behaviors, and investigates their relationship using point-biserial correlation.

Findings – Generation of intention to engage in "pass-on" and "endorsement" ~~intention to engage in~~ eWoM has different drivers and serves different purposes. ~~Findings~~The findings suggest that endorsement engagement is contingent on the consumer's perceived exposure to marketing action stimuli, while pass-on engagement is driven by cognitive-inducing actions.

Research implications – This study extends current theory on SMM strategy and its ~~relation~~relationship with eWoM engagement with a theoretically grounded conceptualization of eWoM engagement behaviors through the use of one-click social plugins.

Practical implications – The study offers guidelines for fashion brands to effectively design their SMM strategies by identifying specific drivers of consumers' intention to engage in eWoM.

Originality/value – This study identifies ~~the~~sources of generation of eWoM engagement behavioral intention from a fine-grained analysis of marketing actions across various fashion social media brand communities. Besides, it extends the applicability of the "mere exposure" effect to the SMM context. The research pioneers the study on fashion consumers' eWoM engagement behaviors in Indonesia, a country with one of the largest social media populations.

Keywords brand community; electronic word-of-mouth engagement; fashion; Indonesia; social media marketing, perceived exposure.

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Social networking sites heavily influence consumer culture, bringing the notion that consumption becomes an exchange of information (Beer and Burrows, 2010). Fashion companies and brands have quickly embraced social media, driven by the potential benefits of the new marketing channels, such as rapid identification of trends and direct engagement with customers. Fashion is a concept that reflects style and material possession (O'Cass, 2004); thus, fashion consumption is influenced by symbols and images, affirming identity and social belonging (Altuna *et al*., 2013). Social media are vehicles for self-expression (McCrea, 2013); therefore, they are appropriate tools for fashion brands to engage with consumers online. As a result, fashion and apparel brands currently have the largest median audience size ~~of~~across all industries in social media (White, 2016). Social media ~~help promoting~~facilitate fashion promotion, and practitioners concur with the view that the future of fashion is democracy, acknowledging the ability of the industry to adapt to – and together with – consumers (Conlon, 2016).

Consumers establish relationships and create bonds with a brand on the basis of their perceptions about the brand and its characteristics (Veloutsou and Moutinho, 2009). In social media, consumers and companies connect and engage through brand communities (Zaglia, 2013). Consumer engagement with a virtual brand community describes the nature of participants' specific interactions and/or the interactive experiences between consumers and the brand, and/or other members of the community (Brodie *et al*., 2013). One important form of consumer-brand engagement behavior is word-of-mouth (WoM), which refers to the process of conveying information from person to person (Jansen *et al*., 2009). WoM influences consumer choices (Chu and Kim, 2011), and positive WoM transmission can be an important indicator of brand relationship quality or brand personality appeal (Tho *et al*., 2016).

When brands create their social media brand communities (SMBCs) and deploy their social media marketing (SMM) activities, their main objective – as well as the expected outcome – is to achieve brand awareness by creating positive WoM (e.g. Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). EWoM, or electronic WoM, refers to "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2004, p. 39). EWoM differs from traditional advertisements in that it consists basically of non-commercial messages created by consumers (Wu and Wang, 2011). Consumer participation in SMBCs may shape the perception of consumers about the brand through eWoM (e.g. Jansen *et al*., 2009). Therefore,

social media networks act as a socialization agent that facilitates eWoM, enabling peer-to-peer communication (Chu and Sung, 2015; Wang *et al*., 2012).

The increasing and ubiquitous use of SMM ~~emphasize~~emphasizes the importance of SMM actions to foster engagement and improve WoM (e.g. Hoffmann and Fodor, 2010). Nevertheless, firms have generally lacked formal eWoM planning. Instead, their use of social media does not follow any clearly established SMM strategy~~,~~ and is carried out with little acumen about the new ways to interact and engage with customers (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014).

Furthermore, while prior research has demonstrated the positive effects of eWoM engagement on consumer attitudes and their decision-making process (e.g. Jansen *et al*., 2009; See-To and Ho, 2014; Wang and Yu, 2015), a fundamental aspect of eWoM – eWoM generation – is still largely understudied (Liu *et al*., 2017), and usually overlooked within the fashion industry. Wolny and Mueller (2013) pioneer the research on generation of fashion consumer ~~social media~~ eWoM engagement behaviors in social media, using traits from a motivational perspective, but research has yet to address the relevance of specific marketing actions by fashion brands in social media. In addition, the study of eWoM in SMBCs mostly focuses on developed countries, neglecting emerging markets such as Indonesia.

Indonesia, with a population of around 250 million – the fourth most ~~populated~~populous country in the world – has not been an exception to the increasing global penetration of social media. Despite having a relatively low Internet penetration rate (34%), Indonesians have quickly embraced social media, with a current total of 79 million active social media users, more than 80% of whom access social media through mobile devices (Kemp, 2016). As of 2014, Indonesia had 69 million active Facebook users, making it the fourth country with the largest Facebook user base in the world (Singapore Post, 2014). Jakarta, the capital city, is recently crowned as the most tagged city in the "story" feature of Instagram (Instagram, 2017). The three most-popular social media platforms in Indonesia are Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (eMarketer, 2016a).

Businesses in Indonesia have been fast to adapt to the affinity of Indonesian consumers with social media. ~~Brands and~~ Indonesian brands and retailers are using social media not only as marketing tools, but also as direct sales channels (Gilliam, 2015). Indonesian fashion consumers are mostly young adults who use social media – predominantly Instagram – and follow digital retailers that sell apparel and fashion accessories (eMarketer, 2016b). Many of the largest fashion brands in Indonesia use Instagram as a means to direct traffic to their site, while smaller brands might not even have a physical store, selling their products directly through Instagram

(Gilliam, 2015). With an emerging middle-class population, the demand for fashion, clothing, and apparel is growing significantly in Indonesia – an expected 7.4% in 2017 (PwC, 2015).

