Towards a New Cultural Paradigm

Fashion Blogging as a Metamodern Practice

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Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Statement of Authorship

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis contains a published contains one peer-reviewed published conference paper, and one peer-reviewed conference abstract authored by myself.


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Abstract

Fashion bloggers have overcome traditional media hierarchies to become new cultural intermediaries in fashion. Where fashion editors and journalists used to be the key players in the legitimation of fashion trends, fashion bloggers have introduced digital practices leading to a remediation of fashion journalism. However, while there are thousands of fashion bloggers on the Internet, only a select group of individuals have ever made it into the consciousness of two key audiences: the fashion industry and fashion consumers. As a starting point, this study applied a Bourdieuan framework to the field of fashion journalism through the mixed methods of content analysis, semi-structured interviews and direct observation. Two international and two Australian blogs were purposively sampled for this study, namely Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao, Nicole Warne and Patty Huntington. Notably, two distinct trajectories to dominance were found based on the acquisition of the various forms of capital, which are social, economic, cultural and symbolic. Given the currency of digital influence in fashion, this study further proposes the conception of a new field-specific form of capital called digital capital in the context of the emergent cultural paradigm, metamodernism. Metamodernism is characterised by a constant and dynamic oscillation between modern and postmodern sensibilities. This study found the metamodern strategy of performativity to be central to the conception of digital capital. Performativity encapsulates a dynamic tension between a modern authenticity and a postmodern artifice, and correspondingly a tension between self-expression and self-promotion. On the other hand, this study found that the metamodern sensibility of the quirky was not crucial the accrual of digital capital. The quirky refers to a tonal quality encompassing the simultaneous expression of a modern sincerity and a postmodern irony, highlighting the unique voice of the blogger. Most pertinently, the remediation of fashion journalism through the introduction of digital communication has paved the way for a new breed of fashion cultural intermediaries, whose metamodern approach to reportage should be a key consideration in the engagement of fashion audiences.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction of the superstar fashion blogger into the fashion industry has changed the dynamics of fashion journalism drastically (Rocamora, 2012). Where fashion editors and journalists used to be the key players in the legitimation of fashion trends, fashion bloggers are quickly staking their claim in the fashion arena as evidenced by their domination of the front-row seats at major fashion shows all over the world (Corcoran, 2006; Wilson, 2009). Fashion bloggers create posts in real-time, where they address their readers in a personal voice, allowing them to both enthrall and amass sizeable audiences (Khamis & Munt, 2010). Their admission into the social institution of fashion proves to be an interesting case study in the evolution of communication. The advent of digital communication has provided amateur content creators with the opportunity to overcome traditional media hierarchies and establish their blogs as legitimate sources of information. Moreover, the fact that fashion bloggers command a high international readership and can post direct links to the online stores of fashion designers is quickly making them indispensable to the marketing strategies of fashion designers. However, while anybody with access to the Internet can start a blog, not all fashion bloggers make it into the notoriously exclusive world of fashion. Therefore, this study investigates how a select few bloggers have capitalised on the communicative opportunities afforded by the Internet to successfully engage both fashion consumers and fashion producers, becoming intermediaries between these audiences. Indeed, the modes of expression exhibited by fashion bloggers demonstrate a departure from the traditional institutionalised styles of fashion journalism. In order to investigate the phenomenon of the rise of the fashion blogger in the fashion industry, this study especially focuses on the career trajectories and modes of expression of four purposively sampled bloggers, namely Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao, Nicole Warne and Patty Huntington.

Concurrent with the growing profile of the fashion blogger is recent scholarship in cultural studies proposing that modernity has evolved to reflect an emergent cultural paradigm called metamodernism (Vermeulen & Van den Akker 2010). This study
explores the increasing fluidity of power hierarchies in the fashion industry as a result of the widespread adoption of digital communication by both fashion producers and consumers, and finds out if it demonstrates a metamodern dynamism. This is in light of Pedersen’s (2011) suggestion that the practice of fashion blogging was an expression of metamodern sensibilities that resulted in a trickle-up flow of fashion aesthetics, especially in the digital age where the lines between content consumers and producers are blurred (Bruns, 2007a).

Metamodernism is defined as a “structure of feeling” that encapsulates a constant and dynamic oscillation between modern and postmodern sensibilities; between the sincerity, unity and purity of modernism, and the irony, plurality and fragmentation of postmodernism (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010). Here, the meta- prefix in metamodernism reflects a position that is temporally beyond postmodernism, and can be seen to encompass the dynamic tensions between preceding modern and postmodern precepts. The existing literature points to the concepts of performativity (Pedersen, 2011) and the quirky (MacDowell, 2011) as manifestations of metamodernism. Performativity entails an oscillating tension between modern authenticity and postmodern hyperreality or artifice (Stern, 1994). Basically, this would refer to the negotiation of the tension between portraying an authentic self and an exaggerated persona. Such a notion echoes the previous finding that bloggers who revealed more personal details about themselves on blogs also tended to get more followers (Trammell & Keshelavili, 2005). The quirky, on the other hand, encapsulates a tonal quality expressed through the oscillation between modern sincerity and postmodern irony (Buckland, 2012; MacDowell, 2013), where the use of irony can be used to convey underlying sincere personal truths of the individual (Miller 2010). While the notions of performativity and quirkiness are not the only modes of expression associated with metamodernism, this study focused on these two sensibilities as they were the best formed in terms of their application to other fields of cultural production at the time of the research. They can hence be regarded as starting points for a study on metamodern expression, which examines the notions of performativity and quirkiness, and whether these modes of expression lead to large scale
phenomenological engagement between successful fashion bloggers and their key audiences. Therefore, this study explores the presence of metamodernism in digital communication, utilising the fashion industry as an example of such cultural practice.

The multi-faceted nature of the fashion industry requires a framework that looks at both the individual and the structures that they work within. Bourdieu’s (1983) theory of the field of cultural production was used as a theoretical framework for this research as it has a tradition of being employed to assess social interactions and trajectories within the field of fashion (Bourdieu 1993a, McRobbie, 1998; Rocamora, 2002; Kawamura, 2005; Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006). Additionally, in the same way that metamodernism encapsulates modern and postmodern modes of expression, Bourdieu’s synthesis of objectivism and subjectivism too highlights the notion of complementarity between seemingly opposing dichotomies. That is not to say that Bourdieu’s ideas are fundamentally metamodern. Instead, this study recognises the commonalities between metamodernism and Bourdieu’s framework of cultural production in that they both seek to find complementarity between traditionally dichotomous concepts or sensibilities. This suggests compatibility in the use of Bourdieu’s conception of cultural production to ground an emerging cultural paradigm like metamodernism in practice. That is, this examination of the logic of metamodernism at the level of individual expression, and its broader cultural significance requires a framework that accounts for both subjective and objective factors, which is afforded by Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production. This is especially so in regard to the fluid and dynamic nature of the field, a space of social contestation identified by Bourdieu, where the acquisition of various forms of capital often results in the shifting of positions among key players such as fashion editors and more recently, fashion bloggers. Through this lens, this study examines the myriad of correlational factors that contributes to the success of high-profile fashion bloggers. Specifically, the trajectories of the four bloggers selected were mapped out in regard to their sequence of acquisition of social, economic, symbolic and cultural capital. It is important to note that Bourdieu’s (1993b) conceptions, discussions of field must not only consider the forms of capital, but also the habitus of the individual. As it is the
habitus of the individual that results in unique personal expression, it will be discussed in tandem with the expression of performativity and the quirky, which are subjective sensibilities emerging within the metamodern paradigm. Finally, the research finds out if metamodern expression coupled with digital influence signals the emergence of a new form of capital known as digital capital, which this paper argues is central to the success of the superstar fashion blogger. This is in reference to Bourdieu’s (1993a) proposition that each cultural field may also contain operative forms of capital that are specific to it. The primary methods of interviews, and content analysis was used for data collection, while direct observation at a fashion week event provided contextual information on the eco-system that is the Australian fashion industry.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Fashion as Cultural Production

While fashion is commonly perceived as the production of clothing, Kawamura (2005) makes a distinction between clothing as the physical garment and fashion as the beliefs manifested through the clothing. An examination of the fashion industry supports the view of fashion as an institutionalised system consisting of overlapping fields involved in the production, distribution and consumption of fashion. In addition to fashion designers, the broader field of fashion can be said to include players such as artisans, manufacturers, stylists, make-up artists, models, celebrities, publicists, buyers, retailers, editors, and fashion students (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006). In more recent times, this list has expanded to include fashion bloggers and other social media influencers (Bradford, 2014). Thus, drawing on Bourdieu’s (1993b) field of cultural production as a theoretical framework, the fashion ecosystem may be viewed as a site of struggles, where players within it vie for dominance in influencing the adoption of trends to forward their economic agenda. Regarding fashion as a market of symbolic goods further brings into sharp focus the importance of the generation of cultural value in fashion objects. Such cultural recognition is often achieved through the agents and institutions of consecration that act as cultural intermediaries in the differentiation of a given fashion artefact in terms of its level of desirability. For example, whether or not a particular handbag is regarded as desirable by potential consumers very much depends on the value and exposure given to it in terms of editorial coverage or validation through adoption by key celebrities. This fluid nature of symbolic value is one of the hallmarks of an aesthetic economy (Aspers, 2006), which is reflected in the fashion industry. Hence, while not all players are directly involved in the production of clothing, it is important to acknowledge that there a myriad of players engaged in the diffusion of aesthetics to target audiences, mediating both artistic and commercial interests (Kawamura, 2005). Fashion magazines in particular were traditionally the vehicle for the perpetuation and diffusion of brand narratives in the form of editorial content and advertising (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2010).
The perception of the media as the site of spectacles where ideals are normalised in the interest of capitalism (Schirato & Webb, 2004), is applicable to fashion magazines that play a pivotal role in the generation of value in an aesthetic economy. The narrative trajectories of brands often play up a certain aspirational lifestyle or identity (Bruce & Kratz, 2007). From the eighteenth century, which coincides with the modern era, fashion magazines played a gatekeeping role that resulted in the top-down diffusion of fashion tastes to the wider public (Miller 2013). However, Kawamura (2006) found that since the mid-1990s, which coincides with the tail end of postmodernism, Japanese subculture and street fashion was having a trickle up effect on fashion design in Japan. This is now further facilitated by the prevalence of social media use, where the participation of social media users in the diffusion of fashion trends has had a significant impact on fashion’s ecology of influence (Kontu et al., 2013). Thus, it is the diffusion of fashion that is of key interest in this study.

2.2 Fashion Journalism as a Cultural Field

Fashion communication is an area that has only just gained some traction as a legitimate subject of academic inquiry (Kawamura, 2005). Literature on fashion media practice is frequently viewed in the context of the wider field of fashion due to its integral role in the diffusion of fashion to a mass audience (Barthes, 1983; Bourdieu, 1993a). In his chapter Haute Couture and Haute Culture, Bourdieu (1993a) posited that the fashion media played a crucial role in the creation of meaning, especially in the affordance of status and legitimacy to fashion artefacts, in a process he called transubstantiation. Whether or not a fashion object is deemed covetable depends on the symbolic production of its status and value conferred by institutions of diffusion or consecration, such as a designer’s branding department, or more importantly the fashion media. Indeed, Kawamura (2005) explicitly made a distinction between fashion as a socially constructed ideal and clothing as the material manifestation of that ideal, arguing that fashion is a collective activity, which involves input from various players in the field. This positions the institution of fashion communication as “a pillar of support” to the fashion industry because it is the bridge between fashion designers
and the end consumers of their products (McRobbie, 1998, p. 151). This indicates that the fashion media, which conflates the fields of fashion aesthetics and journalism, is a field of cultural production in its own right (Bourdieu, 1993a; McRobbie, 1998; Rocamora, 2002; Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006). Therefore, the field of fashion journalism is a fitting microcosm for examining how bloggers have tapped into the communicative potential of digital platforms to not only enter the field, but also occupy positions of dominance in a notoriously exclusive field.

Bourdieu’s (1983) theory of the field of cultural production will be used as a theoretical framework for three main reasons. Firstly, it boasts what Bourdieu (1993a, p. 132) called a “structural homology”, which refers to the applicability of this theory across various fields of cultural production including art, music and literature. Secondly, such a sociological perspective does not privilege the individual over societal structures or vice versa, but looks at both at the same time (McIntyre, 2006). This is pertinent because it acknowledges that cultural products do not gain significance in a vacuum, but with recognition from the field. Thirdly, in Haute Couture and Haute Culture, Bourdieu (1993a) applied his theory of cultural production to fashion and found that it afforded insights into the constant struggle for dominance, whereby the changes in distribution of capital could cause transformation within a field.

In an ethnographic study of a series of London Fashion Week events, Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) examined the relational positions of agents in the field, where designers, models, journalists, buyers, stylists and celebrities were identified as key agents, with less important figures like fashion students existing in the periphery of the field. Indeed, prior to the phenomenon of niche fashion blogging, fashion magazine writers and editors were esteemed as the formal authorities of the industry, making them the elites in the traditional hierarchies of fashion communication (Kawamura, 2005). Along with the introduction of fashion bloggers into these hierarchies of fashion journalism, is the adoption of new practices that are of interest to this research. According to Maton (2008), practice is the result of a simultaneous interplay between habitus, capital and field. Habitus refers to the individual’s dispositions and attitudes,
whereas the field refers to the social boundaries that the individual works within. The position that an individual occupies in the field depends on their access to resources in the form of capital, which are fundamentally economic, social and cultural in nature (Bourdieu, 1986). In Bourdieu’s (1993b) later work, the importance of prestige of recognition within a cultural field was further represented with the notion of symbolic capital. In the field of fashion journalism, an editor of a high-profile fashion magazine such as Anna Wintour of American Vogue is perceived to possess high cultural, economic, symbolic and social capital, whereas fashion students who are low in all forms of capital are said to exist at the margins of the field (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006).

Of particular interest in this study is how amateur fashion enthusiasts, who often start blogging from the comfort of their bedrooms, have managed to appeal to an international audience comprised of fashion consumers, thereby attracting the attention of the fashion industry in the process. For example, Bryan Grey Yamboao, also known as Bryanboy, is a blogger from the Philippines who gained the attention of key fashion insiders when he posted a YouTube video dedicated to designer Marc Jacobs’ green ostrich bag in 2008. Jacobs responded by naming the same bag after Bryanboy, signalling the start of Bryanboy’s acceptance into the exclusive field of fashion (Sauers, 2012). Following this, Bryanboy was invited to sit in the front rows of Marc Jacobs’ and Dolce & Gabbana’s fashion shows, where he blogged in real time releasing information and images taken from his prime seat, demonstrating the immediacy of digital technology as compared to publications operating on a print schedule where images are typically published two months after the event. The fact that Bryanboy’s website can attract up to 215 000 unique visitors in a day as opposed to the 200 000 copies of Vogue sold each month is a further indication of how fashion bloggers are now indispensible to the marketing strategies of fashion designers due to their targeted reach (Copping, 2009). In 2012, Bryanboy elevated his status by becoming a permanent judge on the television show America’s Next Top Model replacing industry veterans in a bid by producers to spur interest online to boost the show’s ratings (Krupnick, 2012).
In addition to Bryanboy, other fashion bloggers like Scott Schuman, Garance Dore, Susanna Lau, Nicole Warne, Chiara Ferragni and Tommy Ton have become regular fixtures in the front rows of major Fashion Week shows in Paris, Milan, London and New York. This is significant as the front row is traditionally reserved for the fashion elites in the institutions of diffusion and consecration – chiefly editors of fashion magazines – and has come to symbolise a physical position of prestige within the fashion industry. In Australia, the exponential growth of fashion blogging as spawned collective networks such as FELLT by digital publisher Sydney Stockholm. This network includes Zanita Morgan of Zanita, Sara Donaldson of Harper & Harley, Patty Huntington of Frockwriter, Sonny Vendeevelde of Sonny Photos, Mitchell Oakley-Smith of Mr Oakley Smith, and sisters Mira and Thilda of We Are 365. Larger talent and events management agencies such as IMG have also moved to capitalise on digital influencers in fashion such as Nicole Warne of Gary Pepper Girl and Margaret Zhang of Shine by Three. Of importance to this study is how the above-mentioned bloggers have created a feedback loop in the discourse of fashion through their niche commentary, resulting in a trickle-up flow of fashion trends and aesthetics (Stefanic, 2010). More significantly, these bloggers’ facilitation of fashion discourse has resulted in influence on a global scale, which in turn has opened the doors to economically lucrative opportunities. This is in tandem with the migration of advertising expenditure towards digital marketing, which has prompted print publications to establish a presence online (Kansara 2009). Therefore, using Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production as a theoretical framework, this study seeks to find out if digital technologies have a significant impact on the dynamics of the field by examining various agents’ trajectories to prominence. More pertinently, the research investigates whether the notion of a digital capital rooted in metamodern modes of expression is a feasible and observable conception. Such an examination first begins with an understanding of the habitus.
2.2.1 Habitus

Bourdieu (1990, p. 66) succinctly referred to habitus as a “feel for the game”, denoting the dispositions and attitudes of the individual that generates thought and behaviour in relation to the field. Habit is therefore formally defined as:

a ‘feel for the game’, a ‘practical sense’ (*sens pratique*) that inclines agents to act and react in specific situations in a manner that is not always calculated and that is not simply a question of conscious obedience to rules. Rather it is a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions. (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 5)

Essentially, the habitus can be regarded as internal structures that have been ingrained since early childhood, which influence the subjective inclinations of the individual. Bourdieu (1977, p.72) termed it “…structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” indicating the complex nature of the individual’s habitus, that results in embodiment and expression through practice. That is, habitus represents a (conscious of subconscious) framework that compels an individual to take certain course of action of make certain decisions based on pre-existing dispositions. It is important to note that the habitus does not definitively predict the choices of an individual, but rather provides an indication of the likelihood of them taking certain courses of action. Indeed, an individual’s family provides an early social structure, which also shapes an individual’s interests tendencies from childhood (Tomanovic, 2004).

The habitus is said to be durable in that it stays with the individual throughout their lifetime and transposable in that it may be expressed across various social fields (Bourdieu, 1977). In regard to the durability of the habitus, this study looks at instances of performative inclinations throughout the blogger’s history. This includes instances of exhibitionism or a past history of being comfortable expressing themselves in front of an audience. In regard to the transposability of the habitus, this study also considered whether the blogger has been featured on a platform other than
their blogs, such as print, radio or television. The reflexive nature of the habitus means that new entrants have the opportunity to disrupt the status quo by instating new practices, causing change within the field (Maton, 2008). It is this potential for change in social dynamics within a field that is of special interest to this study. More specifically, this study examines how individuals with limited prior affiliation to the field of fashion have harnessed digital communication to stake a claim in the field of fashion journalism. These individuals include Susanna Lau (UK) and Bryanboy (Philippines), who were among the first bloggers to be invited to fashion shows, which is a phenomenon observed since 2009.

The practice of blogging poses an interesting conundrum because, as Hawkins (2011) found, communication through blogs is at once one-to-one and one-to-many. This study also takes into account that while there are over thousands of fashion and style blogs on the Internet (Technorati Media, 2013), only a miniscule percentage of bloggers actually become known in the industry and to the wider audience of online fashion-followers. This study specifically looks at the successful fashion blogger’s habitus and the traits they possess that make them effective communicators when engaging with their readers. Since recent discourse indicates that metamodernism is an emergent structure of feeling in the cultural industries (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010), this research investigates if the strategies of performativity and the quirky manifest in the practice of fashion blogging through the blogger’s habitus. If so, this study seeks to find out if the expression of these metamodern traits on digital platforms have significantly contributed to the successful fashion blogger’s rise to prominence in the field of fashion journalism.
2.2.2. The Field

2.2.2a Fashion Communication

The field reflects the social structures or hierarchies constituting the relational positions that agents can occupy depending on the type and amount of capital they possess (Thompson, 1991). Thus, according to Bourdieu:

> a field is a field of forces within which the agents occupy positions that statistically determine the position they take with respect to the field, these position-takings being aimed either at conserving or transforming the structure of relations of forces that is constitutive of the field. (2005, p.30)

Essentially, occupants in dominant positions seek to maintain the status quo so that they remain in those positions, whereas new entrants to the field seek to disrupt and transform the field so that they, in turn, move into positions of dominance. The structure of the field reflects its current state of power relations among its occupants, and is a result of previous struggles that occurred within the field (Bourdieu, 1993a). Bourdieu (1983) also proffered that the field of cultural production was the field of economics reversed, as not all the indicators of esteem and prestige were necessarily monetary in nature. Therefore, in the field of cultural production, transubstantiated types of capital such as social and cultural capital are especially salient, because they can lead to the acquisition of more capital in various forms.

In addition to the possession of capital, individual dispositions and attitudes in the form of habitus also play a key role in the social trajectory of the individual within the field. The field can thus be viewed as a social arena where social structures shape individuals, who in turn reproduce these structures. For instance, magazine editors have traditionally had exclusive access to the latest in fashion designs, making them the traditional gatekeepers in the trickle-down diffusion of fashion aesthetics (Kawamura, 2005). Public relations (PR) practitioners also play a critical role in the dissemination of fashion information to gatekeepers that influence the uptake of
trends (Cassidy & Fitch, 2013). The adoption of social media platforms by fashion PR practitioners to directly engage consumers has also impacted the dynamics of the field, as they too are able to build trust and meaningful relationships with their publics without constant mediation by the traditional media (Cassidy & Fitch, 2012). Indeed, the global fashion field has been structured to allow the timed release of the latest season’s trends than enables fashion magazines to benefit by being the first to deliver these trends to the general public (Arthur, 2012). This system has been disrupted by the bloggers who post updates on fashion shows in real time, as well as the decision by fashion designers to live-stream their fashion shows online as part of their digital marketing strategy (Mackay, 2010). The importance of bloggers in the fashion industry at present reaffirms the notion that the field is dynamic and that participants’ positions in the field can change over time depending on a variety of factors; in this case, the introduction of new entrants and new technologies impacting the distribution of capital. The rise of celebrities and stylists to promote fashion has also come to the fore with the mass adoption of image-heavy social media sites like Instagram and Pinterest (Schneier, 2014), but as they are not directly part of fashion journalism, they fall out of the scope of this study.

2.2.2b The Changing Fashion Audience

According to Aspers (2006), an aesthetic economy is one where creative aesthetic works have a central role. The values of cultural products fluctuate in such economies, where value is often conferred through commercial influences and presiding market tastes (White, 2002; Enwistle, 2006), which indicates that the opinion of consumers, or indeed audiences, should not be overlooked. This is especially pertinent in light of consumer power in the digital age, where consumer sentiment towards a brand or product is highly visible through reviews or blog features, which may potentially influence other consumers’ purchasing choices (Labrecque et al., 2013). Where the media used to be regarded as cultural intermediaries in the diffusion of tastes, digital audiences have gained a voice in the public consumption and evaluation of fashion (McQuarrie, Miller & Phillips, 2013). The dynamic role that fashion consumers play in
the field suggests that Sawyer’s (2012) conception of the nested audience is highly relevant to the notion of the digital audience. According to Sawyer (2012, p. 218), audiences can be categorised according to their level of expertise in a particular subject, namely the public, amateurs, connoisseurs, and intermediaries. At the outer edge of Sawyer’s (2012) concentric model lies the general public, which is often viewed as a collective mass that consumes the cultural artefacts without any influence on what is recognised, distributed or valued. Closer to the centre, amateurs refer to the wider public who may engage with or have an appreciation for a creative activity but whose work is not perceived as cutting edge or at the level of a professional. Connoisseurs refer to an inner circle of audience members who have specialist knowledge of a domain almost on par with the official intermediaries of the field, though with not as much power to influence the consumption decisions of others. Intermediaries, on the other hand, refer to knowledgeable field experts whose tastes have the potential to diffuse outwards and influence other audiences who wield less power in the field. While Sawyer (2012) made a distinction between intermediaries and the different types of audiences, current literature suggests that these demarcations are blurred in the digital context as audiences too are now empowered to become opinion leaders. Indeed, this blurring of lines between producers, distributors and consumers was conceptualised as produsage by Bruns (2007a). The entrenchment of the fashion blogger in the fashion communication process indicates a transcendence of the audience from the role of mere interpreter to empowered brand storytellers (Crewe, 2013). This study argues that this constant and dynamic shifting among roles reflects the oscillatory sensibility of metamodernism.

2.2.3. The Forms of Capital

Bourdieu (1986, p. 241) posited that capital was “accumulated, human labour” manifested in objectified or embodied states that could be appropriated to produce different forms of profits. As the field is not static, an individual’s position within it can change based on the accumulation of various forms of capital. Such changes in turn have the potential to transform the field, prompting Bourdieu (1986, p. 241) to posit
that capital “is what makes the games of society”. Capital may present itself in three fundamental forms that are economic, social and cultural in nature (Bourdieu, 1986). In a separate work, Bourdieu (1993b) further outlined the importance of symbolic capital within a cultural field, which pertains to individuals who occupy positions of prestige and, as a result, play a significant role in process of consecration, where value of an artist’s work is generated.