In addition to the response of retailers to the emergence of social media, Indonesians like to socialize. *Nongkrong* is a local term that refers to sociability and has a close resemblance with the idea of "hanging out". *Nongkrong* involves spending time interacting with family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers and others (Moore, 2013). Indonesians embrace online communication as a form of *nongkrong* with social networking, which is currently the preferred form of socialization in Indonesia (Ipsos, 2012). Desire for social interactions is one factor that may motivate consumers to engage in eWoM behaviors (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2004). Given the socialization-oriented use of social media in Indonesia, the Indonesian case has high potential for the study of eWoM engagement behaviors for marketing purposes.

However, despite the rapid adoption of social media in Indonesia by businesses and consumers and the prominent role of SMM in fashion consumption in the country, several problems have yet to be addressed from both academic and managerial perspectives. More specifically, researchers and practitioners lack: (a) evidence of how Indonesian fashion consumers engage in eWoM behaviors with fashion brands in their SMBCs, and (b) knowledge about the effect of fashion brands' SMM actions on consumers' intention to engage in eWoM behaviors.

From the above, the purpose of this study is to investigate the intention to engage in eWoM behaviors within and across various fashion SMBCs from a strategic perspective. To do so, the research investigates Indonesian fashion consumers' intention to engage in eWoM engagement behaviors within SMBCs under the lens of consumer exposure to marketing stimuli. In particular, the study focuses on two types of social media eWoM engagement behaviors: pass-on or recommendation behavior (e.g. "sharing" or "retweeting") and endorsing behavior (e.g. "liking", "loving", or "favoriting"). Accordingly, the study aims to cover two main research objectives: first, to investigate ~~which~~the type of SMM actions – or marketing messages – of fashion brands in their SMBCs ~~do~~that Indonesian consumers perceive ~~that~~ they are more exposed to; second, to analyze and understand which SMM actions generate higher intent to engage in eWoM behaviors ~~from~~among Indonesian consumers.

The remainder of this study is structured as follows. Section 2 highlights the importance of consumer exposure to marketing stimuli and the effect of SMM actions on consumer attitudes and behaviors. It also explores the concept of SMBCs and explains how fashion brands use SMBCs to deploy their marketing actions. Section 2 further examines the development of consumers' eWoM engagement behaviors resulting from brand-consumer interactions in

SMBCs. Section 3 describes the research design, methodology and measurement instrument. Section 4 details the results of the analysis, and Section 5 discusses the main findings from the research. Section 6 draws the main theoretical and practical implications from this study. Finally, Section 7 draws some concluding remarks and suggests avenues of future research.

Theoretical background and research questions

Consumers' exposure to social media marketing actions

Early literature on traditional – i.e. offline – marketing channels acknowledges the relation between consumers' exposure to brands, products or other marketing stimuli (e.g. logos, labels, and marketing actions) and the consumer decision-making process. For instance, one widespread strategy in traditional media is advertising repetition, which aims to enhance the ability of consumers to recall information in order to influence consumer opinions (Yaveroglu and Donthu, 2008).

It is now common knowledge that familiarity with a stimulus is an important determinant of stimulus recall (Becknell *et al*., 1963) because the frequency of exposure to a stimulus has an effect on an individual's perception process (Solomon, 2009). As a result, the frequency of exposure to a stimulus affects individual's choices; in other words, individuals prefer stimuli to which they are exposed more frequently (Becknell *et al*., 1963). Further, Zajonc (1968) demonstrates that exposure to a stimulus can enhance the liking or preference for that stimulus, independently of cognitive evaluations. This is known as the "mere exposure" phenomenon. "Mere exposure" refers to a condition that makes the stimulus accessible to the individual's perception. Consequently, an individual's familiarity with a stimulus leads to favorable attitudes towards the stimulus – i.e. preference and liking (Harrison, 1977). The positive exposure-affect relationship has been a recurring topic in marketing and advertising literature (Bornstein and D'Agostino, 1992), under different stimuli and rating procedures (Pliner, 1982; Bornstein and D'Agostino, 1992), and has been supported in various domains, including pictures of faces (Harmon-Jones and Allen, 2001), edible substances (Pliner, 1982), tourism destinations (Bojanic, 1991), or web ads (Yoo, 2008). Therefore, repeated exposure to a product with the objective of fostering a positive affection for the product is a common approach in advertising (Ruggieri and Boca, 2013). Marketers seek to increase the ~~number~~amount of marketing communications – i.e. exposure to marketing stimuli – because higher exposure increases consumers' attention and familiarity with a brand or label (Bialkova and van Trijp, 2010). Thus, we posit that increasing the frequency of exposure towards a specific SMM action, which acts as a marketing stimulus, will likely lead to positive attitudinal responses towards the SMM

action.

Perceived exposure, perceived intensity, or perceived frequency of exposure to the stimulus is a close concept to frequency of exposure. Perceived exposure refers to an individual's recall of the frequency of exposure to a certain stimulus~~,~~ and has already been used as well in the context of brand-generated social media messages (Gao and Feng, 2016). Perceptions of brand posting activity in online contexts, such as forums, give an approximate match of actual activity of the brand (Albert *et al*., 2014). Thus, perceived exposure is an alternative and low~~-~~cost measure, especially when compared to collection of data about actual exposure. Furthermore, perceived exposure might also measure attentional bias towards advertising (Feighery *et al*., 2006).

Fashion brands and social media brand communities (SMBCs)

Social media are transforming fashion consumption, as fashion spreads through network effects (Wolny and Mueller, 2013). Companies and fashion brands have responded to the emergence of social media by creating their online brand communities, including SMBCs (Brogi *et al*., 2013; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis. 2014). A brand community is "an enduring, self-selected group of consumers, sharing a system of values, standards and representations, who accept and recognize bonds of membership with each other and with the whole" (Veloutsou and Moutinho, 2009, p. 316). Brand communities have three different components or markers (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001): (1) consciousness of kind; (2) shared rituals and traditions; and (3) moral responsibility. Consciousness of kind is the intrinsic connection that members feel towards one another and the collective sense of difference from outsiders; rituals and traditions perpetuate the community's shared history, culture, and consciousness; and moral responsibility refers to an obligation to the community as a whole and to its individual members.

SMBCs are special cases of online or virtual brand communities created using social media platforms (Habibi *et al*., 2016). Some of the triggers that may prompt an individual to join, or participate in, the online brand community are the need to reduce information asymmetry and searching costs, as well as the perception of the bias inherent to the nature of commercial information (Brodie *et al*., 2013).

Based on the *N-REL* framework ~~for SMM strategy~~ (Ananda *et al*., 2016) for the assessment of brands' strategic marketing decisions and actions, Ananda *et al*. (2017) investigate the ~~relation~~relationship between consumers' perceived exposure to SMM actions and the actual intensity of fashion brands' SMM actions in SMBCs. *N-REL* proposes two types of active SMM actions – the framework also identifies "passive" actions related to marketing research and

analytics – that can be implemented by companies: "representation" and "engagement". Representation-centered actions focus on marketing communications about the brand and its products, whereas engagement-centered actions aim at directly engaging audiences – including customers, opinion leaders, and influencers – and encourage consumers' co-creation or content-sharing. Ananda *et al.* (2017) identify 36 different generic representation and engagement actions in social media, seventeen of which they identify as rarely used by fashion brands. The results of Ananda *et al*. (2017) suggest that consumers perceive that fashion brands are intensely communicating messages about product promotion and access to the brand's online shop or catalog, as well as other actions that function basically as sales promotion – e.g. price discounts, product sneak-peeks and campaign previews. These messages are representation actions, which reflect a traditional transaction-centered marketing approach. On the other hand, engagement actions that reflect a relationship-oriented marketing approach are less prevalent in fashion SMBCs (Ananda *et al*., 2017).

Social media consumer engagement and eWOM

Engagement is a central concept in brand communities. Consumer brand engagement goes beyond a mere behavioral response, and also comprises cognitive processing and affection; as such, consumer brand engagement is "a consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity during or related to consumer-brand interactions" (Hollebeek *et al*., 2014, p. 154). Consequently, the behavioral dimension of consumer brand engagement that occurs as a consequence of SMBC interactions manifests as consumer behavioral responses to a brand's post in SMBCs.

Understanding behavioral engagement in SMBCs involves knowing how users or consumers respond to content posted by the brand. Social media networks are bidirectional communication channels that make tools available for users to express their reactions and respond to any content posted to the platform. These tools include the social plugins (e.g. "like", "retweet", "share", "comment", etc.) usually embedded as click-based buttons on social media platforms. Users can then share their interest or convey their attitude about content posted by anyone using these buttons (Swani *et al*., 2013). Even though these social plugins vary across different social media platforms, they share common underlying motivations and cognitive processes. For instance, Facebook's *"*Like*"* button manifests users' positive affective responses or emotional relationship (Vernuccio *et al*., 2015), and has a similar purpose to the "Favorite" button on Twitter, or *"*Pin" on Pinterest. Therefore, similar mechanisms define a few sets of response

behaviors. For example, Dhaoui (2014) proposes four types of consumer engagement in a Facebook brand community: (1) endorsement of the brand and/or the values expressed in the content – e.g. "liking"; (2) feedback, or replies from users to content published by the brands; (3) conversation with/among Facebook users; and (4) recommendation – i.e. passing on or sharing online content with other users.

Companies may use different metrics of consumer responses to social media posts as proxies for consumer behavior-related performance, and metrics from different social media platforms can refer to the same objectives (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010). For example, the number of reblogs in blogs, number of shares in social networks, number of "retweets", or number of posted reviews, may serve as eWoM measures. In the same way, affective-response metrics, such as the number of likes on Facebook, favorites on Twitter or pins on Pinterest, may also serve as indicators of eWoM. Conceptually, eWoM in social networks comprises three different objectives: opinion seeking, opinion giving, and opinion passing (Chu and Kim, 2011). Consumers with high levels of opinion-seeking ~~behavior~~behaviors tend to search for information and advice from others, while consumers with high levels of opinion-giving behaviors – known as opinion leaders – exert influence on others' attitudes and behaviors. Opinion-passing behaviors are more likely to occur in online social environments, as the unique characteristics of the Internet and social media – e.g. the social plugins – facilitate multidirectional communication and rapid diffusion. Thus, opinion passing, or "pass-on behavior", is an enhanced dimension of eWoM in social media (Chu and Kim, 2011).

Although passing along marketing messages is a clear indication of social media eWoM engagement, there are some additional considerations about the social media behavioral responses that constitute eWoM engagement. Liking is also considered akin to eWoM because users automatically share the messages they like with each other (Swani *et al*., 2013). If a certain user clicks on a "Like" button on a post, other users that visit the post might see that the user liked it, and a story might even appear on the user's timeline showing that he or she liked the post (Facebook, 2016). This is consistent with Hennig-Thurau *et al*.'s (2004) idea that, by liking a post, consumers declare their endorsing statement without leaving a comment (Facebook, 2016). Alboqami *et al*. (2015) share this view~~,~~ and consider both "favorite" (a form of endorsing behavior) and "retweet" (a form of recommendation behavior) as measures of eWoM engagement on Twitter, although they state that the latter is a stronger indicator of eWoM. Liu *et al*. (2017) consider not only "sharing" and "liking", but also "commenting" as eWoM behaviors on a brand page in Facebook.