In the field of fashion, these forms of capital are apparent through having access to events by knowing the right contacts and connections (i.e. social capital), and being regarded as competent in the field through the embodiment of knowledge and confidence in the interaction with other key players (i.e. cultural capital). In addition, whether or not an individual has the economic capital to afford purchasing and wearing the clothes of the designers can also be indicative of their position in the field (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006). Fashion writers and editors are traditionally perceived to possess the symbolic capital that recognises their distinguished positions as the authoritative elites in the world of fashion, whereas consumers of fashion magazines comprised the non-elite mass waiting to be informed of the latest trends (Kawamura, 2005). The widespread adoption of digital technologies in the developed world has empowered audiences through the facilitation of participation (Albrechtslund, 2013).

In light of the consensus that field-specific forms of capital exist (Bourdieu, 1993a; Entwistle & Rocamora, 20061), this study proceeds to synthesise a conception of digital capital based on the examination of fashion-bloggers’ practices in alignment with the growing relevance of metamodernism. Contextually, this research looks at the notion of digital capital in the diffusion of tastes and the generation of commercial success in an aesthetic economy like fashion.

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1 Note that Entwistle & Rocamora (2006) suggest a field-specific capital called fashion capital representing the embodiments and competencies necessary for one to be recognised as an accepted
2.2.3a Economic Capital

Economic capital denotes the monetary wealth that is indicative of social status, and encompasses capitalist ventures oriented towards the self-interested maximisation of profits (Bourdieu, 1986). Fashion journalism is a niche area of journalism that is powered by advertising revenue, and is thus subject to the influence of advertisers even in the editorial copy (McRobbie, 1998). Moreover, the way fashion weeks often present clothing one season in advance to coincide with the print schedule of fashion magazines was devised to generate interest to promote consumption. Indeed, fashion weeks are sometimes accompanied by industry trade fairs to facilitate fashion buying on a large for boutiques and department stores on a global scale (Skov, 2006). While fashion magazines were a key force in the promotion of fashion consumption, the emergence of digital technologies have also led to the prevalence of e-commerce, which has seen the migration of advertising expenditure away from print towards online platforms (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2014). This is congruent to the consumption habits of consumers that has resulted in the global online retail industry to be valued at $1.5 trillion dollars (Dimri & Pandey, 2015).

Economic capital is an important variable for consideration in this study given that successful fashion bloggers have found a way to monetise their online identities by usurping advertising and marketing budgets that would have traditionally been allocated to fashion magazines. For instance, Elle Ferguson of Sydney Fashion Blog charges AU$850 per sponsored Instagram post (Australian Women’s Weekly, March 2014). An interview with Susanna Lau revealed that her revenue stream was constituted of 25% advertising, 10% freelance writing, and the rest of her income came from collaborative projects with designers where she was engaged to incorporate her unique aesthetic and point of view (Kansara, 2011). This suggests that fashion blogging is a lucrative avenue for the creation of business opportunities such as tailored sponsorship and public appearances, which were not previously available to amateur content creators. Indeed, the rise of blogs as platforms for word-of-mouth influence has attracted monetary investment from brand marketers to evaluate, explain, embrace or endorse a product (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki & Wilne, 2010), and can be
viewed as a new form of entrepreneurship. In addition to the exchange of money, this research also considers the exchange of valuable luxury goods in the transactional relationship between the blogger and the sponsoring brand. While endorsements stemming from free gifts need to be disclosed in the US, UK and Australia, it is still up to the blogger’s discretion to disclose such occurrences (Huntington, 2014). In this study, such commercial exchanges of high value products in exchange for coverage will be viewed in regard to economic capital. While economic capital is important in cultural production, Bourdieu (1986) argued that the social world – in this case the social institution of fashion – cannot simply be reduced to a series of mercantile exchanges. It is necessary to acknowledge the importance of other forms of capital such as cultural, social and symbolic capital especially in a field of cultural production. Pertinently, Bourdieu’s (1993b) conceptions of the field of cultural production tend to position individuals who possess economic capital inversely to individuals who possess cultural capital. Thus, this study attempts to find out if it is possible to possess both forms of capital in high amounts, and if so, would the possession of both these traditionally opposed forms of capital reflect a metamodern tension. Specifically, the content analysis of blogs and interviews will assess how commercial interests are balanced with honest displays of tastes to ensure that what is presented to the audience is authentic and engaging.

2.2.3b Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is defined as a range of tangible or intangible assets reflecting a person’s knowledge, competences and dispositions that may be used to further their position within the field. While cultural capital is fundamentally viewed as a disinterested form of capital, wherein its possession is not driven by monetary pursuits but a dedication towards accruing skills and knowledge, Bourdieu (1993b) clarifies that cultural capital has to potential to be converted to economic capital. Threadgold and Nilan (2009) posited that cultural capital flows from habitus in that the habitus is made up of a confluence of external factors including family background, peers, geography, social class, gender race and education, as well as internal structures such as tastes,
and dispositions. An individual’s habitus thus influences the type of and amount of cultural capital they are likely to possess. According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital can be identified in embodied or objectified states. Cultural capital in the embodied state is a form of symbolic capital as it pertains to the perception of legitimate competence within a field, and has less to do with economic self-interest. Thus, cultural capital in the embodied state refers to the process of cultivation and incorporation that the individual personally takes the time to undergo. It is the result of the time period, social class and society that unconsciously shapes the individual’s tastes and dispositions, which Bourdieu (1986) likens to the habitus. In the fashion communication context, embodied cultural capital may be taken to mean an up-to-date knowledge of trends and designer’s styles, and an ability to communicate effectively and confidently on the latest in fashion. Embodied cultural capital may also be taken to mean a level of confidence in how to behave at key social engagements. For instance, Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) examined the enactment of the “air kiss” during their observation of London Fashion Week and how this performative gesture served as a visible indication of one’s inclusion within the field. Indeed, Entwistle & Rocamora (2006) referred to such enactments of a fashion identity in the context of the individual’s social position within the field as being reflective of a field-specific fashion capital.

On the other hand, cultural capital in the objectified state refers to the possession of tangible tools, instruments and products that indicate an individual’s involvement in or appreciation of cultural products. In the context of this study, this refers to the possession of tools such as cameras and mobile devices that allow bloggers to post Tweets, Facebook posts and Instagram images or blog posts in real time from an event or showroom. Objectified cultural capital may also be taken to mean the latest clothing and accessories featured or modelled by the fashion bloggers understudy. This is important because objects play a large part in the storytelling on fashion blogs (Kretz & de Valck, 2010). A fashion blogger’s objectified cultural capital further reflects their tastes and aesthetics, which leads to the opportunity for recognition from the industry and in turn, the acquisition of symbolic capital. However, it is important to be aware
that some of the products featured may have been gifted to the blogger though it might not have been explicitly indicated (Duffy, 2015). Objectified cultural capital may further take the form of institutionalised qualifications confirming that an individual has undergone pedagogic inculcation in cultivating an awareness of the rules and conventions specific to a particular field (Bourdieu, 1986). Notably, there is also a provision for the acquisition of knowledge and skills associated with cultural capital on an informal basis. Known as autodidacticism, Featherstone (1990, p.11) proffers that it is driven by consumer culture, where certain groups of consumers “adopt a learning mode toward consumption and the cultivation of a lifestyle”. While Bourdieu (1984, p.16) argued that the “illegitimate extra-curricular culture of the autodidact” would not hold up to questioning and scrutiny by members of prestige within a given cultural field, a preliminary examination of the existing careers of the fashion bloggers understudy indicate a growing legitimation of bloggers within the field of fashion. Thus this study seeks to uncover instances of symbolic capital that reflects a recognition by the fashion industry of the bloggers’ cultural capital.

2.2.3c Social Capital

Social capital is defined as “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). In this regard, social capital is made up of social connections that often take the form of membership in a group that lends an individual credential, entitling them access to resources that may not be available to people outside of their particular social network. This may be institutionalised in the form of title or nobility and may also be conferred through family connections. Social capital could also refer to exclusive social groups in general, such as clubs (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital is especially pertinent in the notion of networks as it serves a dual purpose of reinforcing relationships between established players in an industry allowing the network to reproduce itself, as well as presents opportunities for new entrants to find niches to occupy within the network (Walker, Kogut & Shan, 1997). While each member of the
group plays a role as a guardian charged with preserving the status quo of the group, new entrants have the ability to redefine the limits of the group, thereby potentially disrupting the social dynamics within it (Bourdieu, 1983).

In the field of fashion journalism, the established players entrenched in the institutional hierarchies include magazine editors, publicists, stylists, celebrities and buyers. Magazine editors were almost always guaranteed a seat at Fashion Week, due to their position as gatekeepers of information (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006). Fashion bloggers, on the other hand, appear to have made a concerted effort to initiate and maintain relationships with key players such as designers and public relations practitioners, thereby facilitating their entry to key fashion events and access to the latest fashion news. This can be seen in the case of Bryanboy, a blogger from the Philippines, whose close relationship with designers Dolce & Gabbana resulted in him being one of the first bloggers to be given a front row seat at a fashion show. Inkpen and Tsang (2005) further noted that social capital aided in the diffusion of knowledge among members of a network. This suggests that there is potential for social connections to lead to the accumulation of cultural capital in the form of knowledge.

While Bourdieu indicated that social capital is disinterested, or free from commercial interests, it is important to note that social connections can be utilised to create opportunities that lead to economic capital as social connections can be used to request favours or preference that could lead to monetary profit (Bourdieu, 1986). Hence, the content analysis in this research will be devised to record revelations of the bloggers social life documented on their blogs, especially their interactions with designers that reflect an ongoing partnership in terms of the regularity of features. In addition to the members of the field of fashion, fashion bloggers also engage another crucial group of people, namely fashion consumers. However, while interactivity is often cited as a hallmark of digital communication, Thorson and Rodgers (2006) posited that interactivity online tends to be of a perceptual nature where interaction is often not a two-way mutual experience. Instead, interactivity online is of a parasocial nature (Thorson & Rodgers, 2006), which means the engagement that bloggers achieve with their readers cannot be regarded as social capital. This further reinforces
the feasibility of the notion of digital capital, which will be explored throughout this thesis.

2.2.3d Symbolic Capital

Symbolic capital is a capital of consecration that enables an individual to confer value to persons or objects, and subsequently partake in the profits that comes with the generation of value (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 75). Symbolic capital is especially pertinent to the field of fashion because it represents the embodiment of an individual’s level of prestige and authority in the field. As Bourdieu further explained:

‘Symbolic capital’ is to be understood as economic or political capital that is disavowed, misrecognised and thereby recognised, hence legitimate, a ‘credit’ which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees ‘economic’ profits. (Bourdieu, 1993b, p.75)

Individuals’ who are deemed to possess symbolic capital are hence known as “symbolic bankers”, where their role in the production of value hinges on the investment of their own reputation to defend and support the artist or work they endorse (Bourdieu, 1993b, p.75). While symbolic capital, is readily converted into economic capital, such endorsements must be guided by a disinterested attitude in order of the work to be recognised by the rest of the field as legitimate. As Jarvinen and Gundelach (2007) pointed out, symbolic capital is essentially an explicit or practical recognition of an individual’s economic, social or cultural capital by other members of the field who also possess symbolic capital and thereby wield authority in the field. This is reflected in the importance of peer acknowledgement and social visibility in Entwistle and Rocamora’s (2011) study of London Fashion Week. In the spectacle of Fashion Week, this may translate into being allocated the coveted front-row seats, where individuals are highly visible and likely to be noticed by fashion media. Drawing on Max Weber’s exposition on religion, Bourdieu (2000) posited that symbolic capital manifested in the form of admiration, fame, invitations and visibility, leading to a “consecrated social identity”
This idea is supported by Entwistle and Rocamora (2011), who found that symbolic capital facilitated the performance of roles by an individual to other members in the fashion industry. Indeed, Bourdieu (2000) described the expression of symbolic capital as a ‘performative act’ (p. 242), in which the individual’s ‘social fiction’ (p. 243) is embodied and presented to the field. This link between the enacting of symbolic capital as one that is performative in nature is highly significant to this study. Indeed, dynamic tension between the expression and impression outlined by Goffman (1971) in the performance of self comes to mind in the display of symbolic capital.

Symbolic capital is especially important in the field of fashion because an aesthetic economy also very much depends on the consecration of artefacts (Bourdieu 1993). Given that fluctuating values are a hallmark of an aesthetic economy, the impetus for consumption depends on the affordance of desirability through key cultural intermediaries. As Entwistle (2009) highlighted, the aesthetic economy encapsulates the convergence of culture and economy, where cultural artefacts may be assigned monetary value determined by the interplay of activities among key players in the field. In fashion, fashion magazines were long regarded as the intermediaries for the diffusion of taste (Kawamura, 2005). In addition to being well positioned to reach a mass audience, these editors’ and journalists’ immersion in fashion critique also means that they have acquired the necessary knowledge or cultural capital to make value judgements on trends and fashion artefacts, thereby making them key cultural intermediaries. While these informed value judgements feed into the resultant editorial content consumed by readers of magazines, it is important to note that content in fashion publishing is subject to the demands of advertisers too (McRobbie, 1998). Readers of fashion magazines are aware of commercial interests, which has resulted in a growing inclination to treat content in fashion magazines with cynicism, while fashion blogs are deemed to be real and relatable (Marwick, 2013). Thus, this study investigates if the promise of authenticity on blogs has become a new frontier for fashion critique. However, the growing readerships of fashion blogs based on their perceived authenticity should also be considered in tandem with the increasing
commercialisation of the blogosphere, which this study seeks to rationalise though metamodernist sensibilities.

2.2.3e Digital Capital as an Emergent Capital

The term digital capital precedes this study but has largely been discussed within the context of e-commerce and the digital economy. In their seminal work, Tapscott, Ticoll and Lowy (2000) described digital capital as comprising of three intertwining types of knowledge assets, namely human capital, customer capital, structural capital. Specifically, Tapscott, Ticoll and Lowy (2000) refer to the confluence of knowledge, customer networks and the built-in value of what a business has to offer as being at the core of successful businesses online. However, Tapscott, Ticoll and Lowy (2000) appear to use the term “capital” to denote assets in mercantile exchanges and makes no reference to the broader Bourdieuan context. This study adopts the term in a broader cultural sense and argues that digital capital, as a socio-cultural asset, is an appropriate term to underpin the large-scale engagement that fashion bloggers achieve. This study perceives digital capital as a disinterested form of capital pertaining to influence in the digital sphere that may be transubstantiated into economic capital. Redefining digital capital as a disinterested form of capital is a significant departure from Tapscott, Ticoll and Lowy’s (2000) definition of the term as this research argues that digital capital does not begin with economic self-interest, but rather with self-expression.

Central to this synthesis between digital capital and metamodernism is the way a rhizomatic model of information sharing is privileged over linearity in digital communication (Rocamora, 2012). This is indicative of an emergent capital specific to the field of fashion journalism brought about by the advent of digital communication that cannot be adequately and precisely represented by the fundamental forms of capital (i.e. social, cultural and economic). This is in line with Bourdieu’s (1993a, p. 73) view that each field may include specific forms of capital that are integral to the social dynamics of that particular field. A review of the digital communication literature
suggests that the communicative capabilities afforded by the Internet may be harnessed to propel individual bloggers with no prior affiliation to the field into positions of dominance in fashion communication. As argued by Bruns (2008), the entrenchment of digital communication in daily life has resulted in changing relationships between producers and consumers of editorial content. Instead of viewing the roles of producer and consumer as disparate, Internet users now shift between the roles of producing, consuming and distributing content in a phenomenon called *produsage*. While documenting and sharing information is not a new phenomenon, Deuze (2006) proffered that the vast connectivity of the Internet has allowed for an amplification of participation, remediation and bricolage by the audience beyond what was previously possible with mass media. Even though interaction online tends largely to be parasocial (Thorson & Rodgers, 2006), the successful engagement of a global audience by elite fashion bloggers is an undeniable phenomenon. Pedersen (2011) noted that in the age of the Internet, no content is truly original due to the vast amounts of information readily available to anyone with access to the Internet to reappropriate. While the act of reappropriation in cultural production is not new (Habermas & Ben-Habib, 1981), this practice seems to be exacerbated by digital capabilities. Warnick (2004) goes so far as to call the Internet an authorless environment where only the quality of content, and not the identity of the author, matters. Because of this, bloggers now straddle the roles of being ardent media consumers and credible content disseminators (Bruns, 2008).

This role of creator/disseminator has allowed fashion and style bloggers to capitalise on the platforms available on the Internet, establishing personal brands and attracting the attention of fashion designers and retailers (Cassidy & Fitch, 2012). The hypertextual nature of the Internet has enabled bloggers to post direct hyperlinks to products online resulting in purchases, making them important intermediaries between consumers and fashion companies (Rocamora, 2012). This is especially evident in the way bloggers have been engaged to produce editorial content for designers. For example, Scott Schuman of the blog *The Sartorialist* was engaged by Burberry to photograph their Art of the Trench campaign, which he subsequently
featured on his blog and garnered praise and acclaim within the fashion industry for (Amed, 2011). This collaboration included complete creative freedom for Schuman to photograph and select the images that would front the campaign and, more importantly, resulted in economic returns for Schuman, demonstrating his astute approach towards capitalising on a digital fan base.

Further, the adoption of digital platforms by traditional luxury fashion houses like Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci, and Christian Dior as part of their digital marketing strategies means that these designers can now reach their target audience directly. For example, at the 2011 London Fashion Week, Burberry launched the Tweetwalk, where looks and outfits were shared on Twitter moments before the models walked the runway in those outfits, prioritising consumers over the editors who were physically present at the show. This is in line with the realization that a majority of Burberry’s customers are inclined to purchase products online, prompting Burberry to allocate 60% of their marketing budget in 2011 to social media marketing (O’Reilly, 2011). In February 2013, Conde Nast, the publishers of Vogue, hosted a Fashion Hackathon that brought together teams of web developers, web designers, entrepreneurs and venture capitalists to build mobile applications that would address current issues in the fashion and retail industry (Decoded Fashion, 2013). Further, during the 2013 New York Fashion Week, it was noted that bloggers and designers relied heavily on Instagram to share live updates through images, and that the images were often accompanied by mentions of sponsors in the caption text (Amed, 2013). Holiday (2013) refers to the practice of leveraging on bloggers influence and the reach of social media as ‘growth hacking’. In addition to being a vehicle for digital marketing, social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Pinterest allow for the presentation of a cohesive persona that is wide-reaching, leading to the perpetuation of the blogger’s personal brand in the digital sphere. Fashion bloggers appear to be aware of the importance of online networks, with link-backs boosting search engine results, which could attract more readers to their blogs (Purcell, 2013). The legitimacy afforded by the accumulation of a large readership may in turn be converted to
economic capital, as it allows the bloggers to command higher rates for advertising and product features (Griffith, 2011).

It must be acknowledged that the nature of fashion communication also evolved throughout the course of this study. While the researcher looked specifically at fashion blogs, there was a growing trends towards the rise of personal style Instagrammers that capitalised on their growing following on Instagram to profit or open pathways for collaboration. Thus, while this use of Instagram by fashion bloggers falls outside the scope of the study, it is useful to highlight that social media platforms do serve a purpose in extending the bloggers’ online reach. Indeed, this emphasises the nature of digital communication as one that affords new opportunities in an ever-changing landscape. Hence, this research recognises the emergence of digital capital in regards to the field of fashion journalism, especially with a growing shift in advertising money towards digital platforms, and proposes to investigate how digital capital may be defined in light of new communicative practices. At the individual level, this study investigates the metamodern modes of expression of performativity and the quirky, and whether they are integral to the conception of digital capital.

2.3 Fashion Blogging as a Metamodern Practice

Metamodernism is defined as an emergent cultural sensibility that demonstrates a constant and dynamic oscillation between modern and postmodern sensibilities; between the sincerity, unity and purity of modernism, and the irony, plurality and promiscuity of postmodernism (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010). As Vermeulen and Van Den Akker (2015) further clarify, metamodernism is not a philosophy, movement, aesthetic style nor trope. Instead, it is a structure of feeling that reflects “a sensibility that is widespread enough to be called structural... yet that cannot be reduced to one particular strategy” (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2015). Its conception is especially timely in light of the consensus among cultural theorists who agree that postmodernism has evolved to be replaced by a new cultural paradigm that has not yet been conclusively defined (Alexander, 1995; Hutcheon, 2002; Lee, 2006). Although
cultural theorists have attempted to encapsulate the pervading cultural logic through concepts like network culture (Varnelis, 2007), digimodernism (Kirby, 2009), information culture (Manovich, 2001), and altermodernism (Bourriaud, 2009), these terms are problematic in that they conflate technology with culture, mistaking the new spaces opened up by communication technologies as new forms of culture (Deuze, 2006). These conceptions of culture based solely on Internet technologies tend to be too techno-determinist in nature, disregarding the other aspects of culture that make up the social world as a whole (Calcutt, 1998). Hill (1988) also put forth a similar argument against extreme technological determinism, saying that technology does not shape society nor vice versa; rather, cultural change occurs when technological possibilities align with the pervading ideologies of society. Instead, Alexander (1995) proposed a neo-modern theory, which included rudiments of modernist utopianism and postmodern cynicism. Vermeulen and Van den Akker (2010) suggests a more specific term called metamodernism, which has been adopted by recent studies in the cultural industries such as art (Turner, 2012) and film (MacDowell 2011; Buckland, 2012). Therefore, this study too employs the term “metamodernism” because just as postmodernism is often viewed in continuity with modernism, metamodernism can be said to be an emergent part of the same continuum.

Vermeulen and Van den Akker (2010) situate metamodernism “historically beyond; epistemologically with; and ontologically between the modern and the postmodern”. This means that there is not merely a balance between the two poles of modernism and postmodernism, but rather a dynamic oscillation, much like a pendulum swinging between innumerable states of being. This notion of oscillation is supported by Feldman (2005) who identified intransivity between opposing poles as being the defining characteristic of a metamodernist paradigm. Hence, as metamodernism has bases in both modern and postmodern thought, it is necessary to understand these prior cultural movements, especially in the context of fashion journalism.

The notion of modernity began with the industrialisation of society (Alexander 1995). Indeed, modernism was said to have been the dominant cultural tendency beginning in
the late 19th Century and extending through to the middle of the 20th Century (Schleifer, 2000). According to Carlyle (1837), the defining moment of the modern ages was the French Revolution, of which the printing press played a key role in the dissemination of anti-establishment messages through the mass distribution of books and pamphlets. Beyond the French Revolution, McLuhan (1962) and Eisenstein (1979) saw the printing press as medium that facilitated the exchange of intellectual ideas and cognitive styles. Despite the tendency towards the cross pollination of ideas and the struggle for meaning during the modernist era, the end goal was towards a unification of ideas to shape a hegemonic modern ideology (Mumby, 1997). Thus, according to various social critics, the hallmarks of modernism include singularity (Hansen, 2010), enthusiasm (Wildman, 2006), purity (Sandler, 1980), rationality (Habermas & Ben-Habib, 1981), unity (Hassard, 1994), sincerity (Melzer, 1995) and authenticity (Heynen, 2006). The modernist movement emphasised “high art” and the autonomy of the artist, embodying a sense of economic disinterestedness as proffered by Bourdieu (1986). Fashion communication in this era was very much targeted at the rising bourgeoisie class through fashion journals, which dictated the styles of the time (Rocamora, 2002).

On the other hand, Lyotard (1984, p.66) stated that postmodernism was based on the premise that “consensus has become an outmoded and suspect value”. Emerging in the middle of the 20th Century and declining at the turn of the 21st Century (Hutcheon, 2002), Jameson (1991) posited that postmodernism was a cultural logic that emerged as a result of late capitalism, where the products of art, culture and everyday life became monetised commodities. Using art as an example, Jameson (1991) noted that the commodification of art meant that new artworks had to be easily reproducible and marketable, giving artists the impetus to mix high and low art with little regard for traditional and authentic forms. As such, the postmodern era can be characterised by plurality (Hutcheon, 1986), fragmentation (Lyotard, 1984) ambiguity (Slaterry & Morris, 1999), decentralisation (Ang, 1996), deconstruction (Derrida, 1976), hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1994) intertextuality (Allen, 2000) and a general disdain towards authority (Bybee & Overbeck, 2001). Postmodernism is hence said to be the representative
sensibility in the time of television, film and advertising, where construction of reality was often manipulated for aesthetic or commercial purposes (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). The commerciality of cultural products also translated to the medium of fashion magazines, where publishers have to constantly balance advertising pressures with creating content that is relevant to their audience (Moeran, 2006). Sylvester (2007, p. 553) posited that the glamour associated with the products featured coupled with the glossy pages of magazines created, in Baudrillard’s terms, a “simulacrum of reality” that reinforced the idea that a desirable lifestyle can be attained through consumption. Indeed, just as modernism and postmodernism reflected the preceding eras and their corresponding cultural logics, it is argued that postmodernism no longer adequately represents the current cultural logic. Instead, the increasing fluidity of the digital landscape has facilitated emergent modes of expression that should not be ignored.

If modernism denotes the time period where the printing press was utilised for the promulgation of a unified culture, and postmodernism denotes the time period where mass media was used to drive mass consumption, then a new cultural logic is needed to represent the use of digital communication in the current communication landscape. This is especially so in the digital age where lines of authorship have been blurred, as anybody with access to the Internet can reappropriate content and add to the discourses that occur online. The coining of concepts like remix culture (Hetcher, 2009), digital bricolage (Deuze, 2006), and produsage (Bruns, 2007a) suggests an oscillation among specific roles that used to be clearly demarcated according to the production, consumption and dissemination of fashion content. While this dynamism may occur at the level of practice, it reflects an emergent cultural tendency towards expression on a global scale that is not constrained by the participatory constraints of traditional media. In the field of fashion, this has given individuals with limited prior affiliation to the field an opportunity to stake their claim and rise to positions of dominance by becoming key cultural intermediaries in the diffusion of trends. This study seeks to find out if the practices inherent in digital communication may be adequately examined through the lens of metamodernism and the accompanying
strategies of performativity and the quirky, especially in regard to how fashion narratives are created and shared.

2.3.1. Metamodern Modes of Expression

2.3.1a Performativity

According to Vermeulen and Van den Akker (2010), metamodernism is articulated through the strategy of New Romanticism, which is an updated revival of the Romantic Movement. Essentially, the Romantic Movement was defined by idealism through the expression of pure and unadulterated emotion, and was characterised by the extremes of utopianism and dystopianism (Pinch, 1997). However, instead of a descent into nihilism inherent in the Romantic logic (Clemens, 2003), the dystopian sensibility in New Romanticism refers to the realisation of the impossibility of an idealistic pursuit due to the constraints of daily life, making it a “new” conception rooted in Romanticism (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010). Thus, New Romanticism strives towards self-actualisation through the elevation of the commonplace and mundaneness of everyday life into the realm of the sublime and the ethereal.

This dichotomy between everyday life and transcendence manifests simultaneously through the notion of performativity (Anderson, 2006; Viramontes, 2008). Such an encapsulation of opposing sensibilities within a single concept indicates that performativity is inherently metamodern as it contains a dynamic tension between authenticity and artifice (Albrecht, 2008), and correspondingly modern and postmodern sensibilities. Here, authenticity pertains to the enactment of roles in daily life, while artifice reflects a contrivance in achieving that authenticity. This is illustrated by Nauta’s (2003) exposition on pastoral performativity, where pastors’ enact their authenticity and authority though the performance of ritualistic actions and utterances. Likewise, the contrivance of the performative enactment in turn reinforces the authenticity of the pastor (Nauta, 2003). This underscores the idea that any undertaking with the purpose of enacting an authentic persona in a given context is
inevitably intertwined with artifice – a sentiment echoed by Goffman (1971), who proffered that the interplay between reality and contrivance were central to the representation of the self in daily interactions. Specifically, Goffman (1971) posited that people tend to adopt varying outward personas in different social contexts to negotiate the complexities of the social relations encountered in daily life. Butler (1988) advances this argument saying, it is not just the outward expression or the performance that should be taken in account but the iterative and repetitive acts that lead to the institution of an identity. Using gender as an example, Butler (1988) argued that gender is not a seamless latent identity, but is constructed through performative acts where a gender identity may be both consciously or unconsciously performed and iterated, leading to its naturalisation. Butler’s (1998) conception is especially relevant to this study as it acknowledges the discursive nature of performativity in identity construction, where the embodiment of a person’s history suggests authenticity and while their conscious actions to enact their identity suggests a contrivance or an artifice.

In the context of digital communication, Lenhart (2005) found that the practice of blogging entailed a constant negotiation between the blogger’s aim of authentic self-expression and contrived self-promotion. Indeed, the practice of blogging involved the articulation of personal thoughts in what Pedersen (2011) called “performative narrations”, allowing bloggers to establish an identity that is representative of who they are as individuals. This in turn has led the practice of blogging to be associated with legitimacy and authenticity (Kang, 2010). As Jetto (2010) found, bloggers of the Australian music industry wielded a legitimacy based on editorial autonomy, leading to the impression of authenticity. However, in order to achieve this authenticity, it is likely that bloggers need to perform a role in line with the expectations of the fashion industry, negating this perception of complete autonomy. Drawing on the Australian music industry, O’Hanlon (2006) found that some Australian singers tended to sing with an American accent in order to be viewed as authentic within the pop and rock genres. In the same vein, fashion bloggers need to demonstrate a competence in embodying a sense of style that is acceptable to the fashion industry. This is further
compounded by Finkelstein’s (2010) point that the social world contains embedded assumptions, and it is possible for an individual to invent themselves in line with these assumptions to further their agenda. Indeed, perception of the fashion bloggers’ authenticity appears to be inversely affected by the outward pursuit of commercial opportunities, as blogger’s may then be regarded by readers as selling out (Marwick, 2013). While this might be the case, the studies cited above find that the very notion of authenticity is discursive in nature, where self-expression could be regarded as a construct in accordance with the norms of a genre or context. Therefore, this thesis will regard authenticity as the embodied performance of an identity in line with the expectations of the industry and consumers.

Rocamora (2012) found that information sharing through blogs facilitated the perception of authenticity as the immediacy of presenting mediated material gave the audience the illusion of watching a ‘live’ performance. On the other hand, one of the key criticisms of blogging is the deliberate wilful exaggeration of a persona simulated by the blogger to facilitate their commercial interests (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005; Hawkins, 2011). Similar to the commodification of magazines, advertisers have leveraged on the blogger’s personal brand to reach a targeted audience (Cassidy & Fitch, 2012). This has led to the formation of groups like FELLT, where the same digital publisher manages advertising on five influential Australian fashion blogs. This allows for highly targeted cross-promotion, which is often delivered under the guise of word-of-mouth reviews (Kozinets et al., 2010). In line with its Bourdieuan framework, this thesis views authenticity as being in the same vein as cultural capital, while artifice may be denoted by the presence of commercial interests (i.e. economic capital). This relationship between authenticity and artifice manifests in the performance of an identity that is naturalised and reified by the individual, and simultaneously recognised and reinforced by other players in the field through collaborations and sponsorships. Indeed, this tension can be represented by the notion of a metamodern performativity, which is underpinned by a constant tension between a modern authenticity and a postmodern hyperreality. This dialectic of authenticity and artifice
will be used as a point of investigation to find out if fashion blogging can indeed be defined as a metamodern practice.

2.3.1b The Quirky

In addition to how a persona may be enacted to reflect performativity on fashion blogs, it is also informative to look at how messages are conveyed. Building on the work of Vermeulen and Van den Akker (2010), recent discourse in film has identified the notion of New Sincerity as an expression rooted in metamodernism (MacDowell, 2011). Buckland (2012) described New Sincerity as a sensibility that encompassed a constant oscillation between sincerity and irony, resulting in a tonal quality known as the quirky. Thus, just as performativity emerged out of New Romanticism, this study adopts MacDowell’s (2013) argument New Sincerity is observed through the notion of the quirky. Commenting on emergent sensibilities in film, Buckland (2012) proffered that New Sincerity is not a regression back into idyllic modernist thought, but rather involves an incorporation of postmodern irony and cynicism with a modern purity and naiveté. The oscillating tension between sincerity and irony within a single sensibility results in a tonal quality that MacDowell (2011, p.1) described as “quirky”. Indeed, the term “quirky” has been used to describe the blogs of Tavi Gevinson (Square, 2012) and Susanna Lau (Jacobs, 2012), both of whom have demonstrated an ability to enthrall an audience through the content they produce. Rombes (2005, p. 74) surmised that it is possible to both “evoke a sincere emotional response while at the same time, to create the possibilities for the audience to see through the very mechanisms that elicit response”. Chan (2011) associated such complexity of emotions expressed in New Sincerity with the potential for engagement on a phenomenological level.

Trilling (1972, p. 2) defined sincerity as “a congruence between avowal and feeling”. Essentially, sincerity involves the representation of oneself truly to others without falsification or subterfuge, not as an end, but rather as a means of expression (Erikson, 1995). Such expression reflects an alignment of internal and external states of being (Targoff, 1997), which Melzer (1995) identified as a fundamental human virtue.
According to Hawkins (2011) sincerity can be found in digital communication practices as the confessional nature of blogging could be linked to Foucault’s (1989) hermeneutics of the self, where bloggers engage in a discourse of identity with both themselves and their audience. At the other end of the spectrum, the concept of irony has historically been used to denote an incongruity between literal and intended meanings thereby suggesting pretense (Sperber & Wilson, 1981). Another perspective views irony as echoic mention, which includes utterances that remind listeners of implicit or explicit norms or expectations (Kreuz and Glucksberg, 1989). That is not to say that the notions of pretense or echoic mention are mutually exclusive. Indeed, the postmodern tradition of irony suggests a text may have multiple meanings at both the literal and implied levels (Shugart, 1999). Hutcheon (1992, p. 219) defined irony as a “semantic balancing, as a fence-sitting, bet-hedging middle ground where evasion and complicity sit – not totally comfortable with – commitment and critique”. Thus, postmodern irony is often characterised by subversion, detachment, and scepticism (Hutcheon, 1992). In the context of digital communication, the use of figurative language in the form of irony and sarcasm is pervasive in social media interactions (Yu, 2007; Reyes, Rosso & Buscaldi, 2012). The presence of irony within a text requires an audience that is adept at bridging the disparity between meanings to identify the intended meaning. This way, irony may be used as a rhetorical tool to engage specific audiences in what Booth (1983, p. 729) called an “identification of two minds” between the ironist and the interpreter. In recent journalism studies, a blurring of the lines between news and entertainment through the use of subjectivity, humour and irony as a means of engaging younger audiences has been noted (Deuze, 2005; Feldman, 2007).

Drawing on the work of Gibbs (2000), verbal irony may be identified and characterised in five ways. The use of hyperbole, understatement, rhetorical question, sarcasm and jocularity each contains their own nuance or connotation in the spectrum of ironic expression. These five markers of irony were adopted by Whalen, Pexman, Gill and Nowson (2013) in their assessment of irony on blogs, demonstrating its relevance in an environment like the Internet. Specifically, hyperbole is a device used to overstate
reality (Whalen et al., 2013). This is characterised by a representation of reality that is often exaggerated and largely disproportional in regard to the scale of the statement or claim. Undertstatement may be characterised by the indication of irony through deliberately downplaying or stating far less than is the case (Gibbs, 2000). Rhetorical questions are questions that convey an assertion and often do not require a response. Sarcasm is a tonal quality used to convey intent that is directly contrary to what is said. Lastly, jocularity often reflects a light-hearted and humorous teasing meant to “enhance bonds through the indirect expression of affection and shared laughter” (Gibbs, 2000, p. 8). This way, the use of irony as part of quirky expression can potentially be a strong mode of audience engagement, and will thus be a point of focus in the content analysis.

In Sincerity and Authenticity, Trilling (1972) associated sincerity with the ideals of truth, morality and purity, and virtue. On the other hand, the notion of irony has sometimes been associated with pretense due to the disparity between literal and intended meanings in such expression (Clark & Gerrig, 1984). However, it can be argued that ironic utterances can also serve a function in portraying truths that are often difficult to articulate (Miller, 2010). Such a view of irony acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of ironic expression and supports the idea that ironic expression is part of social interaction and allows the individual an opportunity for self-realization through the personal interpretation of their existence beyond the level of the literal (Kierkegaard, 1966). As previously highlighted, the presence of such a tension where irony and sincerity are simultaneously expressed is encapsulated in the cultural sensibility of New Sincerity, which manifests as the quirky. It is this conception of the quirky that will be a guiding concept for the identification of metamodern expression in the content analysis.

2.4 Chapter Summary

The emergence of metamodern modes of expression in various cultural industries appears to coincide with new avenues of engagement in fashion journalism facilitated
by digital communication. Although the notions of performativity and the quirky are by no means exhaustive, they appear to be the more fully developed conceptions of metamodern modes of expression in the current literature. More importantly, they provide a good starting point in the investigation of whether metamodern tendencies lead to effective engagement of fashion audiences in the digital sphere. An investigation of this nature has to be grounded in a theoretical framework that considers both the individual and the structures that they work within in order for robust and cohesive information to surface. As such, Bourdieu’s (1993b) theory of cultural production provides a lens through which movement within fashion hierarchies as a result of individual inclinations may be rationalised. More pertinently, this study finds out if the introduction of fashion bloggers into the field has led to a remediation of fashion, where digital practices are altering traditional fashion journalism and vice versa.

It is noteworthy that while Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production is not inherently metamodern, a key hallmark of both Bourdieuan and metamodernist ideas is that they focus on the complementarity between dichotomous stances. Metamodernism highlights the complementarity between modern and postmodern sensibilities, while Bourdieu marries the divide between subjectivism and objectivism by looking at both the individual and the structures they work within to elucidate a comprehensive understanding of cultural production. The application of a Bourdieuan framework to the metamodern paradigm, therefore, seems compatible as an aesthetic economy like fashion contains multi-layered narratives promulgated through various key cultural intermediaries involved in the generation of value and meaning in the minds of consumers. Indeed, existing research indicates that bloggers have successfully accumulated various forms of capital, including economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. These forms of capital, however, do not fully explain the type of engagement that successful fashion bloggers achieve with their readers, which is a gap in the literature that this research addresses. This study therefore explores the value of digital influence and investigates the feasibility of the conception of a field-specific digital capital. Although the notion of digital capital has been discussed in mercantile
terms, it is possible that this form of capital holds more cultural relevance than previously defined. Therefore, a primary aim of this study is to extend the definition of digital capital by exploring the modes of engagement that seem particularly effective in the digital environment. Specifically the metamodern strategies of performativity and the quirky will be assessed in the context of the individual’s habitus in order to establish the relevance of these metamodern modes of expression in an updated conception of digital capital. This will be achieved through the mixed methods of content analysis, semi-structured interviews and direct observation outlined in the following methodology chapter.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The phenomenon of the superstar fashion blogger came to the fore in 2008, when Bryanboy was seated in the front row of a Dolce & Gabbana fashion show alongside the prolific editor of Vogue, Anna Wintour (Sauers, 2012). Since then, fashion bloggers have cemented their position in the fashion industry, prompting a shift in the focus of recent studies in fashion communication. While recent studies on fashion blogging tend to focus on the monetary or hierarchical implications of blog superstardom on the fashion and journalism industries, there has been a scarcity of studies on the broader cultural shift it reflects. Drawing on the multi-disciplinary nature of communication and media studies, this study uses a Bourdieuan framework to look at the practices of the individual blogger in relation to other agents in the field, as well as the wider social structures in the field of fashion journalism, using the tools afforded by mixed-methods research. Such a methodology is informed by a constructionist ontology, where meaning does not inhere in objects but is constructed as we consciously engage with the social world (Crotty, 1998). In the same vein, this researcher acknowledges that while key patterns in fashion blogging exist outside of this study, they may only emerge if we actively engage with the field, the content and the individuals involved in fashion communication. Thus, the mixed methods employed in this study are content analysis and semi-structured interviews, and in a secondary capacity, direct observation. This chapter outlines the rationale for and procedures involved in the use of these methods in addressing the research statements and questions.

3.1 Aims of the study

A review of the literature suggests that elite fashion bloggers capitalise on opportunities presented by digital media despite having no prior affiliation to the field of fashion. Their ability to overcome traditional media structures is significant as it indicates that digital communication has opened up new avenues for accruing influence. This research investigates the modes of expressions employed by successful
bloggers that result in meaningful engagement with audiences. Specifically, this study explores the presence of metamodernism in digital communication, utilising the fashion industry as an example of such cultural practice. Thus, the aims of this study are two-fold. Firstly, the study utilises Bourdieu’s theory of the field of cultural production to map the existing trajectories to dominance in fashion journalism, given the relatively recent introduction of the superstar fashion blogger in the field. This follows a similar study conducted by Entwistle and Rocamora (2006), who mapped the field of fashion using Bourdieu’s cultural production theory prior to the entry of the fashion blogger. While this study is not a replication of Entwistle and Rocamora’s (2006) London Fashion Week study, that particular study can be viewed as a key text that informed this research.

This research, in particular, looks at a combination of the habitus, field and forms of capital to elucidate the confluence of factors to provide the conditions for a fashion blogger’s success in the fashion industry. An investigation into new trajectories to dominance in fashion journalism aided by digital technologies further enables an exploration of the concept of digital capital as an operative form of capital in the field of fashion. The conception of digital capital is undertaken in the context of the emergent cultural paradigm metamodernism that is said to have taken root in cultural practice. A review of the current literature suggests that metamodernism can manifest as performativity and the quirky as they demonstrate oscillating tensions between modern and postmodern sensibilities. While these two modes of expression are by no means exhaustive, they shall be the focus of this study given that the cultural paradigm of metamodernism is a new research area. Indeed, that metamordernism is a fairly nascent conception presents a sizeable gap in the literature, to which this research is a contribution. The second primary aim of the study looks specifically at the habitus of the fashion blogger, and whether or not they exhibit a tendency towards metamodern modes of expression like performativity and the quirky. This allows for an analysis of the wider cultural implications of digital communication and identify if metamodernism can indeed be viewed as the dominant cultural logic expressed in the practice of fashion blogging. It is important to note that this study is more concerned
with how fashion is communication, and not what is being communicated. This gives rise to the following research statements and questions, which will guide this inquiry.

### 3.2 Research Statements

**Research Statement 1:** The new trajectories to dominance by fashion bloggers indicate the emergence of a new capital representative of metamodernism.

**RQ1:** What are the forms of capital possessed by fashion bloggers?

It is important to identify the forms of capital possessed by fashion bloggers because fashion communication is a field of cultural production, where positions within social hierarchies are often the result of the amount and type of capital an individual possesses (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006). This study looks specifically at the sequence of acquisition of social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital as starting points in discerning the career trajectories of the superstar fashion bloggers understudy to find out if there are any commonalities in the factors that made their success possible. In more practical terms, these forms of capital may present themselves as social connections, monetary assets, knowledge of trends, and recognition from the field respectively. The changes in distribution of capital give us insights into the exchanges that have facilitated each blogger’s mobility within the hierarchies of the field. The likelihood for the acquisition of certain forms of capital is inevitably tied to the habitus of the individual, which influences the choices they may make within the constraints they face to advance in the field. As highlighted in the literature review, the habitus pertains to the set of dispositions and attitudes that manifests through an individual’s practice (Bourdieu, 1990), while the field refers to a social space encompassing institutions, rules, rituals, and conventions that make up an objective hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1993b). The subject of the individual’s habitus will be addressed in conjunction with the modes of expression of performativity and the quirky in the second research statement. Prior to that, this first research question will specifically seek to first establish the forms of capital that are important for a blogger to be
successful in the field of fashion journalism. A mixed method approach was employed in this investigation.

Firstly, a content analysis was conducted containing quantitative variables and qualitative notes on each post in the sample. Quantitative variables were thoroughly defined to directly or indirectly denote various forms of capital. For example, whether or not a blogger is invited to an exclusive event denotes a level of recognition by key gatekeepers such as designers or event organisers, which suggests symbolic capital. Whether or not a blogger was sponsored to create a post demonstrates the conversion of blogging into economic capital. Further, mentions of encounters with other key industry players reveal useful social connections and thus, social capital. Qualitative observations that reflected the themes in the coding scheme were also recorded. For instance, given that the front row is typically reserved for the key elite industry insiders, where a blogger was seated in a fashion show may denote their level of symbolic capital. Mention of family background or social groups also provides insights into potential social connections that may be leveraged on to excel in the fashion industry, or may be drawn upon for insight regarding the blogger’s habitus. Similarly, evidence of bloggers referring to past collections of a designer reveals in-depth knowledge of fashion trends, which indicates cultural capital.

Secondly, key players in the fashion communication, such as journalists, editors, publishers, public relations practitioners and bloggers, were approached for research interviews. Questions asked pertained to the various forms of capital necessary to excel in the fashion industry, such as educational background, modes of entry into the fashion industry, factors that affect decision-making processes in fashion communication, and the strategies of engagement with audiences. Third, in a more contextual capacity, a direct observation was conducted in a prolific fashion consumer event, the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Festival 2013. The observation sought to find out how key industry insiders were situated or involved physically in such an event. Thus, points of observation included notes on who were invited to the event, where they were seated in the fashion shows, how attendees’ presented themselves, and who
were engaged to speak or mingle with event attendees in the retail hall after the show.
The overlaps in the elucidation in the forms of capital using each method of data collection assists in the triangulation of the data found, thereby ensuring the rigour of the conclusions drawn.

RQ2: Does the digital remediation of fashion indicate the emergence of a new metamodern capital, namely digital capital?

Although, the forms of capital proffered by Bourdieu (1986) can encompass most observable exchanges within a given cultural industry, Bourdieu (1993a) acknowledged that each cultural field might include their own operative field-specific capital. Indeed, none of the forms of capital examined in RQ 1 fully encompasses the type of phenomenological engagement that fashion bloggers achieve with their readers, and the nature of the assets and influence that bloggers have accrued through blogging. Indeed, this gap in the knowledge will be explored in the context of recent literature, which suggests there has been a shift in sensibility from postmodernism to metamodernism in cultural practice (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010). This research question looks at how fashion bloggers have capitalised on the opportunities presented by the widespread adoption of digital communication in the daily life of the developed world. This has allowed bloggers to attract and build up a loyal following, propelling them to celebrity status within their niche fields. Fashion bloggers, in particular, have overcome traditional boundaries to end up in the front row seats of Fashion Weeks all around the world, earning features in magazines and collaborative partnerships with the designers and labels that they blog about (Luu, 2012). However, it is important to note that while anybody with access to the Internet may start a blog, not all fashion bloggers break into the consciousness of the fashion industry. Hence, instead of viewing digital capital as a tangible object, like mere access to the Internet, this study investigates the habits central to the personalised journalism practiced by fashion bloggers through digital means that results in audience engagement. Thus, this research question aims to find out if digital capital is a legitimate form of capital in the cultural practice of blogging, and whether it reflects the oscillation between modern
and postmodern sensibilities characterised by metamodernism. Quantitative variables in the content analysis coding scheme includes instances of content dissemination through social media websites, as well as the use of hyperlinks to extend the narrative beyond the confines of the sampled blog post. The use of multimedia content, and interactions with readers in comment threads of posts were also recorded. Expanding on the quantitative variables, qualitative notes on the type of multimedia featured and the nature of the content and hyperlinks were noted. For example, a blog post that features many photos of the blogger may indicate that they relish in being in the public eye, which is a reflection of their habitus manifest through their practice. Semi-structured interviews with fashion bloggers, editors, designers and publicists will also be used to address this research question. Questions will centre on specific social media and blogging habits, and the interviewees’ thoughts on how successful audience engagement comes about online. Direct observation will also be used to collect relevant data such as the social media channels attached to the event. Innovative ways in which digital technologies are used to engage audiences in the lead up, during and after the event will also be noted.

**Research Statement 2:** If metamodernism is an emergent cultural logic, then the metamodern strategies of performativity and the quirky are expressed through the habitus of the superstar fashion blogger.

**RQ3:** Is the oscillating tension between authenticity and artifice encompassed by the concept of performativity integral to the habitus of the superstar fashion blogger?

Leading on from RQ2, where instances of expression stemming from the bloggers habitus are explored, this third research question looks in greater detail at modes of expression that are specifically metamodern in nature. From the literature, the practice of blogging can be seen to contain an element of performance, which is an idea that can be linked to performativity. In this study, the notion of performativity is positioned within the metamodern paradigm because it entails a constant oscillation between the expression of modern authenticity and postmodern hyperreality or
artifice. This tension between authenticity and artifice is a common conundrum in the practice of blogging as bloggers have to constantly negotiate between the expectations of readers and that of paid advertisers (Marwick, 2013). In Bourdieuan terms, this can be viewed as a struggle to wield the legitimacy that comes with the possession of cultural capital while leaving room for opportunities that could lead to the acquisition of economic capital.