In this research, eWoM engagement covers the two types of behavioral engagement that involve the use of "one-click" social plugins: "pass-on" and "endorsement". The one-click behaviors provided by plugins such as "Like" or "Share" require less effort and reduce cognitive load, compared to other types of behavior, such as commenting or replying (Swani *et al*., 2013; Liu *et al*., 2017). Albeit similar, there are also slight differences between the cognitive load associated ~~to~~with the use of "Like" and "Share" buttons, as the latter – if not broadcast – may require an additional effort to select specific recipients or add an extra message (Liu *et al*., 2017). Pass-on engagement relates to recommendation behaviors, such as: sharing a post on Facebook or a video on YouTube; retweeting a tweet on Twitter; ~~reblog~~reblogging on a blog; or ~~repost~~reposting on Instagram or a blog. Endorsement engagement denotes affective responses, covering behaviors such as: liking a post on Facebook, a "gram" on Instagram or a video on YouTube; adding a tweet as favorite on Twitter; or pinning a "pin" on Pinterest. Additionally, this study considers an aggregate measure of eWoM behavioral engagement consisting of either pass-on, endorsement, or both types of eWoM ~~behavioral~~ engagement behaviors.

~~Few~~Perceived social media marketing activities are effective in developing relationships with customers and building brand loyalty within an SMBC (Ismail, 2017). Nonetheless, few studies explore how different types of marketing actions, messages or content posted by brands in social media may drive eWoM engagement. Swani *et al*. (2013) measure the relation between three types of Facebook message strategies – corporate branding, emotional content, and direct call to purchase – and the number of likes the message receives, but they do not evaluate pass-on behaviors. Alboqami *et al*. (2015) examine different characteristics of marketer-generated content on Twitter and how they may lead to eWoM. Liu *et al*. (2017) examine the effect of appeal, vividness and interactivity of social media communication strategies on eWoM behaviors on Facebook brand pages. However, these studies focus only on one platform and do not offer any in-depth analysis of the different strategic SMM actions, most notably regarding engagement actions, which are unique to social media marketing. Therefore, there is no empirical evidence on whether specific brands' strategic actions are more likely to result in consumer eWoM engagement behaviors in social media environments – more specifically, in fashion brand SMBCs. Hence, this study poses the following research questions:

RQ1. What type of SMM actions by fashion brands drive higher (a) pass-on, (b) endorsement, and (c) aggregate intention to engage in eWoM behaviors?

RQ2. What is the ~~relation~~relationship between fashion consumers' perceived exposure towards fashion brands' SMM actions and their intention to engage in eWoM behaviors?

This study builds on the categories of SMM actions for fashion brands proposed by Ananda *et al*. (2017) to analyze the relation between perceived exposure to different types of SMM actions by fashion brands in SMBCs and intention to engage in eWoM behaviors, using a sample of Indonesian fashion consumers. The following section presents a research design aiming to shed a light on this topic by investigating the extent to which SMM actions by fashion brands foster intention to engage in eWoM behaviors.

Research design and methods

Sample demographics and data collection

The research ~~proposes~~applies a quantitative approach using data collected from a survey to Indonesian consumers who are members of at least one fashion SMBC. The target respondents are members of brand-initiated fashion SMBCs (i.e. not consumer-initiated SMBCs). The survey consists of an online self-administered questionnaire distributed via mobile device to a panel of respondents obtained with the collaboration of JakPat, one of the leading marketing research companies in Indonesia. The company has access to more than 134,000 respondents across Indonesia. Upon the sample requirements provided by the authors to ensure representativeness, JakPat selected the participants following a random stratified sampling method.

The stratified random sampling includes 65% of the respondents in the 15-30 years old bracket, 20% in the 31-35 years old bracket, and the rest above 35 years old. The respondents include 54% and 46% of male and female respondents, respectively, 84% of them being fashion online shoppers and the rest being members of brand-initiated fashion SMBCs who have not made any fashion purchase online. As the majority of the Internet users in Indonesia reside in Java Island and urban areas (e.g. APJII, 2015), about 85% of the respondents are from major cities in the island of Java, and the rest are from major cities in Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and Bali. The characteristics of the sample are similar to those of Indonesian Internet, social media, and online shopping audiences (BMI Research, 2014; eMarketer, 2015; Lukman, 2013).

G*Power 3 (Faul *et al.*, 2007) helped ~~ensuring~~to ensure that the sample size was larger than the minimum required for the study. A priori power calculation for one-tailed point-biserial correlation model with statistical power of 0.8 and a medium effect size of 0.3 (Cohen, 1988), corresponding to a coefficient of determination of 0.09, yields a minimum sample size of 64. A

total of 250 Indonesian members of any fashion SMBC participated in the study. Even though JakPat automatically dropped invalid respondents, 9 additional invalid responses with the same levels of perceived exposure across all SMM actions were discarded after inspection of the dataset. Therefore, the final sample comprises 241 respondents.

Measurement instrument and data analysis

The proposal of Ananda *et al*. (2017) provides empirical basis for the measurement of SMM actions, ~~especially considering its adaptation~~adapted to the context of fashion brands. The overarching idea of the instrument relies on how frequently fashion brands perform different SMM actions, but also ~~takes into account~~considers the perceived exposure to those actions by consumers. The final questionnaire includes 19 measurement items for fashion brands' SMM actions from Ananda *et al*. (2017), summarized in Table 1. The measurement instrument includes 15 representation actions and 4 engagement actions; the underrepresentation of engagement actions follows Ananda *et al*.'s (2017) finding that 17 ~~actions~~ out of 36 actions were rarely or never used by fashion brands, 15 of which were engagement actions.