Hence this research question hopes to find out if the ability to negotiate the tension between authenticity and artifice in performativity leads to the successful engagement of digital audiences. This research question will be addressed using data collected through interviews and content analysis. The content analysis will seek to identify instances of authenticity and artifice at the level of practice. Authenticity in blogging may be identified through a blogger’s willingness to convey a negative opinion about a designer’s collection without fear of ramifications. Another indication of authenticity is through the revelation that the blogger expended personal funds to purchase clothing or accessories as a reflection of their personal style, as opposed to items that were gifted. On the other hand, artifice may be presented by the exaggeration of reality through highly aspirational sponsored posts, as well as writing only positive things about advertisers, which are common practices on some blogs (McQuarrie, Miller & Phillips, 2013). Indeed, an interesting conundrum that will be explored in regard to performativity pertains to blog posts where the blogger is posing in front of the camera. On one hand, the blogger’s personal embodiment of the featured aesthetic suggests authenticity. On the other hand, the presence of a photographer capturing an image in which the blogger is posing suggests contrivance in the invention of an identity. Drawing on the previous literature on authenticity (Nauta, 2003; Finkelstein, 2010), this discursive construction of authenticity is viewed in conjunction with the pursuit of economic interests, which in this study connotes artifice. Once again, it is argued that the tension between authenticity and artifice is encapsulated the concept of a metamodern performativity. In Bourdieuan terms, this tension also reflects the inverse relationship between cultural capital and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1993).
During the interviews, bloggers will be asked about why they blog, how they negotiate the expectations of both readers and advertisers, as well as what they believe to be important traits that lead to success in fashion blogging. Publicists and designers will be asked about their perceptions of what makes a blogger deserving of an invite to an exclusive event or collaboration, as well as their own efforts in engaging audiences online. Editors and journalists and publishers will be asked about the changes in fashion publishing since the introduction of digital media, how their publications likewise negotiate between the demands of advertisers and readers, and their strategies in ensuring they have a presence on the same digital platforms as bloggers.

RQ4: Is the oscillating tension between sincerity and irony encompassed by the quirky integral to the habitus of the superstar fashion blogger?

This research question also looks at another mode of expression identified as part of the metamodern paradigm – the quirky – which will be similarly examined in the context of the individual’s habitus. Emerging out of the metamodern strategy of New Sincerity, the notion of the quirky has been used to describe bloggers like Tavi Gevinson and Susanna Lau, though the use of this term is often ill-defined in such contexts. New Sincerity is inherently metamodern because it entails the simultaneous expression of modern sincerity through a postmodern irony. Modern sincerity can be characterised by expression that reflects oneself truly without subterfuge (Trilling, 1972), and may be reflective of the confessional nature of blogging where the blogger participates in a discourse of their own identity (Hawkins, 2011). On the other hand, a postmodern irony refers to a subversion of meaning in a text, which requires an audience adept in distinguishing between the literal and intended meaning. Through this lens, the use of language of blogs can be open to multiple interpretations, and existing literature suggest there is merit in the idea that irony can be utilised to engage a niche audience (Deuze, 2005; Feldman, 2007). As a strategy, New Sincerity can be described as the evoking of a sincere emotional response, while at the same time creating the possibility for the audience to see through the mechanisms that elicit this response (Rombes, 2005). This results in a tonal quality known as the quirky...
(MacDowell, 2013), which will also be explored in the context of the fashion blogger’s habitus as it manifests at the level of individual expression.

The concept of the quirky appears to be discussed in a highly nuanced manner as the concepts of sincerity and irony are never clearly demarcated, emphasising the presence of tension and oscillation. As such, this sensibility is investigated in a largely qualitative capacity, primarily through the content analysis. Drawing on the literature, the content analysis utilises the five indicators of irony on blogs posited by Whalen et al. (2013) – namely hyperbole, understatement, rhetorical question, sarcasm and jocularity – to identify the occurrence of irony on the blogs under study. Instances of quirky expression, where sincerity and irony are simultaneously expressed, will also be recorded under qualitative notes.

### 3.3 Methodological Underpinnings

The key objective of this study is to explore the modes of expression inherent in the practice of successful fashion bloggers, within the wider context of the structures they work within to provide a framework through which fashion blogging, and to a larger extent digital communication, may be analysed and adapted to engage audiences online. A mixed-methods approach provides a means of gathering information that aids in a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study. Indeed, the social nature of the online networks and audience engagement requires the adoption of primarily qualitative research methods in order for contextual data to emerge. However, steps were taken to ensure the credibility of the data typified by quantitative research, so as to ensure the rigour of the conclusions drawn. Thus, the methods of semi-structured interviews, content analysis and, to secondary degree, direct observation was employed in a mixed methods study on the field of fashion journalism.

In order to derive results that are logically sound, it is necessary to think in depth about the nature of the research being undertaken, which drives the consideration of
the philosophical underpinnings of the research design. To facilitate this process, Grix (2004) outlined the directional relationships between concepts and frameworks, beginning with ontology, then epistemology, methodology, and methods. According to Blaikie (2000, p.8), ontology refers to our assumptions about the nature of social reality and what constitutes it. As the research has adopted a mixed-methods approach, it can be said to reflect a constructionist ontology. A constructionist viewpoint does not favour objectivity over subjectivity or vice versa, but rather regards these concepts as complimentary to each other. Thus, reality does not exist independently of our knowledge of it, but is constructed as we actively engage with the structures that we try to comprehend (Crotty, 1998). Indeed, drawing on the work of Giddens, Blaikie (1993) posited that while meaning already exists and is reproduced by social structures before the arrival of the researcher, meaning also emerges as the researcher engages with these social constructs. The choice of the adoption of constructionism, as opposed to constructivism, was informed by Crotty (1998). Echoing Schwandt (1994), Crotty (1998) posited that while constructivism is of the view that what we take to be objective knowledge is often the result of perspective, constructionism places a greater emphasis on the social construction of meaning. It is this emphasis on the construction of, and interaction with, the social world that is especially relevant to the approach of this inquiry. Parallel to the constructionist underpinnings that inform the methodology, this common thread of structure and agency also pervades the Bourdieuan theoretical framework that directs this research, where the practice of individuals in fashion communication are examined within the context and limits that they work within. Following a constructionist ontology, a mixed methods study draws on the epistemological paradigm of interpretivism. Epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge and refers to the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality (Blaikie, 2000). Traditional epistemological positions like positivism and interpretivism highlight opposing approaches to how data may be collected and interpreted. In the same vein as constructionism, this research adopts an interpretivist epistemology, which is of the view that social phenomena do not exist independently of our interpretation of them (Grix, 2004). Thus, any study on social phenomena is bound to be subject to the interpretation of the researchers. This is in
contrast to positivism which proffers that the world exists objectively outside of our consciousness and that knowledge is derived categorically and empirically (Grix, 2004). The adoption of an interpretivist approach is often associated with studies that feature qualitative methods of data collection. This is compatible with a mixed methods methodology, which utilises a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to collect information and arrive at a conclusion that is holistic and contextual.

A mixed-methods approach is suitable as the phenomenon of the superstar fashion blogger, in relation to the cultural paradigm of metamodernism, is a complex area of study that requires nuanced information reflective of actual social interactions. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) highlighted the usefulness of a mixed methods approach towards complex studies on a few levels:

As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis and the mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches in many phases of the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems then either approach alone. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5)

Thus, the use of a mixed multi-method approach yields data that can be triangulated, allowing for the limitations of each qualitative and quantitative method to be compensated for by the other. Qualitative methodologies have often been criticised for lacking scientific rigour and generalisability, which are the hallmarks of the positivist tradition that have dominated much of early social research (Mays & Pope, 1995). However, qualitative methods can help provide rich descriptions of phenomena that enhance our understanding of the complexities underpinning the events under investigation, thereby yielding more meaningful explanations (Sofaer, 1999). Additionally, while a quantitative approach towards a social phenomenon would be
too reductionist in nature causing important nuances to be overlooked (Verschuren, 2003), the inclusion of generalisable data would lend the study credibility and may be used to aid in the accurate interpretation of the qualitative data derived. Thus, issues of rigour and credibility can be overcome through the use of triangulation, which involves the use of multiple sources of information (Darke, Shanks & Broadbent, 1998). This is supported by Yin (2009), who posited that the convergence of findings often strengthens the conclusions drawn on the phenomenon under study. In this study, all data collected will be constantly compared against the same themes that are under investigation as outlined in the research statements and research questions. For instance, the definitions of the various forms of capital outlined in the literature review, as well as the conceptions of performativity and the quirky, provide the foundations for which interview questions and coding variables are devised. As part of the mixed methods methodology, the specific methods of content analysis, semi-structured interviews and, in a secondary capacity, direct observation will be used in the investigation into the forms of capital possessed by successful fashion bloggers, as well as the potential tendency towards performativity and the quirky that is expressed through the habitus.

3.4 Subject of the Study

The field of fashion appears to be a particularly good starting point for mapping the positions of agents within the field – and possibly identifying new strategies of communication that may be metamodern in nature – because it is a cultural field where the impact of digital communication is highly apparent (Rocamora, 2012). Further, the dynamics between bloggers and other players within the field are not only observable in the content created on digital platforms but in a physical social arena like Fashion Week as well. As such, this study utilises the field of fashion journalism as a microcosm, wherein the phenomenon of bloggers gaining prominence in their niche fields may be observed and analysed. In this study, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with fashion editors, journalists, public relations practitioners, designers and bloggers. Further, a content analysis of fashion blogs was included in the study.
because blogs are the platforms that bloggers use to effectively engage their audience. This research is focused on the common and differing traits exhibited on successful blogs in terms of the frequency of blog posts, type of content, use of visuals and other multimedia, and use of social media for content distribution. The key consumer event in the Australian fashion industry also presents opportunities to inform this research through a direct observation.

### 3.5 Methods

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with influential fashion bloggers, as well as other agents in the field who interact with bloggers, in this investigation on the impact of digital communication on the fashion industry. These other potential interviewees include fashion publicists, designers, retailers and editors. Further, purposively sampled blogs were subject to a content analysis that sought both quantitative and qualitative information to provide an in-depth understanding of the content studied. Additionally, this study also undertook direct observation at the Sydney Fashion Festival in September 2013. The use of multiple methods not only provide a holistic perspective on the phenomenon understudy, but also serves as mechanism for triangulation. Triangulation allows for the phenomenon under study to be observed from multiple perspectives and serves to enhance the quality of the data collected as it allows for the confirmation of findings (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

#### 3.5.1 Sampling

Data was selected using purposive sampling, where the researcher identifies the most productive sample based on the needs of the study (Marshall, 1996). Morse (1991, p. 127) stresses the importance of “good” informants in purposive sampling, which requires the selection of participants who are reflexive, articulate and willing to share information required for the study. Such an approach to sampling reflects a priority in
collecting information that could lend depth to the findings (Coyne, 1997). As Schafer (2002) noted, purposive sampling is necessary when studying websites as the Internet is in constant flux, and there is no comprehensive directory that indicates the population of relevant websites for any Internet study. Hence, in this study, a content analysis of two Australian and two international blogs were conducted to get an in-depth understanding of the modes of expression present in successful blog posts, namely instances of metamodern performativity and the quirky, as well as any indicators of the type and amount of capital they possess. The blogs of Australian bloggers Patty Huntington and Nicole Warne were selected as they represent two very different forms of fashion blogging. Patty Huntington of Rrockwriter.com had an illustrious background in broadcast before carving a niche in fashion blogging, whereas Nicole Warne of GaryPepperGirl.com had limited experience in the fashion media as a styling intern before initiating her blog as a means of promoting her online store. Thus, the differences in their career trajectory serves as an interesting basis on which to compare the similarities and differences in strategies used in engaging their respective audiences. The blogs of internationally recognised fashion bloggers Bryan Yambao of bryanboy.com, and Susanna Lau of Stylebubble.co.uk were examined as they were among the first bloggers to gain recognition and end up in front row seats at Fashion Weeks all over the world despite little prior affiliation to the industry, and should not be excluded in an investigation about digital capital and metamodern practices. A full list of the blog posts sampled for three content analysis periods can be found in Appendix A.

In addition, key players that contribute to the field of fashion journalism in Australia were engaged for interviews. This includes, fashion editors, publicists, retailers, designers and influential bloggers in Australia. This study primarily focused on influential fashion bloggers who boast a high readership and who get invited to fashion events not just in Australia but internationally as well. In particular, the bloggers that comprises the FELLT network, which is a collective of internationally recognised Australian bloggers, was suited for this study. Thus, this study aimed to secure interviews with agents occupying various positions in the field to elucidate insightful
contextual data to address the research questions about individual practice in relation to the social structures in fashion journalism. Overall, this study successfully secured four research interviews with Patty Huntington, Daniel Kjellsson, Chelsea* and Louis*. Patty Huntington, whose blog was also sampled for the content analysis, is a fashion media veteran with who has had career spanning 20 years in various forms of broadcast media before starting her blog in 2006. Daniel Kjellsson is the co-founder of the digital publisher Sydney Stockholm that created the FELLT network of fashion in Australia. Opting for confidentiality, Chelsea*2 is an experienced professional in fashion public relations and is personally involved in publicity and event planning the Australian fashion industry. Similarly opting for confidentiality, Louis* is a journalist who has written for a luxury fashion magazine, but is presently writing for the digital and print editions of a women’s interest magazine in Singapore. Given the global scale of the fashion industry, a combination of Australian and international blogs and interviewees were included in this study.

Although it was hoped that this study would observe the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Australia (MBFWA) in September 2013 and April 2014, access to these industry events were strictly controlled by designers and entry was denied. Instead, the organisers of MBFWA offered tickets to the a consumer fashion event the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival (MBFF) 2013, which also yielded significant insights on the distribution of capital in this social arena. It is important to note that while the phenomenon of fashion blogging is a global one with superstar fashion bloggers emerging out of regions like Scandinavia, Europe and Asia, only blogs expressed in the English-language was included in this study. Further, given that this study specially investigates the successful modes of engagement of fashion bloggers with fashion consumers and producers, bloggers that do not demonstrate a high readership nor receive any recognition from the industry are excluded from this study.

2 Note that asterisks will be utilised throughout this thesis to denote aliases assigned to participants who opted for confidentiality
3.5.2 Measures and Procedures

3.5.2a Content Analysis

Content analysis is a useful and unobtrusive method of research inquiry that has a strong tradition in mass communication research (Lombard et al., 2002). This research method has been applied to written text, transcribed speech, verbal interactions, visual images, non-verbal behaviours and other message types (Neuendorf, 2002). Such documents are a useful source of information in case studies and are often used to supplement data collected through other methods (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Content analysis appears to be especially suitable for Internet studies has been used to investigate various social phenomena that occur on the Internet, such as the adverse effects of social networking sites (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008), extremist views on the Internet (Gerstenfeld, Grant & Chiang, 2003) and the impact of disaster relief websites (Paul, 2001).

Content analysis has traditionally been defined as “a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1952 p. 18). This definition contains three concepts that require further elaboration. First, content analysis is a systematic process that requires content to be analysed according to clearly defined guidelines that can be consistently applied. Second, content analysis must be objective, which means that the researcher’s personal preferences and biases should not enter the findings, as the study should be easily replicable. Thirdly, content analysis should be quantifiable as the end goal is to arrive at an accurate representation of the content studied. However, while a majority of the coding variables in the coding scheme for this study are quantitative in nature, some of the coding variables are qualitative in nature as some of the themes understudy are heavily nuanced and require some degree of interpretation. While traditional content analysis is associated with quantitative approach to data collection reflective of positivism, more recent literature suggests that content analysis may also be used in qualitative fashion (Graneheim & Lundman,
2004). While the integration of qualitative and quantitative elements within the same method may seem paradigmatically incompatible, recent studies suggest that such an approach should be viewed as complementary instead of dichotomous (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Yin (2006) further argued that the integration of mixed approaches in more phases of the project could lead to a greater depth and dynamism in the findings. With this in mind, the use of both quantitative and qualitative variables aligns with the study’s interpretivist epistemology. Thus, this study employs the five stages of content analysis outlined by Waere and Lin (2000) as a guide to collecting rigorous data for analysis. Firstly, the parameters of the study needs to be defined, which has been detailed in the section above on sampling. Secondly, the unit of analysis needs to be identified. Krippendorf (1980) differentiated the unit of sampling into the sampling unit, the recording unit, and the context unit. In this study, a sampling unit refers to a single blog post, which consists of smaller recording units that can be coded into categories, which will be interpreted in regard to the context unit of the whole blog. Thirdly, the development of a comprehensive categorisation scheme for the quantitative variables allows for the recording units to be validly and reliably classified (Waere & Lin, 2000). Finally, the researcher establishes inter-coder reliability in a pilot study to ensure that the recording units are likely to be interpreted in a similar fashion between researchers, before finally analysing the data.

Quantitatively, occurrences like advertising and frequency of posts were documented with the purpose of providing generalisable data that accurately represented each blog as well as the practice of each blogger. In total, three rounds of content analysis were conducted, with all the content produced on these blogs coded throughout a full month in each year of the study. The coding months were mid-November to mid-December 2013, April 2014 and April 2015. The first round of content analysis provided the groundwork for a familiarisation of the blogging style of each blogger, while the subsequent two rounds of content analysis were devised to coincide with the coverage of MBFWA 2014 and 2015. The blogs were: Bryanboy.com by Bryan Yambao, Stylebubble.co.uk by Susanna Lau, Frockwriter.com by Patty Huntington, and Garypeppergirl.com by Nicole Warne. The way in which each blogger enacted their
own style of narrative creation to their blogging practice provided insights into their
habitus and the forms of capital they possess. The blogs of Bryan Yambao and Susanna
Lau provide the study with a snapshot of the themes inherent in internationally
acclaimed fashion blogs, while the blogs of Patty Huntington and Nicole Warne
provided an Australian perspective on the practice of fashion blogging. While each
coding period was chosen to coincide with specific events, it was hoped that the
examination of these blogs for a month each year would provide a snapshot for the
blogger’s blogging style and frequency of posts, so as to detect any possible changes in
each blogger’s practice over the three-year period of this study.

A coding scheme was devised for the content analysis to ensure that the quantifiable
variables fit into mutually exclusive categories. A pilot study was implemented to
ensure that the intercoder reliability test reflected a scheme that guided researchers
to interpret key occurrences in blog posts in the same way. This is to ensure that
subjectivity was kept to a minimum in the coding of quantitative data. In this study, the
coding scheme was devised by the doctoral candidate. Both the doctoral candidate
and the primary project supervisor, Dr Susan Kerrigan, both coded the four sampled
blogs over a one-week period from 14th October to 21st October 2013 for the pilot
study. Inconsistencies were then discussed, where the coding scheme was further
refined, before the articles were revisited and a high level of reliability was achieved.
Using Holsti’s (1969) formula, the pilot study achieved a 91% agreement level for the
11 quantitative questions in the coding sheet, which exceeds the 90% required to
establish reliability. The finalised coding scheme can be found in Appendix B.

While quantitative questions allowed the researcher to measure the frequency of
occurrence of a variable, qualitative questions allowed for deeper examinations of the
latent themes that emerged from the posts to be noted. The presence of qualitative
questions were included to ensure that subtle nuances in the text of each blog post
would not be overlooked or oversimplified in the content analysis process.
Specifically, instances of social, economic, cultural and digital capital, as well as the
themes of sincerity, authenticity, irony and artifice were highlighted and noted with
relevant quotes extracted to illustrate the themes in practice. This required interpretation on the part of the coder. For instance, any mention of family or friends was taken as an indication of cultural capital or social capital, while any mention of being invited into an exclusive preview was taken as an indication symbolic capital. Similarly, expressions of performativity and quirkiness were recorded. For example, the tension between authenticity and artifice in performativity may be encapsulated in posts where the blogger is seen modelling a certain brand in the capacity of an authentic fashion opinion leader, even though the post may be sponsored by the featured brand. The quirky, on the other hand, proves to be more challenging in its identification, as it manifests in a more nuanced manner and needs to be recognised in the text. Drawing on the works in poetics, which looks at the role of language in social life, this study acknowledges that language can be used to fulfil context-specific functions (Bauman & Briggs, 1990). It can be argued that the use of the quirky serves a purpose to convey or evoke an emotional response in a way that can engage a niches audience. Specifically, Rombes (2005, p.74) posited that New Sincerity, which results in the quirky, functions to “evoke a sincere emotional response while at the same time, to create the possibilities for the audience to see through the very mechanisms that elicit response”. An example extracted from a post on Susanna Lau’s blog outside of the sampled timeframe is demonstrated in the following quote:

‘Hi I drew you! Please blog about me!’ unfortunately peppers quite a few emails in my inbox. Poor them. They absolutely took no joy in knocking out their illustration of me because their sole purpose was to flatter my shallow vanity, stroke my ego and thus get a blog post about their work out of me. (Lau, 2013a, para. 1)

As found in the literature, the use of such irony coupled with sincerity can result in engagement on a phenomenological level with the audience (Chan, 2011). More importantly, owing to the subjective nature of this mode of expression, all variables pertaining to irony and the quirky were regarded as qualitative were and excluded from the intercoder reliability test.
3.5.2b Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviewing is a method that involves the exchange of verbal information to find out information that may address a research question (Longhurst, 2003). This qualitative method is flexible because while key questions were prepared ahead of the interview, the interviewer has the freedom to ask more questions that may arise from the interviewee’s responses (Horton, Macve & Struyven, 2004). This qualitative method is especially relevant to studies in subjective practices, as it allows for an in-depth inquiry into personal perceptions, practices and decision-making processes (Wengraf, 2001). Dicicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) posited that interviews were a good way of studying complex social phenomena, allowing for contextual information to surface. This is supported by Yin (2009), who stated that interviews are essential method in social research, and should contain a combination of questions that follow the researcher’s line of inquiry, as well as unbiased open-ended questions.

Therefore, in line with the research aim of mapping the positions of agents within the field, three distinct groups of interviewees have been identified for the study. Firstly, influential bloggers in the Australian fashion industry were invited to participate in the study. This includes bloggers who maintain a blog that has a high readership and who frequently receive invites to both local and international fashion events. In Australia, this sample group can potentially include Zanita Morgan of Zanita, Nicole Warne of Gary Pepper, Margaret Zhang of Shine by Three, Sara Donaldson of Harper & Harley, Amanda Shadforth of Oracle Fox, and Patty Huntington of Frockwriter. As most of the bloggers selected for the study have been associated with the FELLT collective at various points in time, the publisher of the network, Sydney Stockholm, was approached given their expertise in effective digital communication. In general, bloggers were asked about their perceptions regarding the practice of blogging, and how they maintain relationships with fashion consumers and fashion producers. Bloggers were also invited to talk about their style of expression, and the conscious and subconscious choices they may make when creating content.
The second group of interviewees approached for this study include members of mainstream fashion media such as fashion editors and journalists. Specifically, fashion editors and writers of the most widely read publications in the niche area of fashion, *Vogue Australia* and *Marie Claire*, were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews where they were asked about their knowledge of the social structures in the field, traditional career trajectories, and balancing advertisers’ demands while creating content that is relevant to their target audience. It is interesting to note that the fashion print media is also adapting to draw online readers. As such, interview questions largely pertain to digital and social media strategy. The third group of interviewees included retailers, designers, public relations practitioners, and event organisers engaged by designers to promote products through bloggers. In particular, this group of interviewees were asked about why they chose to engage their target audience through blogs and how they perceive bloggers in relation to the field for fashion communication. This group of interviewees were asked about their other media relations efforts, and whether the use of social media has changed the way they engage audiences. In this study, recorded interviews were conducted face-to-face or over the phone, at the interviewees’ convenience. The participants who agreed to be interviewed for this study are: Patty Huntington of *Frockwriter.com*; Daniel Kjellsson of Sydney Stockholm, fashion PR and events manager Chelsea*, and fashion journalist Louis*. The interviewees were approached through their respective official e-mail channels, and interviews typically went from half an hour to an hour. Notably, all interviewees made a point of emphasising the fact that they were busy people and were not able to commit more than an hour to the interview, which is not unexpected given the fast-paced schedule of fashion publishing.

Interviewees were given the option of confidentiality and have the right to withdraw from the study at any point in line with the conditions suggested by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Newcastle. The questions drafted were vetted by project supervisors to ensure that they remain focused on the use of a Bourdieuan framework to investigate the cultural logic of metamodernism. As questions in the each interview pertained to the themes and concepts outlined in the
research questions, the interviews were transcribed and key quotes that either support or contradict the research question were included and analysed in the findings and analysis chapters. For an example of a research transcript, please see Appendix C.

3.5.2c Direct Observation

Observation is generally regarded as an ethnographic method of data collection as it involves some degree of immersion into the field under study (Baker, 2006). Essentially, it can be defined as the “the systematic recording of observable phenomena or behaviour in a natural setting” (Gorman & Clayton, 2005, p. 40). Direct observation encompasses approaches that are either reactive, where people are aware of the researcher, or unobtrusive, where the people are not aware of the researcher’s presence (Bernard, 2011). Direct observation can be undertaken in four possible ways, namely: continuous monitoring, spot sampling, unobtrusive observation and indirect observation. This study intends for this method of data collection to be passive or unobtrusive, as the researchers hope to observe events and interactions in a setting where the presence of the researcher would not cause behavioural changes in participants (Kellehear, 1993). Further, as the researcher had no prior affiliation to the Australian fashion industry, this method of data collection allowed for a familiarisation of the field.

Direct observation entails selecting and defining the parameters of a setting in order to make observations that address the hypotheses under investigation (Flick, 2009). A key strength of direct observation as a method of data collection is that the researcher can observe a phenomenon first-hand in its natural setting (Yin, 2009). In direct observations, what is to be observed depends on the purpose of the research and the theoretical concepts under investigation (Merriam, 1998). The observations conducted were primarily recorded in the form of field notes by the researcher, including notebook jottings at the time of the events and subsequently converted to formal field notes as suggested by Yin (2012). Information recorded may include event descriptions, direct quotations and researcher’s comments (Merriam, 1998). A key
criticism of this method of data collection is its subjective nature, leading to questions of validity and reliability in the data collected. It is important to acknowledge that while the researcher’s own perspectives and past experiences affect how the field conditions are observed and interpreted, contextually embedded data requires a reflexive approach so that subtle nuances may be observed and recorded (Merriam, 1998). While this fully aligns with the interpretivist epistemology of the study, the notes recorded were also triangulated with the data collected from other methods to aid in the corroboration of information gathered, thereby insuring the dependability and credibility of the conclusions drawn.

As part of this study, two runway shows at the consumer event Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival 2013, and subsequent interactions of attendees, were observed. This method of data collection addresses the first research statement pertaining to the distribution of social and cultural capital in the field, as well as the possibility of digital capital. Points of observation include: where key agents are seated in the audience during the fashion shows, layout of the event, flow of the event, the way attendees are dressed, the way attendees interacted with each other, the potential differences in body language between event staff and attendees, the use of social media, and the interactions between bloggers and other agents before, during and after shows. It was hoped that these notes would provide context and insights into the forms of capital possessed and utilised by various groups of attendees at the events.

As a key ethical consideration was the potential for deception due to the unobtrusive the nature of this method, event organisers were first approached for consent to carry out this phase of the research. The response from the event organisers were initially positive with event organisers facilitating the researcher’s attendance to more shows than intended during the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Festival in September 2013, which is a consumer event. However, a subsequent requests to attend a key industry event, the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Australia in April 2014 and April 2013, were denied due to the designers’ desire to keep this event exclusive to members of the international fashion industry. However, this could be taken as a reflection of the researcher’s lack
of institutional cultural capital or symbolic capital and is nonetheless, an interesting result. Due to access issues, this method was relegated to a secondary mode of data collection due to the lack of access to the more important industry event. As informed by the University of Newcastle’s Human Research Ethics Committee, the researcher distributed printed card-sized information notes to participants photographed during the observations. These cards contained a brief introduction of the research and the researcher’s contact details, which allowed attendees to contact the researchers to opt-out of the research without a need for a reason.

3.6 Mixed Methods Analysis

Every phase of the data collection was informed by the research statements and questions detailed at the start of this chapter. The first research question pertains to the forms of capital that come into operation in the field of fashion journalism, while the second research question pertains to the modes of expression exhibited by fashion bloggers that may be metamodern in nature. As the study contains both quantitative and qualitative data, the study utilised two types of software to codify the data. This is in line with Sandelowski’s (2000) argument that datasets in mixed methods studies need to first be analysed using the traditionally accepted methods of analysis for each technique before the quantitative and qualitative analyses can be combined at the interpretive level. Therefore, the quantitative data collected in the content analysis were subjected to a percentage analysis while the qualitative data from the content analysis, semi-structured interviews and direct observation were coded according to themes that corresponded with the research questions.

The content analysis was conducted through the use of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, where sampled blog posts were coded against a master coding sheet. All raw data from each round of content analysis were converted to percentages against each variable to demonstrate the frequency of occurrences of certain practices or traits for each blogger. These statistics allowed for generalisations to be made when comparing bloggers with each other, and also allowed for the identification of any changes in
practice for a given blogger over the course of the content analyses periods. All qualitative results from the content analysis recorded in the Excel spreadsheets were then extracted into Word documents. Similarly, semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim into Word documents, as were the formalised field notes from the direct observation. These documents were then analysed in line with the themes of the study, which are: economic capital, social capital, cultural capital, symbolic capital, digital capital, performativity and the quirky. Some of these main themes contained sub-themes as well, which allowed more specific inferences to be made.

The resultant sets of analyses were treated in a holistic manner where both types of information played key roles in providing a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under study. Indeed, Yin (2006, p.41) supported the combination of data collection and analyses throughout all phases of a single study, arguing that such an approach would “simultaneously broaden and strengthen the study”. This approach to mixed method data can be encapsulated by the concept of integration. According to Woolley (2009, p. 7), the integration of qualitative and quantitative components that explicitly relate to each other within a single study can produce results that are not only mutually illuminating, but also prove greater than the sum of its parts. This emphasises the importance of a clearly defined focus and parameters at the start of the study. Thus, the theoretical frameworks of Bourdieu’s field of cultural production and the cultural paradigm of metamodernism as outlined in the research statements underpin this inquiry. As the qualitative and quantitative components of the study required separate techniques for initial analysis, it can be said that the integration of analyses occurred on an interpretive level where information that pertained to each research question was synthesised to form a broader description of the phenomenon of the superstar blogger.

3.8 Limitations of the Research Design

Three main limitations were noted in this proposed study. First, it is important to note that the interpretive nature of the study may elicit criticism for lacking validity and
reliability. However, the notions of validity and reliability stem from the positivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1982), which is incongruent to the approach of this study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) point out that notions of credibility and dependability are more relevant to qualitative studies, and this can be achieved through the use of multiple methods of data collection within a single study. Thus, the inclusion of quantitative component of the content analysis adds rigour to the analyses and strengthens the conclusions drawn by allowing for the integrated analysis of the data gathered. In following the conventions of quantitative content analysis, researcher bias was circumvented through the implementation of a pilot study to achieve the reliability required in this technique of data collection. This provided an opportunity for the researchers involved to refine the coding scheme to a high level of agreement, which also benefitted the qualitative aspects of the study as the themes under study were comprehensively defined. Overall though, given the complexities of the cultural phenomenon under study, contextual data was needed to find out if links could be made between the concepts under investigation. This fully aligns with the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the study, which finds that even quantitative information requires some level of interpretation when synthesising information to allow for trustworthy conclusions to be drawn (Jick, 1979).

Secondly, this study only investigates the cultural paradigm of metamodernism in the field of fashion journalism, with an emphasis in fashion blogging. It is important to note that this is not a comparative study between fashion editors and fashion bloggers. Rather, the opportunities opened up to non-industry affiliated individuals through digital communication technologies was the particular focus of the study. Given the busy international lifestyles of the bloggers under study, a number of requests to purposively sampled bloggers did not elicit a response. Indeed, the fact that only bloggers with a high profile in the fashion industry were examined in this study, meant that there was a limited potential sample size to begin with. Thus, although the research gained rich information from the four research interviewees with different gatekeeping roles in the field of fashion journalism, the study would have benefitted further from interviews with all the bloggers under study. Another
challenge pertaining to the interviews was that two participants opted for confidentiality as they were not authorised as spokespersons for the organisations they work within. These included Chelsea* and Louis* who were not referred to by their real names at any stage of this thesis. While this research completely accepts their choice of confidentiality, it should be acknowledged that the revelation of their identities would have given their comments a greater context. Nonetheless, their agreement to participate has led to the collection of highly informative data. To compensate for this, a third round of content analysis was conducted to ensure there was ample data analysed for credible conclusions to be drawn.

Third, while the researcher intended to attend a key industry event (MBFWA) for direct observation, only access to a key consumer event (MBFF) was granted instead. This highlighted the exclusive nature of the field of fashion, underscoring the significance of fashion bloggers having successfully staked a claim in an arena where boundaries are closely guarded. A crucial point to note is while the scholarship on metamodernism is growing, this study only looks specifically at one cultural field, chiefly the field of fashion journalism. This study acknowledges that metamodern sensibilities could also be present in other areas of the fashion industry, or even other genres of blogging, especially in industries where bloggers are similarly regarded as cultural intermediaries. In order for broader patterns of metamodern culture to be recognised and established, similar studies could be conducted in other cultural fields.

3.9 Chapter Summary

Following a review of the literature surrounding the theoretical frameworks of this study, this methodology chapter outlined the procedures and underpinning philosophies that informed the way in which data was collected and analysed. In line with a constructionist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology, this study adopts a mixed method approach to elicit a holistic picture of the phenomenon under study. Using Bourdieu’s (1993b) theory of the field of cultural production in conjunction with Vermeulen and Van den Akker’s (2010) conceptions of metamodernism, two research
statements were formulated to investigate how individuals with no prior affiliation to the institutions of fashion capitalised on digital communication to become opinion leaders in the industry. More specifically, the first statement question seeks to find out which forms of capital are in operation in fashion journalism and how each may be utilised to the advantage of the individual, and its subsequent impact on the limits of the field. Following the establishment of the operational forms of capital, the second research statement delves into the modes expression of successful bloggers that allows them to amass a wide international readership. This examination of dominant modes of expression is implemented cognizant to the emergence of the scholarship surrounding metamodernism, including the modes of expression of performativity and the quirky. In this mixed methods study, the primary methods of content analysis and semi-structured interviews, as well as a secondary method of direct observation were employed in the collection of data.

Content analysis was used to address both research statements using a combination of quantitative and qualitative variables. While this might appear to be paradigmatically conflicting, proponents of the mixed method approach argue that the combination of qualitative and quantitative research can be integrated to yield data that is both broad and deep (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Yin, 2006). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to find out more about the phenomenon of the superstar fashion blogger in greater depth. In particular, interviews were conducted with a digital publisher, a fashion blogger, a fashion journalist and a public relations practitioner. Each interview provided multiple perspectives on the practice of fashion blogging and pertained to the forms of capital in operation, as well as the ways in which bloggers may consciously strive to express themselves to appeal to their audience. In a supporting capacity, a direct observation was carried out at a major consumer-oriented fashion event, the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival in 2013. It is important to note that the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival was chiefly a consumer event, and which meant that not all of the members of the fashion industry were present for the event. An observation of the key industry event, the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Australia, would have yielded stronger data, but access was denied to this exclusive series of
events. Nonetheless, the observation yielded contextual data in the use of digital technology by the Australian fashion industry to engage consumers. All participants and blogs were sampled purposively, so that data was derived from the most relevant sources of information to address the research questions. Finally, the data were all compared against the same research statements and question to come to an integrated analysis. Such an approach safeguarded the quality of the data, and consequently the conclusions drawn as a result of this study, which are presented in the following three chapters.
Chapter 4: The Field

The Australian fashion industry can be situated inside of a larger global fashion industry. This chapter details the findings and provides a brief analysis pertaining to the field of fashion communication in relation to other overlapping fields of fashion. In their study of London Fashion Week, Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) posited that Fashion Week was the field of fashion materialised, and identified key players within the fashion system, which include designers, models, journalists, buyers, stylists and celebrities. The field has since expanded to include the elite fashion bloggers that not only occupy the front rows of fashion shows, but are also actively engaged to mediate the interests of designers, retailers and consumers. This chapter seeks to discuss the roles of these fashion industry players in regard to the functions they perform in the field. Delving deeper into the field of fashion communication, the space of works is identified and the symbolic production of fashion is discussed in regard to how value is generated – and by whom – in the fashion industry. The results of the direct observation of the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival 2013 conducted as a secondary method of data collection provided insights into the fashion industry and how consumers are engaged in the digital age. Findings from the research interviews and content analysis pertaining to the field will also be presented and discussed in this chapter. Throughout the course of this research, it was apparent that the fashion industry is one whose boundaries are difficult to define due to an overlap of a myriad of cultural fields of that are involved in the production, dissemination and consumption of fashion. Specifically, it is important to highlight the importance of the entertainment industry in the diffusion of aesthetics, especially with celebrities being an integral part of the front row in fashion shows as their presence is likely to boost the media coverage of the show (Bruce & Kratz, 2007). However, as this study is rooted in the discipline of communication, its main focus is on fashion journalism and the people involved in content creation. In order to gain a more complete understanding of the field, this chapter first looks at the space of works involved in the creation of fashion content.
4.1 The Space of Works

For the purpose of analysis, it is important to look at the space of works alongside the space of positions held by those who produce the works (Bourdieu 1988, pg. xvii). The space of works can be defined as a symbolic space that encompasses a network of related texts or canon that may be regarded intertextually (Bourdieu, 1991, pg.30). The notion of intertextuality allows for comparisons to be drawn among relevant works within a field, and provides a framework for the identification of key themes, properties and discourses within that symbolic space (Chandler, 2007). In fashion journalism, the space of works contains fashion magazines, the fashion section of news publications, niche fashion magazines, fashion news websites, and high-profile fashion bloggers. Excluded from this space of works are fashion-centric television shows such as Fashion Police and Project Runway, as these shows do not carry out any actual fashion reportage and will be regarded as fashion entertainment instead. The space of works can be seen as a homologous to the social field that it corresponds with, in that both the works and the authors that produce them occupy positions within hierarchies in the symbolic and social spaces respectively. The space of works in early fashion journalism emerged out of France where fashion gazettes, such as Le Mercure Galant in 1724, published articles and illustrations on fashion trends with the aim of becoming barometers of the tastes of the times (Miller, 2013).

At present, key publications synonymous with being at the forefront of fashion include Vogue, Elle, Marie Claire, and Harper’s Bazaar, all of which have editions in Australia. It is interesting to note between 2014 and 2015, Elle, Marie Claire and Harper’s Bazaar saw a drop in readership in Australia, while only Vogue recorded a slight increase (Roy Morgan, 2015). Reflecting the homology of the positions occupied by each of these publications in the space of works, are the positons that the editors of these publications occupy within the hierarchies of fashion. It is noteworthy that editors of the aforementioned publications tend to be seated in the front rows of fashion weeks, which are positions of prestige, and correspondingly symbolic capital. In fact, the prolific editor of Vogue US, Anna Wintour, has been known to yield influence not only
within her own publication, but has been known to offer valuable input in the design, manufacture and marketing practices of fashion brands in the fashion industry as well (Weiss, 2014). News publications such as the *Sydney Morning Herald* also tend to cover the key fashion events in Australia. The space of works also encompasses more niche fashion magazines with lower but sustained readerships such as *LDN*, *i-D* and *Dazed & Confused*, each of which tends to focus on or feature a particular style or aesthetic. These niche publications “have a hybridised quality that straddles art, style cultures, and high fashion”, and trades on their subcultural capital (Lynge-Jorlén, 2012). It is noteworthy that one of the bloggers understudy, Susanna Lau, further cemented her presence in the field through becoming the commissioning editor the digital platform of one such niche magazine *Dazed & Confused*, which is a job she acquired through rigorous rounds of interviews (Lau, 2013b). This suggests a recognition by this niche fashion print publication of the necessary subcultural capital that Susanna Lau (also known to her readers as Susie Bubble) is deemed to possess as a result of her fashion blogging. Through the research interview with Chelsea* (i/v, 2014), it was found that although fashion magazines usually only published the images from fashion shows two months after the actual event due to print cycle schedules, magazines fulfil a role in the trade and consumption of fashion artefacts as the printing schedule coincides with the time in which the clothing from fashion week becomes available for purchase in stores. This finding supports the literature, which states that magazines serve a function in driving fashion trade and consumption (McRobbie, 1998).

In the digital space, websites such as *Women’s Wear Daily* (wwd.com) and *The Business of Fashion* (businessoffashion.com) have also become key online trade publications that provide comprehensive feature interviews, and in-depth analyses and critique of the fashion industry. While *Women’s Wear Daily*, the digital arm of the newspaper *Women’s Wear Daily*, is owned by media conglomerate Fairchild Fashion Media, *The Business of Fashion* began as a blog by present editor-in-chief Imran Amed and now boasts an international stable of staff and regular contributors, including Susanna Lau of StyleBubble.co.uk. As the key focus of this study is the phenomenon of the superstar fashion blogger, this study specifically examines the individuals who
gained entry into the industry as single entities. In 2009, blogs gained prominence when Bryan Yambao, a fashion blogger from the Philippines, emerged as one of the first bloggers in the front row of a prestigious fashion show by Dolce & Gabbana. Internationally, bloggers like Tavi Gevinson (US) and Susanna Lau (UK) also proceeded to gain attention in the field of fashion journalism, propelling their blogs into the space of works that traditionally encompassed fashion print as the main fashion media. Included in the space of works are the four blogs under study, though they may occupy varying positions in this symbolic space. These blog are: Bryanboy.com by Bryan Yambao, StyleBubble.co.uk by Susanna Lau, GaryPepperGirl.com by Nicole Warne and Frockwriter.com by Patty Huntington.

Both Bryan Yambao and Susanna Lau had their advertising managed by the NowManifest network, the digital publishing arm of Conde Nast that owns Vogue. Indeed, parallel to the entry of the blogger into the field, the blogs can also be said to occupy homologous positions in the space of works. Similarly, both Patty Huntington and Nicole Warne blogged as part of the FELLT network, where their advertising and other monetisation efforts were managed by Sydney Stockholm, before Warne left to be the first blogger managed by the elite talent agency IMG. It is pertinent to note that IMG also organises the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week (MBFWA) and Fashion Festival (MBFF), thus accounting for Warne’s high-profile involvement as MBFWA Insider in 2013 and 2014. This role involved her directly addressing digital audiences during the live-streamed interviews with key fashion insiders, which underscores her role as a digital cultural intermediary. Indeed, being approached by a digital publisher or talent agency for representation signifies a recognition Warne’s blog as a platform that is lucrative in that she possesses a readership big enough to attract advertising revenue. In Bourdieuan terms, this means that her blog boasts a level of prestige or symbolic capital within the space of works. More significantly, it is apparent that the digital influence accrued by Nicole Warne is readily convertible to economic capital. This is especially evident in contrast to the amateur fashion blogs that never gain recognition or entry into the upper rungs of the hierarchy of the space of works. A look at Independent Fashion Bloggers platform revealed there were 66 971 registered
bloggers engaged in the practice of creating fashion-related content. While print magazines have also tried to engage digital audiences through creating dedicated editorial for their digital editions, the 2013 Digital Influence Report by Technorati (2013) revealed that blogs were regarded as being more trustworthy than online magazines. This legitimises the inclusion of blogs in the space of works in fashion communication as fashion audiences are consuming content on fashion blogs. The evolution of fashion has thus seen expansion through the inclusion of fashion blogs into fashion journalism’s space of works, allowing for communication that is at once one-to-one and one-to-many.

In addition, the widespread adoption of the image-based social media platform Instagram, has become integral for brands in reaching their target audience. When asked about whether the use of Instagram has changed the way fashion is presented to consumers in the research interview, Louis* (i/v, 2014) revealed that when he gets invited to an event, he is expected to post images related to the event on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Louis* (i/v, 2014) further explained that when brands invite the media to events, “they do up the place really nicely with bottles and bouquets of flowers and sometimes they employ models to linger around”. Chelsea* (i/v, 2014) concurred with this in a separate interview where she said: “Absolutely. Not only that, I think we’re seeing that designers and brands are more careful about what images are going out.” Indeed, when asked which platform among print or digital was the most important to fashion designers, Chelsea resolutely said: “Instagram”. In a New York Times’ commentary, Fashion in the Age of Instagram, Schneier (2014) highlighted the ways in which fashion designers have adapted their events to enhance opportunities for attendees to capture images for social media sharing. Further, Chelsea* revealed that designers are now more inclined to hire a professional photographer to take a range of images to be uploaded on Instagram, emphasising the importance of quality images in appealing to audiences. The aspirational quality of these Instagram images mirrors the type of images featured in magazines as well, suggesting a level or artifice. It is thus evident that the use of these smartphone images should also be included in
the space of works of fashion communication, though this will be explored in tandem with the practice of fashion bloggers, which is the primary focus of this research.

4.2 The Symbolic Production of Fashion

While the social and symbolic spaces of fashion journalism are the central focus of this study, it is important to note that fashion designers also play a paramount role in this cultural field as they create the clothing that fashion editors draw upon when creating editorial content. Adhering to the codes of journalism, the fashion media is driven by priorities and logics more aligned with publishing, such as creative editorial, circulation numbers, and advertising revenue (McRobbie, 1998). The field of fashion journalism thus serves as a pillar of support for the fashion industry, constituting its own distinct field where fashion production and consumption overlap (McRobbie, 1998). In the literature, Kawamura (2006) highlighted the importance of the fashion journalism in the institutionalised diffusion of fashion trends and aesthetics, where members involved in fashion journalism may be regarded as gatekeepers. Indeed, in The Field of Cultural Production, Bourdieu (1993b) argues that the relevance of the creator has to be created, in that symbolic value does not spontaneously inhere in an artist or their work, but has to be conferred by other key members in a process of symbolic legitimation. In the world of art, these key members may be art dealers and publicists that not only give the creative work commercial value, but also “brings the producer onto the cycle of consecration” (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 77). In the same vein, fashion editors, journalists and bloggers can be seen to fulfil the same role as agents of validation. Further, Bourdieu (1993b) posited that the less commercially driven something appears to be, the more symbolically legitimate it is, and that publicity must be euphemised in order to have a desired impact. A review of the literature, together with the qualitative notes generated by the content analysis, suggest that cultural capital and symbolic capital can be linked to the notion of authenticity. The fact that gatekeepers trade on their own symbolic legitimacy and reputation when endorsing a designer suggests that a level of authenticity in their belief in the creator they are endorsing is required. By the same token, Bourdieu highlighted the misrecognised
nature of symbolic capital in that even though symbolic capital is most effective when it appears free of commercial interests, gatekeepers are often aware of the economic profits that can be derived by endorsing a designer. This is highlighted in the interview with Louis* (i/v, 2014), who revealed that his publication might write favourably about a brand that an editor or writer believes in, in the hopes of enticing the brand to advertise with his publication. Further, the complex relationship between symbolic capital and economic capital – where symbolic capital is fundamentally a misrecognised form of economic capital – also mirrors the tension between authenticity and artifice in performativity.

Parallel to the space of works, is the social field of fashion where members of various publications occupy corresponding positions within the hierarchies of the fashion institution. Associated with fashion magazines are key players like magazine editors, writers, creative directors, stylists, hair stylists, and make-up artists. Additionally, public relations practitioners or publicists representing fashion designers are also play an important role in facilitating the release of information and accompanying images to fashion magazines (Cassidy & Fitch, 2012). A key finding of the study is that the abovementioned pre-existing members within the field largely mediated the entry of bloggers into the field of fashion. It is evident that the invitation by designers Dolce & Gabbana for Bryanboy to sit in the front row of their fashion show next to Anna Wintour in 2009 facilitated his entry in the field. Similarly, the decision by Dazed & Confused magazine to hire Susanna Lau as the commissioning editor for their digital edition bestowed a sense of legitimacy to her position within the field. Patty Huntington already had the necessary social and cultural capital owing to her previous experience in print and radio journalism, while Nicole Warne’s presence in the field was legitimated when she became the first blogger to walk the runway for a designer at the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Australia in 2012. In The Forms of Capital, Bourdieu’s (1986) posited that each member of a cultural field was a custodian of the limits of that field, and highlighted the importance of social capital in order for new entrants to overcome the field’s boundaries. Thus, bloggers can be said to have integrated into the field of fashion journalism through the pre-existing key members in
the field. In doing so, they have also become part of the system of consecration where symbolic value surrounding a designer and their creative works may be generated through the content that fashion bloggers create.

Building on the work of Bourdieu (1984), it can be said that fashion magazine editorial teams, as well as fashion bloggers, fulfill the role of cultural intermediaries. Cultural intermediaries are defined as "those workers who come in-between creative artists and consumers (or, more generally, production and consumption)" (Negus, 2002, p. 503). As described in the Literature Review chapter, fashion bloggers occupy a unique position in field as they appear to have moved through Sawyer's (2012) model of the nested audience, often beginning as part of the public, then amateurs, connoisseurs and finally, after a process of legitimation from the field, become intermediaries. Indeed, the presence of fashion bloggers at the event under observation, the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival 2013 is of great importance to this study as it would confirm the role of the fashion blogger as an emergent cultural intermediary. Such a finding would further suggest an evolution of fashion audiences, given that they too are present on the digital platforms utilised by fashion bloggers in their remediation of fashion content. More significantly, in addressing the second research question on the emergence of new forms of capital, the incorporation of such a digitally sophisticated mobile application to this event underscores the currency of the notion of a digital capital. While this study steers away from a technologically deterministic argument, the unmitigated nature of mobile and digital technology in daily life in the developed world cannot be ignored. Further, the fact that opinion leaders exists in this digital space and may exert influence, both through online content and in person at events, lends weight to the notion of digital capital.