The questionnaire does not consider specific types of fashion products (e.g. luxury, mass-~~-~~market, fast-~~-~~fashion, etc.), company size, or country of origin of the brand. The questionnaire also includes real examples of social media content to illustrate the different marketing actions. Three experts selected the examples from content posted on the public official social media page of different fashion brands in different social media platforms. The questionnaire items were formulated in English, then translated to Indonesian, and pre-tested by two Indonesian marketing experts.

For each SMM action, and using real examples of content posted by fashion brands in social media, respondents were asked about the perceived frequency of their exposure to each type of action – i.e. "How frequently do you perceive that the fashion brands you follow post this kind of content?", adapted from Meirick (2005). ~~Responses~~The responses to perceived exposure were measured in a Likert-7 scale, ranging from "never" to "always".

Insert Table 1 around here.

The measurement of eWoM engagement – or, more precisely, behavioral intention to engage in eWoM – aims to capture consumers' likeliness to respond to each type of SMM action using one-click social plug-ins. Participants were asked to provide a "Yes/No" response to the questions "Would you share/retweet/re-post this type of content?" (intention to engage in pass-

on eWoM behaviors) and "Would you like/fav/pin this type of content?" (intention to engage in endorsement eWoM behaviors).

Data analysis involves, as a first step, calculation of the average of perceived exposure to SMM actions and the level of intention to engage in eWoM behaviors generated by each SMM action. While the latter aims to answer RQ1, the former may allow confirmation of findings in prior studies in the context of Indonesian consumers~~,~~ and ~~will~~ also ~~help answering~~helps answer RQ2. The dataset includes three types of eWoM engagement: pass-on, endorsement, and aggregate eWoM engagement – which includes either pass-on, endorsement, or both. A second step aims to answer the second research question~~,~~ and uses point-biserial correlation to analyze the relation between perceived frequency of SMM actions and intention to engage in eWoM behaviors.

Results

Perceived exposure to fashion brands' social media marketing actions

Regarding perceived exposure, the results are consistent with previous studies. Table 2 summarizes the findings of the research. The overall average of perceived exposure to SMM actions is 4.056. There are four coincidences among the top five actions: "access to the brand's e-shop/e-commerce site" (SMMA01), "free products or price discounts" (SMMA16), "publishing casual socialization content" (SMMA09), and "product promotion" (SMMA02) – the exception being "promoted posts" (SMMA10). Besides, there is one particular outlier in the lower band that slightly contradicts the results of Ananda *et al*. (2017) – "reporting or posting offline promotional events" (SMMA05). Because Ananda *et al*. (2017) do not provide country-specific data for each SMM action, we cannot discard that the discrepancy might be specific to Indonesian consumers, which is worth investigating further. Interestingly, three out of the four engagement actions – "sharing personalities' or influencers' posts and endorsements of the brand and its products" (SMMA18), "giveaway contests or competitions" (SMMA19), and "content about personalities or influencers" (SMMA06) – fall within the top ten actions regarding perceived exposure but none of them are among the top five.

Insert Table 2 around here.

Social media fashion ~~consumer~~consumers and eWoM engagement

SMM actions generate an average of 22% intention to engage in pass-on eWoM behaviors.

Actions that generate higher levels of intention to engage in pass-on behaviors (more than 40%) refer to "free products or price discounts" (SMMA16, representation) and "giveaway contests or competitions (encouraging winners to share their experiences on social media)" (SMMA19, engagement). The rest of actions show levels below 30%. The results show higher levels of intention to engage in endorsement eWoM behaviors (average of 51%, peaking at values higher than 60%) for "access to the brand's e-shop/e-commerce site" (SMMA01, representation) and "free products or price discounts" (SMMA16, representation). Generation of aggregated eWoM behaviors (average level of 62%) is led by "free products or price discounts" (SMMA16, representation), "giveaway contests or competitions" (SMMA19, engagement), "access to the brand's e-shop/e-commerce site" (SMMA01, representation), and "casual socialization" (SMMA09, representation) (more than 70%). Interestingly, content about the brand (expertise, values, culture or achievements) also appears to generate relatively high intention of ~~overall~~aggregate eWoM (66% or above).

Despite the relatively low values, point-biserial correlations (r_{pb}, Table 2) confirm the positive relation between consumers' perceived exposure towards SMM actions and intention to engage in eWoM behaviors in most cases, with some exceptions: "access to the brand's e-shop/e-commerce site" (SMMA01) and "promoted-post/ad-banners" (SMMA10) (pass-on engagement); "content about brand's expertise, values and culture" (SMMA11), "encouraging customers to share their brand experiences" (SMMA17), and "sharing personalities' posts and endorsements of the brand" (SMMA18) (endorsement engagement); and "promoted-post/ad-banners" (SMMA10) (aggregate eWoM engagement).

Linearity plots of eWoM engagement (Figure 1) also show the positive relation between consumers' perceived exposure towards SMM actions and their intention to engage in eWoM behaviors. However, there is a clear distinction between the influence of perceived exposure to SMM actions on pass-on engagement and endorsement/aggregate eWoM engagement. From Figure 1, perceived exposure accounts for 41% of the variance explained of aggregate eWoM engagement and 47% of endorsement engagement, but roughly 11% of pass-on engagement behaviors.

Insert Figure 1 around here.

Discussion

Save for a few subtle differences, mentioned earlier in the results section, the findings of this study in the Indonesian context share common views with generic fashion consumers and

substantiate the proposal and findings of Ananda *et al.* (2017) on the topic of consumers' perceived exposure to SMM actions.

Concerning RQ1, the results show that the intention to engage in eWoM behaviors is contingent on the type of SMM action. Marketing messages like "free products or price discounts", "giveaway contests/competitions", "access to the brand's e-shop/e-commerce site", or "publishing casual socialization content" seem to generate higher levels of overall intention to engage in eWoM behaviors, followed by content linked to the brand's identity – expertise, values, culture or achievements. For endorsement engagement, "access to the brand's e-shop/e-commerce site" and "free products or price discounts" are the two most engaging SMM actions. The latter, together with "giveaway contests or competitions", stand out from the rest in driving pass-on engagement intent.