Pertinently, digital communication may be regarded as unilinear as consumers’ use of social media also has a trickle up effect on the production of fashion. The interview with Chelsea* revealed,
If an image from a runway gets shared 400 times and then another outfit gets shared 4000 times, well a designer can consider that when they go into production of that collection. Whereas it used to be that the consumer opinion didn’t really matter, and we were dictated to by the fashion media. (Chelsea*, i/v, 2014)

In addition to the incorporation of a mobile application for attendees to make purchases, there were also social media based competitions that encouraged event attendees to take Instagram selfies accompanied with a specific hashtag. At the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival 2013, mineral water brand San Pellegrino held an Instagram contest with the hashtag #CEXSANP (denoting Christopher Esber X San Pellegrino), which allowed consumers to enter a competition for a Christopher Esber garment. Similarly, Tempust Wines collaborated with fashion label Aje to create an installation of an intricate gold-sequinned Aje dress in the post-show hall called The Hub with instructions to snap a creative selfie with the hashtag #TEMPUSTWOlovesMBFFS. Similarly, the gift bag contained a Sportscraft card that prompted attendees to “join the conversation” by following the Sportscraft’s Instagram account (@sportscraft), and share photos taken of the runway to #sportscraftrunway, essentially crowdsourcing images from event attendees for the wider audience on Instagram. The use of hashtags to engage event attendees signals an attempt at harnessing participation of the consumer as the diffuser of aesthetics to their peers. As Bourdieu (1993b) highlighted, the wider public cannot be excluded from the symbolic production of belief as they contribute to the value of the work of art by appropriating it materially through consumption, or symbolically through appreciation.

Hence, although fashion designers are the key producers of creative works in fashion, their status and more specifically, the position that they occupy with the field, requires legitimation by other players in the production of belief. The creator, as Bourdieu (1993b, p.77) suggested, has to be authorised by other members of the field to be

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3 A hashtag is a word or phrase preceded with a hash (#) sign, which enables the search of content relating to the word or phrase on social media sites. The main hashtag associated with the observed event was #MBFFSsydney
brought into the “cycle of consecration”. In fashion, the institution of diffusion largely comprises of the fashion media, namely fashion editor, writers, fashion stylists, hair stylists, make-up-artists and photographers and creative directors. However, trading on their digital influence, fashion bloggers have also assimilated into this system of symbolic production. Further, while members of the fashion audience used to exist in the periphery of the field of fashion, they are now regarded as the epicentre of their own peer group through which aesthetics and trends may be diffused, which will be further elaborated on in the following section. While this study focuses specifically on members in fashion communication, it is also important to note that celebrities and high profile individuals also play a key role in the consecration of fashion designer’s works. For example, fashion commentators have observed that whenever the Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton, wears an outfit by a certain fashion brand or designer, the same outfit tends to sell out soon after. Dubbed the “Kate Effect” (Thomas-Bailey & Wood, 2012), Kate Middleton has also been credited for the growing interest in British fashion in the US fashion market, which has in turn influenced trade. Therefore, although celebrities, socialites, models and other public figures fall outside the scope of fashion journalism, images of them are often appropriated and featured in fashion editorial content, making them indirectly a part of the field of fashion journalism.

4.3 The Observation: The Spectacle of MBFF 2013

As part of the study, this researcher observed two fashion shows at the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Festival (MBFF) 2013 in Sydney. In order to highlight and preserve the self-reflexivity of this method, this section is written in the present tense. Points of observation included: the segmentation of the audience according to ticket-type; who attended the event; who were visible at the event; the behaviour of attendees during shows; the interactions between attendees after the show; the setting of the event; as well as the activity on the #MBFFSydney hashtag across social media platforms. In total, two shows were attended on 22nd August 2013, where the researcher purchased a front-row ticket to the first show called the MBFWA Trends, which included a backstage tour before the commencement of the show. The second show,
the InStyle Red Carpet Runway was complimentary as it was facilitated by the event organisers following an email sent to them notifying them of the observation. It should be noted that the researcher requested entry into the Day One Opening Gala but was denied entry, as it was a restricted-access industry event.

Prior to the show, the researcher arrives just over an hour early to observe the physical setting of the location, which is Sydney Town Hall. The building is well-lit and flags surrounding the Sydney Town Hall indicate that the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Festival is underway. Event branding is also visible on the front steps of Town Hall as well as on the two pillars that frame the main entrance to the building where a red carpet has been rolled out for event attendees. At the door, there are two men in black suits with earpieces who do not check your ticket but merely nod you into the venue, which begs the question of whether their roles are perfunctory, and therefore a part of the performative spectacle of the fashion festival. In the Vestibule, that is the main foyer of the Town Hall, a reception desk was set up with three lines partitioned with retractable belts, directing attendees to different queues depending on ticket type, namely: the Concierge for enquiries, the Box Office for general-seating ticket holders, and the Front Row & Fabulous A-list Access (represented in Photograph 1). This way, attendees are segregated according to the amount of economic capital they were willing to expend for this consumer-targeted experience. Notably, as this is a consumer event, access to the front row was commensurate with economic capital invested, as opposed to the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Australia (MBFWA), which is an exclusive industry event run by the same organisers of MBFF. This suggests that in an industry setting, other forms of capital such as symbolic capital, institutionalised cultural capital and possibly social capital are required to gain entry as the boundaries of fashion week appear to be closely guarded by the gatekeepers, that is designers and the event organisers, that oversee the guest lists.
While awaiting the pre-show, attendees photograph selfies against the sponsorship backdrop containing the event logo, as well as the logos of event sponsors. The researcher notes the presence of Jonathan Pease, who was a judge on *Australia’s Next Top Model* and who now owns a creative agency, in the lobby of the building. Upon further research after the event, it was found that Pease contributed in the capacity of creative director to the MBFF, lending the event an air of authenticity in terms of creating a fashion atmosphere typically only experienced by industry professionals. On the other hand, the carefully constructed environment to excite event-goers into taking selfies with sponsor logos also suggests an artifice. This tension between authenticity and artifice is indicative of the performativity of the event. An hour before the first fashion show at the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival, a group of event attendees including this researcher congregate in the Vestibule of Sydney Town Hall and are met with a lady in a black MBFF Sydney t-shirt and black jeans who proceeds to take this group through the backstage tour that comes with the purchase of Front Row & Fab ticket. All personnel associated with the event are differentiated from event goers by their black outfits, which contrasts with the colourful array of outfits.
donned by attendees as part of their participation in the spectacle of the event. The tour first guides the group backstage where rows of clothing for the various runway shows are stored, some of which are being wheeled around by volunteers and stylists in preparation for the next show. The group is then led down a corridor towards the room where hair and make-up preparation for the runway shows take place.

The hair and make-up room is a hive of activity as the guide introduces the group to Mike Thompson of the Redken group, which is the official hair partner for the event. Thompson mentions that a lot of time and effort goes into the resultant hairstyles for the runway shows as a team of Redken “Hair Architects” meet with the show’s designers three months prior to discuss and conceptualise hairstyles that complement the collection of clothing presented, highlighting the collaborative nature of such a production. Next the group is introduced to Jon Pulitano, who proceeds to conduct a hair styling demonstration using one of Redken’s latest products. The group is reminded that the products would be available for purchase after the show, emphasising the fact that this is a consumer-targeted event. Here, with the help of two-bored looking models with their hair in varying stages of completion, Pulitano tells the group that having a low side-part is on trend this season. The education of attendees on the latest trends could be seen as an attempt at making the group feel like insiders cognizant of the latest trends. Once more, the tension indicative of performativity is present here as on the one hand, such an informative backstage tour helps create an authentic experience. On the other hand, the fact that the group needs to be informed of trends suggests a contrivance with our desire to be insiders for a night.

Next, the guide introduces the group to Dean, a producer for Maybelline. He tells the group about how his make-up artists met with the designers prior to this event to discuss looks for the runway show. Dean also tells the group that the look for the season is bronzed, natural and ethereal, and sketches of this look are showed to the group via Dean’s iPad. He then introduces Maybelline’s new product, and reminds the group to drop by The Hub at the end of the show where we can get our free...
makeovers and purchase Maybelline products. The constant reminder to proceed to The Hub to purchase products highly reflects the fact that this specific arena of MBFF is driven by the economic interests of sponsors, where attendees are encouraged to consume products under the guise of inclusion in the industry. Additionally, the exposure of the group to the key individuals that fulfil their roles in symbiosis with the larger system of this major fashion event highlights the collective effort that is required in cultural production (Becker, 1974).

After the backstage tour, the group is led to the Centennial Hall for the MBFWA Trends Show, which is the grand main hall where the runway shows take place. MBFWA refers to the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Australia show that occurred earlier in the year in April 2013. This runway representation is a rehash of some of the outfits that were featured at MBFWA for industry insiders to preview. Seats are differentiated in that the front row chairs are white in colour, which blends with the runway. Seats in the back rows are red in colour. The first three rows have gift bags on each seat, consisting of samples and vouchers from sponsors such as Maybelline, Redken, ASOS, Sportscraft, San Pellegrino and Mercedes Benz. The gift bag also contains a printed newsletter edited by Romy Friedman of StyleMeRomy.com, a blogger who began her career as a stylist and creative director for print publications like Marie Claire, Elle and Vogue Australia. Her embodied cultural capital as a stylish fashion insider together with her ability to write engagingly can be seen as a tool to engage attendees on a personable level. Additionally, trays of San Pellegrino drinks are only offered to people in the first three rows. This is notable because the first three rows consist of people who bought the more expensive tickets (Front-row and Fabulous, and A-list Access). This reinforces the consumption-driven nature of the event where the perks you receive are commensurate with the amount of money you invested towards the event.

While waiting for the show to begin, the researcher strikes a conversation with other attendees in the front row. The lady sitting to the left of the researcher is a clinical psychiatrist, and her sister seated next to her is not in the fashion industry. The people on to the right of the researcher appear to be a mother and her two daughters who
are not a part of the fashion industry, and so may be regarded as fellow consumers who bought their way into the front row. A second tour group arrives and takes their place in the front row on the other side of the runway facing the researcher. This group of attendees were all colleagues from a recruitment agency that aided in the recruitment of staff and volunteers for this Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival, but are not directly a part of the fashion industry. The lack of recognisable or authentic fashion industry personnel in these front rows underscores the artifice of this event as one that was staged to reach consumers. Thus, while fashion week typically plays a role as a trade fair that facilitates fashion buying for boutiques and department stores for eventual consumption (Skov, 2006), an event like MBFF is novel as it bypasses retail stores to facilitate direct purchases by consumers through an experiential event. It should also be noted everyone in the front row, which is the most visible row, made an effort to dress fashionably, adding to this collective spectacle. This is supported by Photograph 2 below, which shows that only front-row attendees were visible due to the lighting at MBFF 2013. As Enwistle & Rocamora (2006) found, the members in the front row often contribute to the performance that is Fashion Week, or in this case, MBFF 2013. Indeed, audience members are not just “performing’ for each other in this space, but for their peers on social media as well, as many attendees are taking selfies on their mobile phones, some of which can be found on Twitter and Instagram through the hashtag #MBFFSydney. The fact that many members in the audience have their smart phones out to take pictures or videos throughout the night using the event hashtag potentially extends the discourse happening in the arena of Sydney Town Hall into the wider digital sphere as well. Further, while waiting for the show to begin a representative from the mobile application Booodl approaches the front row and encourages that front row to download the application so that we can purchase outfits as they appear on the runway. This demonstrates how digital technologies are increasingly integrated into opportunities for the immediate generation of economic capital for fashion designers.
Once all remaining attendees are seated, the light dims and an advertisement of Mercedes Benz featuring supermodel Karlie Kloss in a convertible driving alongside wild horses on an open road appears on the screen. This advertisement essentially marries the aspirational nature of luxury cars and the world of fashion. After the video, the screen splits down the centre to reveal a model for the label Romance Was Born, signalling the commencement of the runway show. It is interesting to note that the garments showcased have already been presented at MBFWA 2013, a few months prior to MBFF 2013. This means that the clothing has already been previewed by industry insiders, and that all the official fashion buying and production of garments in the right quantities have already occurred in the lead up to this consumer-centric event. In this session, a total of 169 outfits are presented on the runway taking about 40 minutes. More significantly, there is a booklet on each seat with a list of outfits and their descriptions to aid audience members in the purchasing process through the Booodl mobile application.

Immediately after the show all attendees are directed towards The Hub, which is also the only pathway to exit the venue, as all other exits are sealed off. The Hub is located
in the lower level of Town Hall and is a wide expansive hall with booths for make-overs and product testing that facilitates the purchase of products of participating sponsors by attending consumers. The busiest sections of the hall are the Maybelline and Redken booths where attendees are queuing up to get makeovers, and subsequently purchase the products that were used on them. This is represented in Photograph 3. This is made conspicuous by the long counter with eight cashiers ensuring an efficient shopping experience, thereby reinforcing the objective of this event. The only exclusive section of The Hub is the Star Lounge situated on a raised platform, and set apart from the hair and make-up purchasing booths. Only people with the orange coloured wrist bands imprinted with “Star Lounge Access” are permitted entry, which is a continuation of social segregation based on the individual’s monetary investment in attending this event. Attendees allowed in this section consisted of fellow members of the front row, who are offered a complimentary alcoholic drink and Magnum ice-cream, indicating more perks on the basis of monetary expenditure.

Photograph 3. Makeover Booths in The Hub at MBFF 2013

In a different section of The Hub, fashion blogger Margaret Zhang can be seen milling about the Booodl booth, where her role is to take photos of attendees that she feels
are stylish, and feature them on Booodl’s Twitter and Instagram platforms. This potential for attendees to have their outfits featured and validated recreates the performativity Fashion Week, where people tend to put a great deal of thought and effort into their appearance as an expression of their embodied cultural capital (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006). Zhang’s presence at this event is of special relevance to this study as it confirms the role of the fashion blogger as a key cultural intermediary in engaging fashion consumers. The role that Zhang plays in this physical setting, mediating the interests between consumers and brands, is a complex one. While consumers may read Zhang’s blog, *Shine by Three*, and know that she is a law student at the University of Sydney, they do not actually know her in person. Thus, the enactment of Zhang’s role as a photographer who is capturing and disseminating outfit images of well-dressed attendees cannot be taken to reflect social capital with attendees, even though interaction is present. Instead, Zhang exercises her symbolic capital to identify trendy attendees, and subsequently utilises her digital influence to promote them as an extension of the performativity of the event. Notably, the interview with digital publisher Daniel Kjellsson of Sydney Stockholm revealed that bloggers not only earn revenue through advertising, but through event appearances as well. Therefore, while it was not confirmed that Zhang was paid by Booodl to be their event ambassador, it is common practice for bloggers to charge fees for such appearances, which potentially indicates the exchange of economic capital between Booodl and Zhang. While The Hub is still bustling with activity, the researcher returns to the Vestibule to attend the second show, the Instyle RedCarpet Show, this time with general entry tickets arranged by event organisers for the purpose of this research. The only noticeable difference was the lack of attention towards attendees seated in the back rows. However, all attendees were similarly guided to The Hub after the show, indicating that even with the purchase of a cheaper ticket, the main objective of the event is to encourage consumption.

A look at the #MMFFSydney hashtags confirm that many photos were taken and shared via Twitter and Instagram. The busiest day for this hashtag was on the first day of the event, which was the opening gala for industry insiders only. There were no
tickets for sale on this day as this preview was invite-only. Upon contact with the event organisers, the researcher requested to attend this night but was refused entry, though a general admissions ticket for Day Two was offered instead. Thus, television personalities and other industry insiders in attendance largely generated the tweets on Day One. Pictured in the front row of the Day One Opening Gala was model and television personality, Ruby Rose. An examination of the tweets on Day 2 of the Fashion Festival revealed less celebrity involvement but more tweets from public relations companies that represented the various brands involved in the Fashion Festival, fashion brands themselves, the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival Sydney account, and one professional fashion photographer who appeared to have access to all areas of the event. Individuals that did tweet tended to be amateur bloggers that did not have a large following on Twitter, and were perhaps new to the “game”. This also calls into focus the hierarchy that exists within fashion blogging. While there are thousands of fashion bloggers globally, only one blogger Margaret Zhang was conferred a high profile at this event. It is also interesting to note that Zhang is managed by IMG, which is the same company that organised the MBFF 2013. This signifies the importance of recognition from the industry in order to be legitimated as an insider. Zhang had a Twitter following of 18 300 at the time of MBFF 2013, and was also photographed extensively for the event, making her involvement highly visible through the event’s hashtag. Bloggers with a following of about 2000 also seemed have been invited to the exclusive Day One Gala, though it did not seem that they were given front row seats, nor were they photographed. The only indication of their presence was through their Tweets using the #MBFFSydney hashtag. This contrast in treatment between Zhang and the lesser known bloggers signifies that the possession of a high-level of digital influence is indeed an important asset in securing a position of prestige and privilege in the social arena of the MBFF 2013. This further lends weight to the need for conceptualising an emergent form of capital enabled by digital communication.

On a separate note, amateur bloggers who attended the event tended to share images of their outfits, indicating a level of performance in their practice that is reflective of
their habitus. A brief examination of attendees’ Twitter biographies revealed that the most active users of the event hashtag tended to work in public relations, marketing and blogging. Therefore, although it was recorded earlier in the observation that many attendees were seen documenting their experience by taking pictures and images on their smartphones, there was little evidence of these images on Twitter. Selfies of attendees and their companions for the event were also interspersed with more professionally taken images posted by IMG and Getty Images in the #MBFFSydney feed on Twitter. In contrast, a search of the same hashtag on Facebook yielded posts by organisation and businesses, and negligible audience participation. That is not to say that no pictures of the event taken by audience members were shared on Facebook, merely that if there were more photos, they might have been shared in a more personal context, sans a publically traceable hashtag. A search of the contest hashtag #CEXSANP on Twitter yielded seven entries while the other contest hashtag #TempustwoLovesMBFFS yielded one entry to the contest, revealing that the digital engagement between brands and attendees was not successful.

4.4 Chapter Summary

Before delving into the field of fashion journalism, this chapter first looked at the parallel space of works that encompassed fashion journalism and the positions occupied within it. Beginning in France in 1724, fashion journalism was traditionally represented through print, which has carried through to the present with publications like Vogue and Harper’s Bazaar being viewed at the pinnacle of fashion journalism. Other occupants in the space of works of fashion journalism include niche fashion magazines, fashion sections of news publications and, more recently, online fashion news websites and fashion blogs. The positions that these key publications occupy in the space of works mirrors the positions occupied by their accompanying editors in the field of fashion journalism. Based on the London Fashion Week study (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006), industry events like Fashion Week can be regarded as a physical manifestation of the field because where editors and journalists are seated, as well as their social interactions, often reflect their level of symbolic capital or recognition in
the industry. The entry of the superstar fashion blogger into the front rows of fashion shows signals a legitimation of their position within the field of fashion. Indeed, an investigation into the career trajectories of the four bloggers understudy revealed obvious pivotal points facilitated by pre-existing agents that were gatekeepers of the boundaries of the field. The agents that have played a role in the legitimation of the bloggers understudy include fashion designers, hiring managers at print publications, and talent agencies.

The data presented in this chapter was mainly derived from a direct observation of two fashion shows at the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival Sydney (MBFF) 2013, which is a consumer event. As the request for entry into an industry event, the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Australia (MBFWA) was denied, this method was relegated to a secondary method of data collection, which serves to provide a context for the information gathered through the interviews and content analysis. A significant finding of the observation is the deep entrenchment of performativity in the fashion industry that precedes the emergence of fashion blogs. Indeed, the spectacle of the observed fashion festival contained both the authenticity of a fashion event and an artifice that persuaded consumption. It can further be argued that the aspirational nature of images posted on designers and bloggers’ Instagram accounts is not that different from the editorial photographs in a fashion magazine. This possibly has to do with the aspirational standards that the fashion industry is often associated with. While the idea of performativity in fashion precedes blogging, it was also found that successful bloggers tend to be aware of this performativity and thus aligns their practices with the fashion industry’s agenda, as seen in Margaret Zhang’s involvement in the MBFF 2013. As a result of acquiring legitimation from the field, successful fashion bloggers hold a special position as a cultural intermediary, where they oscillate between the positions of elite fashion insider and subculturally relevant audience member. This in turn adds to their authenticity in the effective engagement of both the producers and consumers of fashion. Indeed, Zhang’s high profile presence at the observed event underscored her importance in mediating the interests of fashion producers, retailers and consumers. Hence, a significant finding of the observation in regard to the field is
that the boundaries of the field has expanded to include the superstar fashion blogger. The fact that Zhang was engaged to play a key role in a major consumer-targeted fashion can be seen as an attempt at tapping into her digital influence, supporting the currency of an emergent capital rooted in digital practices. In tracing the forms of capital that puts a blogger on a trajectory to success, it is proposed that a combination of digital influence, embodied cultural capital and a tendency toward the performative, puts a blogger in good stead to accrue recognition or symbolic capital from the fashion industry. This in turn leads to opportunities for economic capital through advertising and event appearances. Overall, this chapter outlined the structures present in the symbolic production of value in the fashion industry. The following chapters will address the trajectories to dominance based on the acquisition of operative forms of capital in greater depth. Additionally, notions of performativity and the quirky occurring at the level of expression will be further explored in the context of the habitus.
Chapter 5: The Forms of Capital

Building on the data gathered in the previous chapter on the field of fashion, this chapter explores the forms of capital that are in operation in the fashion industry, namely: social, economic, cultural, symbolic and digital. Over the course of this study, instances of these various forms of capital were recorded to illuminate the trajectory and position takings of the four bloggers understudy. Indeed, the pattern emerging from the field chapter suggests that successful fashion bloggers tend to follow a trajectory that often begins with a combination of digital capital and embodied cultural capital, often leading to the acquisition of other forms of capital. In order for a fashion blogger to gain acceptance within the fold of the fashion elite, it is first necessary to undergo a process of legitimation, which in turn opens up more opportunities for the further acquisition of various forms of capital. By highlighting the forms of capital that are crucial to the success of the individual, it becomes possible to identify how bloggers who are seeking field recognition can move up the hierarchies of fashion.

While this study is not a comparative study between fashion editors and bloggers, the data shows that there are obvious differences between fashion bloggers and members of the traditional fashion media in the way they were legitimated as players in the field of fashion. The chapter begins with the notion of social capital as it provides an understanding of the network of individuals that play various roles in the production, diffusion and consumption of fashion aesthetics. Following the results on fashion networks, this chapter further outlines the knowledge, assets and competencies necessary for a successful career in fashion blogging. Lastly, this chapter documents the growing value of digital influence in the presentation of fashion, and the new economic opportunities created as a result of it. The data from the semi-structured interviews and content analyses are the focus of this chapter and will be used to explain the significance of certain occurrences and practices that aid in the individual blogger’s advancement in the field.
5.1 Social Capital

A cultural field is an arena of contestation for dominance within a social hierarchy. As such, an individual’s social connections or networks are especially important (as demonstrated in the chapter on the Field), where pre-existing members facilitated each superstar blogger’s entry into the field. Social capital is defined as a durable network of actual or potential connections based on mutual acquaintance and recognition in an institutionalised setting (Bourdieu, 1986). Within the field of fashion journalism, social capital is also pertinent to the exchange of information and the access to exclusive news among the gatekeepers of the fashion industry. The importance of cordial relationships was illuminated in the research interview with Louis* where he divulged:

If you want to progress, if you want to get scoops, you have to maintain some kind of friendly relationships with brands and the agencies that represent the brands. So you have to do your schmoozing, your PR-ing [sic] with, you know, like your air-kisses, your nice little greetings whenever you email them... that try to you know maintain relationships in the hope that they will give you scoops. (Louis*, i/v, 2014)

This consciousness implicitly acknowledges the interconnectedness of the different roles involved in the diffusion of fashion trends. Indeed, the interactions between journalists and other members of the field such as PR personnel appear to be deeply ingrained in institutional practice, and are acquired through a systematic entrenchment within institutional hierarchies. On his inclination to maintain relationships, Louis* succinctly surmised, "it’s definitely a symbiotic relationship - we need them for stories and they need us for coverage". By the same token, the focus on maintaining one’s professional or social networks is likewise reflected in fashion PR and their relationship with members of the fashion media:
It’s very important for us to keep those relationships going, I think for us, we want to make sure we’re not only talking to them when we have event news and things like that, but listening to them when they’ve got feedback for us then we can change and evolve with what we’re offering at each event each season. (Chelsea*, i/v, 2014)

The importance of being sociable also factors into the interactions of bloggers. On building relationships with people in the fashion industry Daniel Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) said: "The network I think is important. It makes you stronger". Reflecting on his own practice he says,

If I look at myself as a writer, I always get my best sort of input when I can talk to other people about something, that sort of opens your mind a little... if you can choose, make it a social activity absolutely. (Kjellsson, i/v, 2013)

Kjellsson further added that regardless of the type of industry or niche a blogger is in, it is important to get involved with key organisations, not only to aid in blog metrics through increase awareness of the blog, but to expedite news and knowledge gathering. The willingness of a fashion blogger to be social can also be discussed in regard to the habitus, which will be explored further in the following chapter.

Throughout the coding period, it was evident that fashion events were highly social as evidenced by the multitude of selfies with designers posted on bloggers’ Instagram accounts. In an Instagram post by Bryan Yambao (Bryanboy) at a fashion show, he is captured posing with Jason Wu and Philip Lim, who are part of a rising group of fashion designers of Asian descent in New York, which he captioned "The Gaysian Mafia". Similarly, at the Philip Lim 3.1 Spring/Summer 2015 fashion show at New York Fashion Week, Yambao posted an image of him and other fashion bloggers in the front row, including Nicole Warne (Gary Pepper Girl), Margaret Zhang (Shine by Three), Rumi Neely (FashionToast), Aimee Song (Song of Style) and Tina Craig (Bag Snob). The image
was captioned "Asian section at 3.1 Philip Lim", and underscores the ways in which relationships may also be built on commonalities such as racial backgrounds.

Bryanboy’s entry into the field was facilitated by his acquaintance with designers like Dolce & Gabbana and Marc Jacobs, after attracting their attention though his highly favourable reviews of these designers online. In an interview with *The Wall Street Journal*, Bryanboy is quoted as saying:

> The first fashion show I went to was for Fall 2009. I remember that I was sitting in the front row, next to Sally Singer [who was fashion news and features director of Vogue before being appointed editor of T, the New York Times Style Magazine] and Anna Wintour [editor in chief of Vogue]. I was thinking, “Oh my God, this is a seating mistake – what am I doing sitting beside these people?” (Yan, 2011, para. 9)

It should be noted that the high visibility of the front row at fashion shows in the media further highlights how social capital can be part of the performance and spectacle of the event, allowing the enactment of position takings within the field to be observed. Three years after his first encounter with Anna Wintour, Bryan Yambao became a part of the same blogging network as Anna Wintour on the NowManifest platform, which was owned by Conde Nast that also publishes the print edition of American Vogue. Also part of the now-defunct fashion blogger network NowManifest was Rumi Neely of FashionToast.com, who is Yambao’s constant companion at fashion events, whom he refers to as his “bestfriend” (Yambao, 2015, para.2). In addition to the social activities undertaken by the individual as an adult within their chosen cultural field, social capital also pertains to the familial background of the individual that contributes to the development of their tastes and dispositions (Bourdieu, 1986). While Yambao did not come from a wealthy family connected to the fashion of publishing industry, he credits his mother’s collection of fashion magazines for piquing his interest in fashion from a young age. Indeed, this early socialisation in the appreciation of fashion may be regarded as a key contributor in Yambao’s acquisition
of embodied cultural capital or a habitus that afforded him a discriminating eye for his own fashion style and aesthetic.

Social capital has proven to be useful in the entry of other individuals into traditional fashion journalism too. When recounting her induction into the field of fashion, Patty Huntington revealed that a media job was something that she never actively pursued but was an opportunity presented to her by way of her boyfriend who worked in radio broadcast in Paris. Thus, her foray into radio began:

...just because of the fact that, I mean, you know, he was my partner and I just hang around and... it was really like being at the epicentre of the pop culture of Paris... I started doing voices and jingles and I wound up doing a morning chat show [laughs]. And then I started going to the shows and doing some stuff for the magazine and recording interviews and I come back and sell the interviews to Australia so it kind of just happened from there. (Huntington, i/v, 2013)

This eventually led to full-time positions in the print media on Australia. Having spent close to 20 years in the media, Patty’s accumulated social capital is evidenced by her backstage access to some shows at MBFWA 2014, which she covered on her blog and featured on social media. In the interview, Patty mentioned that she had a good friend at the Sydney Morning Herald who often looked at her blog for potential stories that can be hyperlinked to the articles on the publication’s website. This indicates her possession of social capital with individuals in traditional journalism, which could have arisen from her institutionalised cultural capital, given her long-term immersion in the field. Huntington also appears to have good relationships with models and their agents as they provide her with exclusive images for her blog Frockwriter.com.

For Susanna Lau, Stylebubble.co.uk began in her bedroom as a platform for her to feature or write about fashion in a way that was not addressed in the mainstream fashion media. In an interview with her former publication of employment Dazed & Confused, Lau revealed that her blog allowed her to connect with other like-minded
bloggers through the Internet (Mulhall, 2014). From the content analysis, one such blogger whose friendship preceded Lau’s involvement in mainstream publishing is Tommy Ton, of the blog Jak & Jil, which he has since rebranded to TommyTon.com. Having blogged consistently for three years, Lau continued to blog after acquiring a job as the commissioning editor of Dazed & Confused’s online publication DazedDigital.com. While her eloquent critique of the fashion industry gained her a steady readership, Lau’s acquisition of social capital appears to have been facilitated by her appointment as commissioning editor for DazedDigital.com, as her position as an editor further secured her entry into exclusive events. On a more personal front, Lau’s long-time boyfriend Steve Salter who runs the men’s fashion blog StyleSavage.blogspot.com, is also often mentioned in the form of affectionate anecdotes. Her close real-life ties with other people involved in blogging also aided in cross-promotion in the form of hyperlinking, where bloggers may feature each other on a blogroll – a symbiotic practice commonly adopted by bloggers to make known to their readers their network of similar blogs (Bruns 2007b). This was evident in Lau’s earlier iteration of her blog, where her blog featured a list of fashion, arts and culture blogs in a permanent column in the left-hand panel of the blog. This is also mentioned in the interview with Daniel, where he explained:

Relating to the history of fashion blogging, six or seven years ago when we were a part of the birth of this phenomenon, the big Scandinavian bloggers there was basically a bunch of friends. And they grew big because they always linked around to each other and they all gained from that. And that was extremely powerful as well. (Daniel, i/v, 2013)

Indeed, while the practice of hyperlinking often stems from the personal networks of the blogger, it has the potential to increase one’s digital influence by acquiring new readers through other bloggers’ readership. It should be noted that Lay was also a part of the elite NowManifest blogging network, which included Bryan Yambao and Anna Wintour among its ranks. In the blog posts analysed, Susanna Lau also mentioned her sister Louisa Lau, a fellow blogger and art director, as well as her cousin Elizabeth Lau,
owner of a trendy fashion boutique in Hong Kong. While it does not appear that she has benefitted monetarily from these connections, the portrayal of her social environment to her audience does lend her a relatable persona that appeals to readers. This is congruent to a study outlined in the literature review of this thesis, which posited that bloggers who revealed more personal details about their lives tended to gain a bigger following (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). While she does not explicitly tell her readers what her family does, she has mentioned in a blog post that she grew up travelling the world with her family that owned multiple businesses, namely restaurants, in the UK and Hong Kong (Lau, 2013, December 11). Her familial social capital is something that will be considered in regard to the formation of the habitus that will be outlined in the following chapter.

Another blogger under study who also demonstrated an awareness of the strength of collaborating with other bloggers is Nicole Warne. Throughout the coding period, it was found that in every country she went to, she tended to team up with another blogger who could take photos of her in various outfits, often using the locale as a backdrop for her street photo-shoots. Warne would then post a hyperlink to these bloggers/photographers when she featured the photos in a blog post. Apart from other bloggers, Warne’s long-time boyfriend Luke Shadbolt, who is a professional photographer, is frequently credit for the photos on her blog as well. Indeed, Shadbolt was also credited for the images on Warne’s online vintage clothing store, Gary Pepper Vintage, which was the precursor to her prolific blog. A key finding of the study is that Warne operates on a highly performative level, as she is visible in front of the camera in 100% of her sampled blog posts. Her awareness of the importance of quality photographs for her blog is complemented by her access to people adept at taking good photos. The inception of the Gary Pepper Girl blog in 2011 arose as an accompaniment to an online store that Nicole Warne set up called Gary Pepper Vintage. However, by February 2011, her blog soon eclipsed her online store, which saw Nicole being inundated with gifts from other Australian designers to feature on her blog. It is known that prior to setting up her online store, she completed internships in the styling departments of high fashion publications Grazia and Harper’s
It is not known whether or not her relationships with fashion designers started as result of her internships or after she became a business owner though. Nonetheless, Warne’s social capital was evident from 2011 where she started receiving invites to exclusive events such as Fashion Week in 2011, as well as the grand opening of a Louis Vuitton Store in Sydney. In a post in 2011, Warne recounts how she first met a few designers in at Fashion Week who later sent her clothing to model on her Gary Pepper blog. This suggests a high level of trust in Nicole’s ability to promote these designers’ clothing, and also symbolises the growth of her personal network. The fact that Nicole started out as a blogger in the FELLT network, which represents Patty Huntington and Zanita Whittington, also highlights her social capital among other influential fashion bloggers in Australia.

Nicole’s involvement in the fashion industry continued to grow as she was appointed the official MBFWA Fashion Insider in 2013, and 2014. Throughout those events, Nicole is seen wearing some of the designer’s creations as she interviews them for the event’s digital livestream. In a post coded for this study, Nicole wrote about how she decided to wear the latest pieces by designers Michael Lo Sordo and Toni Maticevski saying that they “both happened to be dear friends” and she wanted to capture their playful spirit at MBFWA 2014. Similarly, on the fourth day of MBFWA 2014, Nicole is featured on her blog wearing a replica of a dress by Alice McCall on the same day, where she reveals that she had visited the Alice McCall showroom the week before for the dress fitting. This suggests a combination of social capital, symbolic capital, and embodied cultural capital, as her friendly relationship with this designer is apparent in the way she is honoured through being gifted with the latest outfit, which she is capable of physically embodying, given her modelesque physique.

In 2015, Warne hinted at a big collaboration with other bloggers, namely Chiara Ferragni of TheBlondeSalad.com and Zanita Whittington of Zanita.com.au, which was revealed to be a cover feature for the magazine Lucky (Warne, 2015). There appears to a few forms of capital in operation in that project. It is known that Warne has been friends with FELLT blogger Zanita Whittington from the time she launched her blog in
2011. Warne has also been photographed at events with Chiara Ferragni before the Lucky magazine project was devised. The fact that these three superstar fashion bloggers are acquainted indicates the presence of social capital. More pertinently, the fact that they are often photographed together exposes each blogger to the readership of the other bloggers who may not already know about them, thereby extending each blogger’s digital reach. Lastly, that Lucky magazine, a print publication whose purpose is to get readers to purchase featured items, chose to feature three influential members of online fashion publishing indicates that Lucky recognises the economic potential by targeting the readership of these bloggers. In regard to metamodern expression, there is an element of performativity present, as the fact that the featured bloggers are acquainted in real life suggests an authenticity. On the other hand, the way they are enacting their friendship with the purpose of promoting next season’s clothing for a shopping magazine is undeniably artificial. Indeed, the impression of bloggers being cordial to each other adds to the performance of the social spectacle surrounding fashion. It is noteworthy that Warne was pictured on Bryan Yambao’s Instagram sitting in the front row of a New York Fashion Week 2015 show with their arms linked.

Through the examination of the social capital present in interactions of fashion bloggers over the course of this study, it is found that social capital does not exist in a vacuum, but it closely linked to other forms of capital as well. As demonstrated by Susanna Lau and Patty Huntington, social capital may be accrued through institutionalised cultural capital, where the immersion of the blogger in the traditional hierarchies of fashion may afford them the necessary contacts to facilitate front row seats or backstage access. Social capital may also be accumulated through being a part of a network of bloggers that work together, creating opportunities for cross-promotion. Elite platforms like NowManifest created by Swedish blogger Elin Kling, and acquired by Conde Nast, served as a network between prolific bloggers and editors to be identified as upper echelons of fashion journalism. Specifically, both Bryan Yambao and Susanna Lau were part of this network, together with Vogue editors Anna Wintour and Anna Dello Russo. This supports Bourdieu’s (1986) notion that there is value in the
associations an individual keeps, where the members within a particular social group all contribute to a collective credential. Drawing on Bourdieu, Biggart (2002, p. 78) posited that social capital is as much about exclusion as it is inclusion – a pertinent point demonstrated in the exclusive invite-only nature of fashion industry events. Although NowManifest has ceased operation as of February 2015, the same bloggers and editors are still invited to the same shows, and are still pictured interacting at fashion events. A similar network is also observed in Australia, with the inception of FELLT, where digital publisher Sydney Stockholm manages advertising across all FELLT blogs. Before Nicole Warne joined the international talent agency IMG, she was also a FELLT blogger alongside the likes of Patty Huntington, Margaret Zhang and Zanita Whittington. The social interactions documented by photographers as well as bloggers themselves on their blogs or social media add to the performative spectacle of fashion events, reproducing the hierarchies inherent in the exclusive world of fashion.

5.2 Cultural Capital

Drawing on the literature, cultural capital may be defined as tangible or intangible assets that reflect a person’s knowledge, competences and dispositions that may be used to further their position within the field. Cultural capital may manifest in three main forms, namely: institutionalised, embodied, and objectified (Bourdieu, 1986). Institutionalised capital refers to the capital conferred to individuals following a process of structured inculcation, and is often regarded in the context of educational qualifications. However, in a field such as fashion journalism, where movement up the traditional hierarchy is contingent on the accumulation of experience in the workplace, this conception is taken to also reflect capital accumulated through being in the institution of fashion. Thus, in this study, institutional capital is also taken to reflect the accumulation of knowledge and experience accrued as a result of a formal long-term immersion in the hierarchies of aesthetic diffusion that is fashion journalism. In regard to the key players identified and examined in this study, it is evident that no two individuals demonstrated the same pathway to the positions of dominance. However, it is important to note that the fashion editors of today tended to begin their careers in
entry level positions, such as receptionists as in the case of former Australian Vogue editor Kirstie Clements, or assistants to full-time staff as in the case of current Australian Vogue editor Edwina MacCann. Both editors’ career trajectories indicate a gradual progression from junior to senior positions – often within the same publication – before reaching the top rungs of the fashion media hierarchy by becoming editor. As highlighted in the field chapter, it is the editors who traditionally are regarded with a sense of prestige. It can therefore be suggested that a lengthy tenure in fashion publishing affords an individual the necessary perceived knowledge and competencies to occupy a position of dominance in the fashion media, thereby acquiring the symbolic capital associated with the coveted position.

Notably, of all the bloggers sampled for the content analysis, Patty Huntington, Susanna Lau and Nicole Warne have backgrounds in fashion media, though to varying degrees. In the interview with Huntington, it was after she attained an Arts degree majoring in French and Fine Art that she chanced upon an opportunity in radio journalism in France through her then boyfriend. That led to her writing feature articles out of Paris, which she sold to Australian publications. After moving back to Australia, Huntington found jobs in fashion industry publications such as Ragtrader and Women’s Wear Daily, amassing experience in various broadcast media spanning 20 years. In that time, Huntington was also engaged by the Sydney Morning Herald to cover Sydney Fashion Week for their digital audience in 2006. Indeed, her multiple-disciplinary background in the field of fashion journalism underscores her institutionalised cultural capital, which affords a legitimacy that facilitates her backstage access to shows as evidence in her coverage of events on her blog Frockwriter.com. In contrast to Patty, Nicole completed two internships in the styling department of Grazia and Harper’s Bazaar before deciding to focus on her own brand, which led to her entrepreneurial venture Gary Pepper Vintage, an online vintage store. However, her blog for the store where she modelled the clothes became the focal point of her audience, prompting Nicole to redirect her efforts into full-time blogging, where she was getting paid to feature other designers. Similarly, Susanna Lau established her blog in 2006 where she accrued a steady following, after which she
spent two years as commissioning editor of *DazedDigital.com* from 2008 to 2010. This suggests that even though Lau possesses institutionalised cultural capital, her entry into fashion publishing is closely intertwined with her ability to engage audiences digitally. In terms of formal or structured inculcation, Susanna Lau attained a degree in History, which can be linked to her ability to expound on aesthetics eloquently. It is noteworthy that Bryan Yambao did not have any affiliation with traditional fashion journalism until after he was recognised in the industry due to the influence they yielded online, though his background as a web developer could be a contributor to his success. His success in an industry where he had no prior affiliation to other than the fact that he was an enthusiastic consumer will be discussed further in this chapter in tandem with digital capital.

In the interview with digital publisher Daniel Kjellsson, he felt strongly that it was no longer necessary for people to work their way up a hierarchy in the field to acquire influence in the fashion industry. With reference to his own stint as a magazine editor he says:

> I did that as well, but that’s irrelevant. I mean now if you can relate to a lot of people – if you can get a lot of people’s attention – who cares where you came from or where you’re going? … In that moment, you’re influential. (Kjellsson, i/v, 2013)

Given Kjellson’s former position as an editor of a men’s fashion magazine in Sweden, and his subsequent shift in focus towards the digital sphere, this suggests that institutionalised cultural capital alone may not be sufficient in sustaining a position of dominance in the fashion industry. Other fashion industry occurrences, such as the replacement of long-time editor Kirstie Clements by Australian *Vogue* in favour of Edwina McCann, who has been charged with increasing *Vogue*’s digital engagement (*Business of Fashion*, 2013b), underscores other factors in operation. Specifically, the increasing importance placed on digital content by print magazines demonstrates that
while institutionalised cultural capital is still relevant in the field, so is the possession of digital capital, which will be defined in greater detail as the findings progress.

Based on the research into the academic and career backgrounds of the bloggers understudy, the only fashion blogger with an established career in print journalism before making a leap into digital journalism is Patty Huntington, which makes her an interesting crossover case as it is evident that she applies journalism codes to her blogging practice. In the research interview, Huntington (i/v, 2103) revealed an awareness of how economic interests may clash with credibility in her statement: “I turned down a five-figure deal once to be the face of something in Australia, you know, because I can’t then go and... write for Women’s Wear Daily.” It is this adherence to journalistic standards that she has internalised and embodies that will be looked at in regard to an embodied cultural capital as well as in the next chapter on the habitus. Indeed, Huntington’s determination to preserve her journalistic credibility is also supported by the content analysis findings, where product endorsements on Frockwriter.com are typically confined to the advertising space on her blog, and does not feed into her editorial content. Overall, a key difference between fashion bloggers and fashion editors is that editors exhibit longstanding institutional cultural capital as a result of being deeply entrenched in the traditional system of fashion journalism, whereas bloggers that wield online influence utilised their digital capital as a means of entry into the fashion industry.

Another form of cultural capital that is especially pertinent to the fashion industry is embodied cultural capital. Embodied cultural capital “presupposes a process of embodiment [author’s emphasis], incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labour of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.48). This suggests that embodied cultural capital is accrued through a process of personal pursuit, and a fomentation of sensibilities specific to the interest being cultivated. The idea of embodiment is especially pertinent in the field of fashion as fashion essentially entails dressing the body (Enwistle, 2000). The importance of the body is thus discussed in regard to embodied cultural capital as...
it directly pertains to the expression of the self (Bourdieu, 1986). Just as Entwistle (2002) found that there are certain body types and appearances held in esteem in the fashion industry, so can these traits become assets to fashion bloggers; especially those who are inclined to embody clothing as a means of featuring brands and designers on their blogs. This was reinforced in the interview with Daniel Kjellsson.

I mean there’s certain clothing or certain brands that makes pieces for certain bodies... If H&M were like to just do one silhouette and you’re sort of either born into that silhouette or you work out to be in that silhouette. I know that’s the harsh, harsh, harsh, shallow, ridiculous reality but that’s the way it is. If you’re portrayed on your blog looking very good in a certain designer, obviously that designer would be more intrigued to be visible on your blog because you make his or her clothing look better. It basically like having dolls in the store windows. (Kjellsson, i/v, 2013)

While Susanna Lau and Bryan Yambao are featured in the images of some of their blog posts during the content analysis coding period, the one blogger that is the subject of the images featured in 100% of posts is Nicole Warne, whose style of blogging centres on outfit features that express her personal aesthetic, or draws upon a mood at the time of the post. Such an approach to fashion blogging tends to be the most lucrative in the monetary sense as revealed in the interview with Patty Huntington (i/v, 2013). Thus while embodied cultural capital is generally viewed as a disinterested form of capital, it can be readily converted to economic capital.

The notion of embodiment is central to a person’s sense of style or dress, and aids in the enactment of their role or position in the field. As Entwistle and Rocamora (2006, p. 746) found, the embodiment of a fashion habitus reflects one’s belonging in the field. This can be traced back to Blumer’s (1969) argument that fashion played a role beyond adornment – it perpetuated the social stratification of individuals in various social classes based on attire as well. While the widespread access to fashion today means that dress cannot necessarily be used as a barometer of someone’s social class,
the expression of style through clothing can be an indication of an individual’s embodiment of a fashion sense in a highly performative environment like fashion week. Fashion week is an arena where players are deemed to be part of a performance that reproduces the structures within the fashion industry (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2006). Louis* (i/v, 2014), a women’s interest magazine journalist, revealed in the research interview that bloggers were invited to fashion events in Singapore: “mainly because they dress up for the occasion, and they you know, they create a kind of festive atmosphere that the organisers of these events are probably, you know going for”. Indeed, the presence of photographers inside and outside of venues determined to capture the outfits of attendees to be featured in a myriad of print and digital platforms (Honig, 2015), coupled with the high visibility of attendees that occupy the front row, further reinforces the performative spectacle of these key fashion events.

While the embodied cultural capital is outwardly observable, it is also a reflection of underlying internal dispositions that have been cultivated over time, which can be associated with the individual’s habitus (Bourdieu, 1986). An example of embodied cultural capital could be in the form of knowledge. From the content analysis, Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and Patty Huntington constantly demonstrated their knowledge by referring to past collections of designers, or through confidently making comparisons between designers that feature similar aesthetics. Therefore, the intertextuality of their knowledge highlights their exposure to, and absorption of, styles over a long period of time that allows them to authoritatively distinguish and expound on styles in great detail. In addition to knowledge, embodied cultural capital can also be discussed in regard to an individual’s personal style and aesthetic. In the interview with digital publisher Daniel Kjellsson, it was revealed that a well-developed sense of self in terms of personal style is necessary for designers to be able to visualise their clothing being worn by the blogger and thus increase the likelihood of engaging the blog for advertising.
It’s sort of aligning your style and finding the brands you relate to and the pieces and style that you like to wear because... to try to wear everything is impossible. And I think it is also very dangerous to try to align your personal preference to the industry – it needs to be the other way around. (Kjellsson, i/v, 2013)

Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) further explained that for a blogger to try and be someone they are not just to lure advertisers would require too much consistent effort, which is not sustainable in the long term. Successful bloggers that have demonstrated some form of longevity in the industry have remained true to themselves by only featuring brands that align with their style sensibilities, and are passionate about the content that they create on a daily basis. This suggest a strong need for an adherence to notions of authenticity and sincerity. Indeed, Bourdieu (1993b) talked about the importance of sincerity in order effectively convince an audience.

‘Sincerity’ (which is one of the preconditions of symbolic efficacy) is only possible – and only achieved – when there is a perfect and immediate harmony between the expectations inscribed in the position occupied... and the dispositions of the occupant. (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 95)

This reference to dispositions should be regarded in the context of the habitus, which refers to the individual’s internal structures that have been ingrained since early childhood, which influence the subjective inclinations of the individual (Bourdieu, 1977). This can be seen in the instance of Bryan Yambao who grew up reading his mother’s copies of Vogue, Harper’s Bazaar, and Marie Claire (Warne, 2009). Susanna Lau’s interest in fashion began as an act of rebellion and the popular people in her school, which prompted her to dress in outlandish outfits that she customised herself (Lau, 2013b). More than that, her educational background in the humanities, possibly accounts for her eloquent in-depth blog posts where she tends to write about aesthetics in great detail. For Patty Huntington, fashion was a field she was offered to cover while she was a freelance features writer that eventually became her field of
focus (Patty, i/v, 2014). For Nicole Warne, fashion and styling appears to be her passion as prior to setting up her blog, she pursued internships at fashion magazines Grazia and Harper’s Bazaar. Thus, the idea of innate ability and interest is associated with the habitus. According to Kjellson (i/v, 2013), “there’s the fundamentals you can learn and then there’s something that’s harder in terms of; do you have eye for a good photo?” Daniel elaborated that being able to produce a good image would make the blog more enticing to consume. In the same interview Daniel further mentions an ability for the blogger to express themselves through text allows the blogger’s personality to flow through, allowing the reader to feel connected to the blogger. This suggests that a level of sincerity through writing, which is a sensibility explored in this study. Sincerity involves the representation of oneself truly to others without falsification or subterfuge, not as an end, but rather as a means of expression (Erikson, 1995). This underpins Daniel’s descriptions of the need for a blogger to express who they are consistently over a long period of time, not only as a means to an end but a mode of unadulterated personal expression as the best way of sustaining an audience’s interest is a hallmark of the one-to-one communication evident in narrowcast media.