The results indicate that Indonesian fashion consumers are more prone to engage in eWoM behaviors with fashion brands in their SMBCs mostly through endorsing behaviors. Markers of brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001) may explain this result. Shared rituals and traditions are mainly present in brand-initiated SMBCs – the focus of this study – whereas consciousness of kind and moral responsibility are more dominant in consumer-initiated SMBCs (Zaglia, 2013). Therefore, members of consumer-initiated SMBCs actively give and share advice, while members of brand-initiated SMBCs participate mainly for utilitarian purposes, such as information search. Consequently, members of brand-initiated SMBCs are expected to engage less in passing along the marketing messages. This finding may complement the results of Rossmann *et al*. (2016), who find that customers in product communities (e.g. fashion communities) are interested in sharing vivid and entertaining information in the form of positive affection (i.e. liking). Furthermore, the cognitive load and effort associated with each type of eWoM engagement behaviors might also help explain this finding, as endorsement behaviors are purely based on one-click actions, whereas pass-on behaviors may require additional steps, such as selection of recipients or adding customized messages.

In ~~regards~~regard to RQ2, the results suggest that consumers' perceived exposure towards a brand's SMM action correlates positively with their intention to engage in eWoM behaviors, predominantly in endorsing behaviors. This finding ~~goes~~is in line with the effect of exposure to marketing stimuli on the generation of more favorable attitudes (Becknell *et al*., 1963; Harrison, 1977). However, this result is not conclusive because variations in the complexity and sequence of the stimulus, as well as the moment of measurement, may affect the likelihood that an exposure or contrasting effect will occur (Harrison, 1977). ~~Besides~~In addition, and as a note of caution about this finding, prior research shows that overexposure to stimuli may result in

satiation – i.e. boredom, producing a downturn in the frequency-affect curve (Bornstein~~,~~ *et al.*, 1990; Bornstein and D'Agostino, 1992). As such, overexposure may result in wear-out effect; that is, the exposure might have no significant effect on consumers or may even have a negative effect at a certain level of exposure (Calder and Sternthal, 1980; Schmidt and Eisend, 2015). Given the need for provision of a constant flow of new content inherent to social media consumption, which translates into an ever-changing nature of content posted by brands in social media platforms, the likeliness that overexposure to the same stimulus happens is low, but further research is required on whether overexposure to specific types of content – i.e. types of SMM actions – might produce the same effect.

The study finds a negligible effect of perceived exposure to brands' SMM actions on the intention to perform recommendation behaviors. Intention to engage ~~on~~in pass-on eWoM behaviors does not seem to relate to consumer's perceived exposure, but rather to the specific type of the SMM action. In this research, cognitive-inducing actions that deliver messages targeting at fulfilling consumers' needs for pre-purchase information – e.g. information about the brand, product, pricing, promotions, or sales – generate relatively higher intention to engage ~~on~~in pass-on behaviors. This is consistent with the idea that the cognitive dimension of consumer engagement in brand communities is built through value-laden relationships by sharing information and experiences (Brodie *et al*., 2013). This finding is also in line with the notion that the main motivation of a large number of consumers to join brand communities is information search (Zaglia, 2013). The results suggest that fashion consumers might tend to engage less in passing along the brand's messages in a brand-initiated SMBC, but they might effectively develop pass-on behaviors if the posted messages fulfill their information-search needs.

An additional interpretation of this result is that SMM actions that aim to drive consumers to the brand's online shop, or those that focus on sales, price information or product promotions, cater to Indonesian consumers' appeal. This finding implies that Indonesian consumers welcome fashion brands' initiatives to use social media as sales channels and as sources of pre-purchase information. They also embrace initiatives that allow them to read online reviews and conduct online product research before confirming their offline or online purchases (Lubis, 2014). As a consequence, many retailers are starting to sell goods based primarily on social media recommendations, contributing to the surge in social commerce exchange activities (Chadha, 2016; Harsono, 2016).

Finally, the predominance of shared rituals and traditions in SMBCs may explain why actions related to brand stories and images around the community, as well as casual socialization

content, generate relatively high intention to engage in eWoM behaviors. This community marker includes celebration of the history of the brand, and brand-related stories emphasize the distinctiveness of the brand, its innovation and expertise, as well as important events and personages (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

Research implications

Theoretical implications

This study provides a theory-grounded conceptualization of eWoM engagement behaviors in SMBCs based on the use of common embedded one-click social plugins. The research covers two types of eWoM engagement behaviors ("pass-on" and "endorsement") that are distinctive ~~to~~of social media. This formulation enriches prior proposals to measure SMM or eWoM performance (e.g. Hoffman and Fodor, 2010; Wolny and Mueller, 2013).

The research also extends current theory about the drivers of intention to engage in different eWoM behaviors in SMBCs, particularly in the fashion sector, from an integrated SMM strategy perspective. The research identifies specific SMM actions performed by fashion brands (SMM content or messages delivered to their social media audiences) that are more likely to generate consumers' intention to engage in eWoM behaviors in the SMBCs.

Additionally, this study extends the applicability of the "mere exposure" effect to ~~a~~the SMM context. The "mere exposure" theory (Zajonc, 1968; 2001) has already been covered and tested in traditional marketing research. The findings of this study confirm that fashion consumers' perceived exposure (as a proxy of actual exposure) to a SMM marketing action may affect positively their intention to engage in eWoM behaviors – primarily, the affective component of eWoM engagement through endorsing behaviors.

From a theoretical perspective, even though the underrepresentation of engagement SMM actions from N-REL in this study is justified by the rare implementation by fashion brands of most of the engagement actions listed in Ananda *et al.* (2017), the results show differences between two of the engagement actions – "encouraging customers to share their brand experiences" (SMMA17) and "giveaway promotions or contests" (SMMA19) – and the other two, related to engaging with third parties – influencers or celebrities (SMMA06, SMMA18). The former two exert an open call to action from the members of the SMBC and drive higher intention to engage in eWoM pass-on behaviors. However, the latter two, while distinct from the rest of the representation actions that pivot primarily around the brand, might stand conceptually in a middle ground between representation and engagement. This finding might suggest the need for a revision of the categorization of SMM actions in the N-REL framework.

Finally, from a methodological standpoint, ~~this~~the study proposes a generic research design that allows easy replication in different industrial contexts or cultural settings. Furthermore, the study provides empirical evidence of fashion consumer eWoM engagement behaviors in Indonesia, a country with one of the world's largest and most enthusiastic social media populations, as well as a marketplace for the fashion industry with high growth potential that is largely overlooked by scholars in SMM.

Managerial implications

Metrics of eWoM engagement (number of reposts/shares, number of likes, number of reblogs) enabled by various social media plugins are easily retrieved from social media platforms. In general, fashion brands still fall short of optimizing their marketing actions to increase eWoM engagement with consumers in their SMBCs. One way to assess the ~~effectivity~~effectiveness of their SMM efforts would be to perform an analysis of ~~history~~historical data to determine which SMM actions are effectively generating eWoM behaviors. However, this method involves devoting valuable time and resources to data generation, with the added uncertainty of whether the company is correctly implementing its SMM strategy. In a way, this course of action resembles the trial-and-error approach that many companies are still using in their SMM strategy, a course of action that is prone to hinder the company's ability to timely respond to market changes and might even taint the brand if the chosen strategy is not the right one. On top of this, many companies that use eWoM metrics of social media activity are unable to track the performance of their marketing efforts and still lack faith in the data they gather for measuring WoM in terms of value or meaningfulness (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014). This study offers alternative means to effectively design and deploy the brand's SMM strategy from the start, providing evidence about specific and essential drivers of consumer eWoM engagement generation.

Therefore, the findings of this study provide fashion brands and marketers with an understanding of how to strategically plan their SMM actions. By connecting SMM actions and eWoM engagement behaviors, the study may be of use for managers to plan their SMM strategy and actions aiming at specific eWoM engagement behaviors. Furthermore, this research may be especially beneficial for fashion brands with limited resources and ~~unable~~inability to perform post-hoc data analytics. The results of the study may help brands ~~saving~~save time and effort when determining and implementing their eWoM engagement strategies in social media.

Two main lines of managerial implications derive from this study. One of them relates to the nature and purpose of the two different eWoM behavioral engagements ("pass-on" and

"endorsement"), while the other is associated with the different drivers of said eWoM behaviors.

First, consistent with the idea that consumer brand engagement comprises cognitive processing and affection (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014), the different nature of pass-on and endorsement engagement results in different purposes for each of them. Pass-on engagement serves to fulfil cognitive or information search purposes, whereas endorsement engagement might better serve consumer affective purposes.

Second, different drivers may be more likely to generate each of the eWoM engagement behaviors. This study finds that the intention to engage in endorsement eWoM behaviors has a significant relationship with the fashion consumer's perceived exposure to marketing actions. On the other hand, the intention to engage in pass-on eWoM behaviors seems to be contingent on the type of each SMM action; more specifically, generation of pass-on eWoM seems to be induced by informative or cognitive-inducing SMM actions in the case of Indonesian fashion consumers.

The different nature, purpose and drivers of the two types of eWoM engagement suggest the existence of two complementary ways fashion brands or marketers may enhance eWoM engagement through their SMBCs. First, fashion brands aiming at rapidly spreading their marketing messages beyond their SMBCs should use SMM actions that induce cognitive evaluation by consumers; for example, by giving relevant pre-purchase information and ~~funnel~~funneling direct sales though their SMBCs. In addition, it is worth noting that Indonesians are rational consumers who hunt for bargains, and Indonesian shoppers actively seek out promotions and deals (Rastogi *et al.*, 2013); therefore, fashion brands selling in Indonesia should adopt SMM strategies with a strong emphasis on sales and price promotions, in order to generate higher pass-on engagement. This can be achieved either from direct promotional offers or by actively engaging users through participation in promotions via contests in the SMBCs.

Second, if fashion brands or marketers aim at fostering consumers' promotion or advocacy of the brands' messages with personal referrals or endorsements throughout their social networks, then they could leverage the intensity or frequency of their corresponding SMM actions. However, considering that ~~stimulus~~the complexity and sequence of presentation of the stimulus may affect ~~message~~the effectiveness of the message, fashion brands should meticulously plan their marketing actions to maintain the effectiveness of their marketing messages. Thus, besides an increase of the frequency of posted content for each action, brands might want to consider variations of stimulus attributes; for example, by periodically changing

their campaign themes, alternating the type of posts (e.g. text, pictures or videos) or changing the sequence in which they publish content associated with each type of SMM action.

A relevant implication for fashion brands is the prominent role of SMM actions that promote brand image and sense of community in the generation of eWoM endorsement engagement. Endorsing behavior has a strong affective component, and because fashion consumers acknowledge the importance of branding to fashion codes (Auty and Elliott, 1998), brands may keep producing content celebrating the history of the brand or stories about the brand to increase consumer loyalty and identification with the brand. Heightened affection towards the brand may also lead to brand love, which involves strong identification with the brand and the brand community~~.~~ that can further foster positive WoM behavior among fashion consumers (Ismail and Spinelli, 2012). Brand lovers develop high levels of attachment to the brand, positive responses and evaluations of the brand and passion for it (Vernuccio *et al*., 2015). Furthermore, the study also offers guidelines regarding social community values, suggesting that brands should occasionally post casual socialization and greeting messages (e.g. "We wish you happy holidays!", "To all Moms, we love you!") to create a friendly atmosphere and make their online presence on social media resemble online communities or networks of friends (He *et al*., 2013).

Conclusions and future research

Social media are perfect vehicles for generation and propagation of eWoM. SMBCs are gaining relevance as marketing strategy platforms and they have proven ~~useful~~their usefulness for eWoM generation (Hutter *et al*., 2013; Barreda *et al*., 2015). Social media marketers and practitioners focus on the importance of eWoM engagement metrics as key SMM strategy performance indicators (Wong, 2014). Nevertheless, the relation between SMM strategies and generation of eWoM engagement is still largely understudied, in particular within the fashion industry. Moreover, this dearth of research is especially alarming in Indonesia, one of the emerging markets where social media have contributed to the rapid emergence of important and new marketplaces. From a local view, the implications of this study might be critical for the development of social commerce in Indonesia, where society and consumers are experiencing a deep transformation enabled by the growth of online retailing and social commerce activities (Chadha, 2016; The Jakarta Post, 2017).

This study provides an assessment of how different SMM actions by fashion brands affect consumer responses, particularly focusing on different eWoM engagement behaviors. The research provides empirical evidence of drivers of intention to engage in eWoM behaviors and identifies two eWoM engagement behaviors ("pass-on" and "endorsement") as a result of

SMBC consumer-brand interactions, from a strategic ~~view~~perspective. Pass-on engagement relates to recommendation behaviors, whereas endorsement engagement relates to positive attitudes, such as preference and liking. This research provides fashion marketers and practitioners with further understanding about how to strategically plan their social media content and messages, and assesses the expected impact of their SMM actions in pass-on and endorsement engagement.

Furthermore, this study pioneers the study of the effect of repeated exposure to marketing stimuli in SMM and SMBCs. It provides empirical evidence that a consumer's perceived exposure to SMM actions tends to have an effect on the development of positive attitudes and affective responses. On the other hand, the research shows that consumer's cognitive motivations – rather than perceived exposure – seem to be more prone to generate pass-on engagement, and therefore trigger recommendation behaviors.

The study is not exempt from limitations. First, the research explores social media eWoM engagement based on the mere exposure effect; nevertheless, prior research in different contexts shows that the effect of repeated exposure on message effectiveness may decay over time, or has a curvilinear relationship (Calder and Sternthal, 1980; Anand and Sternthal, 1990; Schmidt and Eisend, 2015). Accordingly, further research on the impact of perceived exposure to SMM actions should consider possible moderating factors, such as an individual's exposure level or familiarity with the stimulus (e.g. Harrison, 1977; Schmidt and Eisend, 2015); familiarity with a focal brand is a construct that may influence the effect of message repetition ~~effect~~ on attitudinal ~~response~~responses (Campbell and Keller, 2003), and therefore its effect on eWoM engagement behaviors is worth exploring. Furthermore, the study uses a sample from generic members of fashion SMBCs, but fashion covers a highly diverse range of brands and market segments, which means that consumers have different motivations. For instance, need for uniqueness and self-presentation are two main reasons for luxury fashion consumption (Amatulli and Guido, 2011; Bian and Forsythe, 2012), and luxury brands may also cover aspirational needs in social media, not necessarily connected with their current target market (Kennedy and Bolat, 2017); conversely, consumers' perception of low price is among the main drivers of fast-fashion consumption (Byun and Sternquist, 2008; Gabrielli *et al*., 2013; Cook and Yurchisin, 2017). As such, consumer reactions to SMM actions may vary across different fashion brands. Therefore, future studies may find it ~~worth~~worthwhile to investigate the effect of consumers' cognitive motivations on eWoM engagement behaviors with specific fashion brands.

Second, regarding the research design, future research may consider alternative approaches to complement the results of this research, such as content analysis of brands' public posts in their SMBCs. While this method can accurately provide information about both SMM actions and aggregated actual eWoM engagement metrics (total number of likes, favorites, shares, etc.) of each post, the main challenge is that most content posted by fashion brands in their SMBCs is mainly visual (e.g. pictures and videos), which hampers automated content analysis.

Third, the dependent variable in this study measures consumers' intention to engage in eWoM behaviors, which may be used as a proxy of actual eWoM engagement behaviors. Several social psychological models commonly used in social science research consider behavioral intention as the most important predictor of actual performance of the behavior (e.g. Ajzen, 1991). The use of a proxy measure has evident practical purposes, but also different limitations: first, the link between intention and behavior is not exempt from criticism (e.g. Bagozzi, 2007), and past research identifies different variables affecting the intention-behavior link (Sheeran, 2002; Sheeran and Webb, 2016); second, although the research design situates respondents in a context that is close to reality – i.e. expressing their predisposition to share/retweet/re-post or like/fav/pin the different examples, engaging with social media content in a real situation – sharing, liking, etc. – has additional consequences in the form of an immediate response from the social media platform that may be visible to others, such as the person's name appearing in the list of people who have liked the content, making the content public in the person's timeline or public profile, etc., all of which may affect the self-presentation of the individual, which in turn may translate into lower eWoM engagement levels or discrepancies between the intention to engage in eWoM behaviors and actual eWoM engagement behavior. A possible workaround to solve this problem would be to conduct the survey under real conditions – i.e. having respondents log in their social media accounts and observe their actual eWoM engagement behaviors with the different content.

Finally, two promising avenues of future research from the findings in this study are the analysis of the relation between SMM actions and other eWoM behaviors beyond one-click social plugins, such as "commenting" or "replying", in order to fully understand generation of eWoM engagement, as well as the investigation of "if" and "how" eWoM engagement in social media can translate to other desired behaviors, such as offline WoM or actual purchases.

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