The yearning of the audience for a more personal connection to the producer of content, and the capability of the blogger to provide this level of personal engagement through content, appears to be something that is more readily facilitated by narrowcast media where engagement is at once one-to-one and one-to-many (Hawkins, 2011). The idea of presenting oneself in a consistent manner is echoed in the interview with Chelsea*. When asked about what makes a blogger successful, she explained:

I think they’re consistent with that point of view across everything that they do... I think that they’ve got something more to offer than just their personal style, whether it’s access to events that the normal person doesn’t get to, or it’s an opinion that is, you know, somewhat educated about fashion or whatever
they’re doing, or they’ve got some kind of lifestyle connection. (Chelsea*, i/v, 2014)

Indeed the ability to write eloquently is apparent in the blogs of Susanna Lau and Patty Huntington, whereas Nicole Warne and Bryan Yambao appear to express themselves more efficiently through images as a presentation of a lifestyle connection mention above by Chelsea*. Regardless of the strengths of the blogger, all four bloggers embody their lifestyles in line with the positions they occupy within the fashion industry, reflecting their embodied cultural capital and habitus.

The final form of cultural capital explored in this study is objectified cultural capital, which refers to tangible assets or tools that reflect the individual’s immersion in a field (Bourdieu, 1986). Objects that may be regarded as an extension of the individual’s embodied cultural capital are highly relevant in the observation of the blogger’s practice. In the fashion industry, the possession of professional cameras or a curated collection of designer garments many be taken to reflect this. Indeed, bloggers like Bryan Yambao, Garance Dore and Tommy Ton were observed to have laptops in front on them at a 2009 Dolce & Gabbana show in Milan, allowing them to blog the event as it happened in real time. In the research interview, Patty Huntington cites the importance of good quality images on blogs as the main impetus for her acquiring a professional digital camera.

I wouldn’t say I’m a professional photographer but I actually... do stuff for the New York Times and had a portfolio of stuff from New Zealand Fashion Week published on there. And I do still photos for Women’s Wear Daily and what people are wearing in the street. (Huntington, i/v, 2013)

The possession of the tools of the trade a good camera is also reflected in the data gathered on Lau’s blog, as she features photos personally taken by her in 56% of her blog posts. The intrinsic importance of images in fashion journalism thus makes the camera an important tool of the trade. Throughout the content analysis, it was found
that fashion bloggers often used their mobile phones to capture images and short video clips from their front row seats at fashion shows for their followers on social media, bringing readers an immediate glimpse of the latest trends. Moreover, in addition to crediting the photographer on her blog, Nicole Warne was also found to utilise photo-editing software to edit images for her blog. Veritably, tools like laptops, cameras, mobile phones and photo-editing software are crucial in creation of an online presence as they are they mediums that allow bloggers to create content for the digital audience. Therefore, the possession of these devices and software indirectly feeds into the accumulation of digital capital.

In addition to technological gadgets, clothing or accessories are often the focus of photographers looking to capture the latest styles donned by key industry members outside of fashion show venues. As an aesthetic economy, creative works are central to the field (Aspers, 2006). This is evident in the inclusion of products in the narratives of both blogs and magazines (Kretz & de Valck, 2010). This is especially apparent in one of Bryan Yambao’s (2013, December 1), where he expresses his concern at Typhoon Haiyan ravaging parts of the Philippines where he is from. In this post, which was written during the American holiday of Thanksgiving, Yambao further expresses his gratitude that his family members were unharmed, and includes an image of him lounging around in his apartment with bunny ears on, in a bathrobe with shopping bags from luxury brands Chanel, Cartier and Balenciaga at his feet. The inclusion of an image signifying Yambao’s consumption-driven lifestyle despite the serious subject matter of a natural disaster underscores the integral role that products play on a blog like Yambao’s, as well as the consistent performance of a lifestyle that will be explored further in the following chapter on habitus.

The practice of product-gifting to fashion bloggers has also become commonplace, where designers or their publicists send prominent fashion bloggers their latest products in the hope of being featured on the blog to reach a wide digital audience, who are often the target demographic of these designers (McQuarrie, Miller & Phillips, 2013). Such access to the latest releases in fashion also denotes their insider status.
During MBFWA 2014, Susanna Lau documented her privileged access to the Di$count show where she was able to try on and acquire a jacket from the designers of Di$count right after it was modelled on the runway (Lau, 2014, April 16). The acquisition of objects before they are available to the public reflects a position of advantage and implies the possession of symbolic and social capital. Despite the multitude of products featured on blogs, Kjellsson explained that in order for bloggers to remain relevant, it is important for them to stay true to their personal ethos.

If you have a decent sized blog, you can go around having free lunch with PRs daily, and get new clothing daily. But the fact that you only post things that you’re given will make your content less attractive and you lose your readership, and you won’t be able to go back to the free lunches... If you don’t have the integrity, you’re really going to lose anyway. (Kjellsson, i/v, 2013)

Therefore, while objectified cultural capital is desirable in a consumption-driven field like fashion, bloggers need to curate the products they wear or endorse to align with their personal sense of style.

5.3 Economic Capital

While successful fashion bloggers tend to possess a strong personal aesthetic expressed through their blogs, they are also aware of the economic opportunities that come with having an audience. As Patty Huntington (i/v, 2013), “... there are six-figure deals being brokered on behalf of these female bloggers”. This further expanded on by Kjellsson who says, “the fact that you are something beautiful, funny... and knowledgeable. Whatever ability you’ve got, great writer, whatever, that attracts people. That attraction is what makes it commercially viable”. This statement is especially salient at present with magazines experiencing a decline in advertising revenue as a result of shrinking readerships, which is reflected in Daniel’s own career trajectory. Drawing on his own experience as a former magazine editor working for a large family-owned publisher, Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) explains his decision to leave his job
and set up a digital publishing company saying: “I saw from the inside of such a company, how hurt we were by bloggers in general, and fashion bloggers specifically... they took a lot of advertisers and audiences from local magazines.” The importance of advertising revenue to print magazines is further emphasised in the interview with Louis* (i/v, 2014), where he succinctly affirmed: “…ultimately, you live and die by the number of advertisers you are able to keep throughout the years”. Over the course of the research, it was evident that bloggers offered a novel way for brands to engage their target audience. In particular, bloggers have the capacity to offer a tailored and personalised experience, where an advertising package may entail both an advertising banner space on a blog, as well as a launch event where the blogger physically interacts with attendees (Kjellsson, i/v, 2013).

Although the commercialisation of a fashion blog can affecting its credibility, Daniel argues that this can be circumvented through making an effort to be transparent.

We always, when we do campaigns on FELLT, or on SERVVED the food network we have, we have an ad space and we have the editorial space, but for us it’s really all the same because we use the ad space to push content and we use editorial space to write about our advertisers like advertorials. So when you’ve got that kind of blurry line, the transparency is even more important. It’s like, ‘Hey, here’s a blog post. We just scored an awesome deal with Nokia, we’re going to try this at fashion week and do this awesome thing with this cool new phone. If you want, tag along. If you don’t, don’t visit the blog for awhile.’ [Laughs] It’s very easy to be open. (Kjellsson, i/v, 2013)

The dynamism of digital marketing through blogs is demonstrated in the various collaborations between bloggers and certain brands. For instance, in six out of the ten sampled posts from Nicole Warne’s blog in 2013, she features Qualia Resorts on Hamilton Island as the main backdrop for photoshoots with her photographer boyfriend Luke Shadbolt. The myriad of brands promoted include: Ray Ban, Marc Jacobs, ASOS, and Alice McCall, among others. It appears that the trip to Hamilton
Island was sponsored as she revealed that her main purpose there was to do a special promotional photo shoot for Abercrombie & Fitch. The adaptability of sponsored content creation can thus be linked to the blogger’s symbolic capital, who appears to have editorial freedom in creating sponsored content. Further, it is interesting to note that Warne is the photographed subject in the advertising banners on her blog GaryPepperGirl.com. This level of collaboration is between brand and individual content creator is not common in print fashion journalism, but is more akin to celebrity endorsements, which underscores the potential for the commercialisation of a persona in fashion blogging. In addition to modelling and promoting brands through advertising and content, Warne’s aptitude in creating a digital presence has also led to her being engaged as a consultant for LaVazza coffee, who sought to form an association with the fashion industry. Similarly, although the only time Susanna Lau featured advertising on her blog was when she joined the NowManifest network, she revealed in an interview that her main source of income was from collaborations with brands and designers (Kansara, 2011). The use of the word ‘collaboration’ implies a power relationship of equals even though monetary compensation is involved. Over the course of the study, Lau has collaborated with a host of brands including, Coach, Fendi, Topshop, Gap and Russian retailer, Tsvetnoy. Bryan Yambao, on the other hand, only seemed to disclose sponsored content earlier in his career with the tag “Sponsored Post” up till 2011. All the posts that appear to be sponsored on Bryan’s blog over the course of this research were tagged as “Uncategorized”, indicating a lack of disclosure for sponsored content. Similar to Warne, Yambao’s blog posts are often of him modelling the clothing, with hyperlinks to point of purchase websites. This highlights the use of his blog to stimulate fashion consumption, making his platform an attractive one to brands. This indicates that Yambao creates the conditions to convert his digital capital to economic capital. Therefore, even though Daniel stated that it was easy to commercialise a blog and preserve transparency, Yambao’s blog suggests otherwise.

From a marketing perspective, both Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne are represented by the international talent management agency IMG, which brokers endorsement
deals between brands and their stable of models and celebrities. Commenting on bloggers’ contracts with major agencies, Chelsea* explained:

There were commercial opportunities that were coming to the bloggers that they didn’t know to monetise and how to make sure that they got what they deserved for some of the commercial endorsements. And as more and more of these bloggers become brands in themselves, it’s important that they know how, or what they’re worth. (Chelsea*, i/v, 2014)

Patty Huntington (i/v, 2013) further explains that fashion bloggers are attractive avenues of promotion because marketers “want it to sound like word-of-mouth”. Indeed Huntington indicated that she knew of an international fashion blogger who has become a millionaire as a result of a myriad of endorsement deals, though she was reluctant to name her. Nonetheless, results of a study conducted by the *Harvard Business Review* (Keinan et al., 2015) revealed that Chiara Ferragni of the blog *The Blonde Salad* earns $8 million a year through her partnerships with luxury fashion brands like Burberry and Dior. With a readership of 600,000 a month (Wang, 2014), and an Instagram following of 3.7 million at the time of the study, Ferragni’s reach is undeniable. As PR professional Chelsea* (i/v, 2014) confidently stated, Instagram was the most important medium for fashion brands at the moment. Interestingly, Huntington (i/v, 2013) did question the likelihood of Instagram followers making purchases in contrast to consumers who were willing to pay for their own copy of *Vogue*.

Of the four bloggers under study, an outlier in the pursuit of economic capital is Patty Huntington. Even though Huntington (i/v, 2013) is part of the FELLT network, she eschews product endorsements in favour of advertising or a paywall for her content saying, “I’m pretty sure I’m the first fashion blogger to put a paywall on their blog”. In regard to advertising, Huntington (i/v, 2103) revealed that it was not yet a viable source of income for her. Indeed, at her blog’s readership peak in 2010, she earned four to five thousand dollars through advertising revenue for the whole year. When
asked about the impact of advertising on the perceived authenticity of her blog, Huntington (i/v, 2013) said “I have completely transparent display advertising and that’s the only kind of advertising I do, so it has absolutely no impact whatsoever”. She further explained that there would only be a conflict of interest if she wrote favourably about an advertiser in the editorial section of her blog.

I just don’t work that way... but you know the blogs who have sort of got like click-through links, affiliate links and they don’t disclose to readers where they’re being paid money to wear clothing ... I think that’s a really big problem. And that’s the way most fashion bloggers operate. (Huntington, i/v, 2013)

It was evident that the notion of product endorsements clashed with Huntington's principles of credibility and transparency, solidified by her many years in print fashion journalism. Huntington (i/v, 2013) revealed: "I turned down a five-figure deal once to be the face of something in Australia, you know, because I can’t then go and write for Women’s Wear Daily or whatever." Therefore, in Patty Huntington’s professional context, the pursuit of economic capital has an inverse relationship with her journalistic authenticity. Such economic considerations have also affected her decision-making as a freelance fashion journalist.

I have to sort of weigh up whether what I do is going to be a paid story with Women’s Wear Daily, in which case, due to my contract I can’t do anything on the blog. I have to make a living first and foremost and the blog is really... even after all this time, remains nothing more than an expensive hobby. (Huntington, i/v, 2013)

Further, in relation to economic capital, it should be noted that Huntington’s foray into blogging was initially aided by funding from the Sun Herald in 2003 as she explained:

I was already online using it as a research tool for work and I was also engaged in various online forums... so I was kind of an active participant online anyway.
And I guess it was just natural progression... I had the opportunity and, you know, someone was going to pay me for it. (Huntington, i/v, 2013)

While Huntington created content for fully funded blogs during her stint at the Sun Herald and subsequently, the Sydney Morning Herald, she decided to launch her own platform Frockwriter.com in 2006. At the time of the interview, Huntington revealed that she has turned to what is essentially a crowd-funding business model to keep her blog running.

I found there was a core readership of people who came back more than one or two hundred times per month, when I don’t blog that many times a month, and there was about 30 000 of them. And I thought, oh God, you know, maybe if a third of those people, or even if 10 000 people, you know, [excited voice] if 10 000 people were happy to pay $20 for the year, I could have done nothing else but blog. (Huntington, i/v, 2013)

At the time of the interview though, Huntington (i/v, 2014) was still experimenting with the best way to monetise her blog in alignment with her ethical inclinations: “The challenge is how you make a living out of it. I’m still trying to work it out.”

The possession of objectified cultural goods in the form of garments or accessories in the latest trends is also an indication of one’s possession of economic capital. While some items on fashion blogs are gifts from brands or their PR representatives, there are also instances of bloggers revealing when they have purchased an item. The expenditure of personal funds is an indication of authenticity as it reflects the bloggers’ genuine appreciation of a particular designer’s garment or accessory. It is important to note that the luxury products tend to be expensive, and require the possession of economic capital to procure.

In sum, the fashion industry depends heavily on product consumption for its survival, and bloggers with a wide reach can provide fashion marketers with new opportunities
to reach a broad digital audience. This in turn has seen a large amount of funding, which would have been invested in magazine advertising, channelled towards collaborations with bloggers. Throughout the study, it was evident that Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne were more inclined to receive monetary compensation in promoting brands online, though the levels of transparent disclosure varied among the bloggers, which will be further highlighted in the following content analysis results. Indeed, while Lau was engaged in a range of campaigns for brands, she made it a point to disclose that to readers at the end of each post. For Yambao and Warne, however, less disclosure in regard to compensation and sponsorships was noted. While it is unclear how much Yambao profits from his blog, it is evident that Nicole Warne’s direct presence in the advertisements on her blog has implicitly yielded lucrative payment packages. It is also important to note that for these three bloggers, the demarcation between advertising and editorial is a blurry one. Conversely, Patty Huntington appears to grapple with a conflict of interest in the monetisation of her blog where her journalistic ethics has seen her turn down profitable deals with brands. Huntington has turned to crowdfunding by means of a paywall to fund her blog instead. Thus, a significant finding of this study is the presence of an inverse relationship between Huntington’s institutionalised cultural capital and her pursuit of economic capital. Indeed, Huntington’s high-level of institutionalised cultural capital is a reflection of her long-term immersion in traditional broadcast and publishing, which has contributed to her resistance towards the commercialisation of her online persona. Therefore, for one entrenched within the traditional hierarchies of fashion journalism, economic capital is inevitably derived from the publications that provide a salary to the individual. On the other hand, it appears that bloggers who blog independently of traditional publishing structures exhibit a greater adaptability towards capitalising on the monetary opportunities afforded to them in a highly malleable digital environment.
5.4 Symbolic Capital

Symbolic capital is especially pertinent to the field of fashion as it refers to notions of prestige and distinction – ideas that are important to the field of fashion. Symbolic capital denotes wealth in symbolic form, and includes “authority, knowledge, prestige, reputation, academic degrees, debts of gratitude owed by those to whom we have given gifts or favours... readily convertible into the more traditional form of economic capital” (Terdiman in Bourdieu, 1987, p. 812). Through this lens, this study recorded the instances of symbolic capital and the ways in which they can manifest in the field of fashion journalism. The most common instance of symbolic capital that this thesis constantly refers to is the front row of fashion week. According to Chelsea*, the front row is reserved for the people that the designer feels are most important to his or her outcomes.

So if a designer’s key outcome is to make wholesale sales, then they will be seating buyers front and centre. If a designer’s aim was to get international awareness, then they’d probably seat the internationals [i.e. bloggers] front row. If a brand was looking for commercial sponsorship, then they might have business managers and big brands sitting front row. Or celebrities so that they’re really starting to drive awareness of their brand via the celebrity angle. It really does change depending on what their focus... what their objectives are for showing. (Chelsea*, i/v, 2014)

Indeed, all four of the bloggers sampled for this study have been invited to grace the front rows of fashion shows at different points in time. Like all the forms of capital, symbolic capital is closely linked to the possession of other forms of capital. Often referred to as a pioneer in fashion blogging, Bryan Yambo’s acquisition of symbolic capital came as early as 2009, when he was conferred prestige by designers Dolce & Gabbana through an invitation to sit in the front row of their Milan show in the company of the iconic figure Anna Wintour. This gesture of legitimation elevated Yambo to the level of a tastemaker within the fashion industry. Thus, a combination
of digital and social capital set the groundwork for Yambao’s further acquisition of symbolic capital. In 2011, Yambao was approached to be the social media judge on Season 19 of America’s Next Top Model, where he conferred judgment and critique of the models’ performance on a weekly basis, in addition to tracking the online sentiment towards models. During judging, Yambao was seated on a raised platform facing the models alongside the show’s creator, supermodel Tyra Banks, fashion PR mogul Kelly Cutrone and British model Rob Evans. This afforded Yambao an air of authority, as his opinions and tastes are given weight through this show, with each episode being a reproduction of his symbolic capital. Another instance of Yambao’s authority is reflected in his role as a speaker at the International New York Times Luxury Conference in 2014, where he was interviewed by the esteemed Suzy Menkes, the International Fashion Editor of all nineteen worldwide editions of Vogue. The elevation of Yambao’s opinions and insight as being pertinent to key industry business owners is a strong indication of his high level of prestige. At the event, he referred to fashion designer Anna Sui as his “partner-in-crime”, further denoting his social capital at this conference. Overall, Yambao’s accumulation of symbolic capital largely depended on his possession of social, digital and embodied cultural capital.

Susanna Lau’s accumulation of symbolic capital was aided largely by her years of consistent fashion critique on her blog. Indeed, among the bloggers sampled for the content analysis, Lau demonstrated the greatest consistency in her frequency of blogging over three years. In tandem with her blogging career, Lau's position as the commissioning editor of DazedDigital.com facilitated her access to exclusive fashion shows, where she too was often seen in the front row. Thus, a combination of her digital, embodied and institutionalised cultural capital laid the foundation for the recognition she has received in the fashion industry. Over the course of this research, perhaps the most significant honour bestowed upon Lau was when she was approached by the Fashion Museum in Bath to select the Dress of the Year for 2013. Lau selected a dress by London designer Christopher Kane, whose work she has consistently favoured. This suggests a high level of distinction as she was deemed qualified to select a dress representative of the dominant aesthetic of the year.
Additionally, Lau has created editorial content for Elle magazine and also collaborated on special collections or campaigns with brands like Topshop, GAP and Dr. Martens. She also contributes articles on fashion commentary on the fashion industry’s premier online publication, the Business of Fashion, a publication targeted at fashion creatives and entrepreneurs. That she is constantly approached for her involvement or critique of aspects in the fashion industry highlights the importance and relevance placed on her opinions, especially given her expertise in engaging a digital audience. In a sampled post titled When in Rome, Lau (2013, December 10) reveals that she was engaged by Italian luxury fashion brand Fendi to spearhead their foray into digital communication via a Twitter interview with brand director Silvia Venturini. Indeed, there are various instances relating to symbolic capital on Lau’s blog that strongly reflect the high level of legitimacy she wields within the field. Thus, Susanna Lau’s accumulation of symbolic capital was largely facilitated by her possession of embodied cultural capital and digital capital.

One of Nicole Warne’s first significant instance of symbolic capital was when she became the first blogger to walk the runway at the 2012 Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Australia. In extending her relationship with the organisers of fashion week IMG, Warne was also engaged to be the Official Fashion Insider for MBFWA in 2013 and 2014. Warne’s involvement in the MBFWA was especially evident in 2014, where she facilitated LaVazza’s entry into the fashion market where they hoped to become the coffee brand for the fashion conscious. On this partnership with LaVazza, Warne (2014, April 16) revealed, “I’ll be working closely with LaVazza creatively by advising them from a fashion industry perspective and helping design and execute projects surrounding each event,” highlighting her expertise in fashion branding. Warne’s high international visibility and profile has much to do with her physical embodiment of a lifestyle that is appealing, making the blog a highly performative one, which is a finding that will be discussed further in regard to the content analysis. Thus, a combination of embodied cultural capital and digital capital has also led to an accumulation of a symbolic capital that is based on her performativity and widely appealing aesthetic.
In contrast to the preceding three bloggers, whose careers were taken to greater heights because of their digital influence and engagement, Patty Huntington’s symbolic capital is closely linked to her institutionalised cultural capital. Indeed, in the research interview, Huntington revealed that while she was working for a print publication, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, was able to secure entry to Paris Fashion Week. However, she noticed a significant change when she was assigned to the online edition of the same publication.

> All of a sudden I found it to be very much more difficult to get invitations to shows, because even though I was still reporting for the same media outlet, and was just going online, rather than in the print edition, suddenly, there was no invitation to Prada. (Huntington, i/v, 2013)

Huntington further explained that in Paris, it is the association of couturiers called the Chambre Syndicale that oversees media accreditation and access to all haute couture shows. As a result of her shift away from the print medium, Huntington (i/v, 2013) felt she was perceived by the Chambre Syndicale as “just another blogger”. However, while that might be the case, Huntington’s reputation as a credible fashion reporter, as well as her pre-existing professional network still afforded her backstage access at the MBFWA in 2014, which can also be taken as an indication of her position as a fashion insider. Therefore, in contrast to the other bloggers understudy, it is Huntington’s lengthy tenure in fashion journalism that is the source of her symbolic capital. Based on the change in attitudes towards accrediting a media professional like Huntington who has gone from print to digital, it can also be concluded that the nature of symbolic capital is fluid in nature and contingent on the perception of the industry towards the individual.

Therefore, while all bloggers attained varying levels of symbolic capital through different means, it is evident that the possession of other preceding forms of capital leads to the accumulation of symbolic capital. In general, the forms of capital identified that primed bloggers like Bryan Yambao, Susanna Lau and Nicole Warne for the
endowment of symbolic capital were high levels of embodied cultural capital and digital capital. On the other hand, for a blogger like Patty Huntington whose career trajectory was chiefly rooted in traditional media hierarchies, her possession of symbolic capital was a result of her institutionalised cultural capital and social capital. The fact that her symbolic capital fluctuated based on her affiliation with print or digital publications is a significant finding of this study and highlights the dynamism of the position-taking within the field. Symbolic capital is particularly important in the discussion of power relations within a field as it pertains to authority and legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1987). Building on this, a link can further be made between symbolic capital, authority and authenticity, where authenticity reflects a position of power; in this case the power of taste making. Indeed, in the fashion industry enactments of prestige are highly visible, often in the form of special front row treatment, and thus highly performative in nature. Here, performativity is taken to reflect the authenticity of being formally or informally instated as a figure of distinction whose opinion matters in the field, and the artifice of enacting that socially constructed position.

5.5 Digital Capital

The concept of digital capital proposed by this thesis is a departure from the previous conception of digital capital in business economics. While digital capital was initially developed as a mercantile concept (Tapscott, Ticoll & Lowy, 2000), this study argues that digital capital has strong cultural relevance given the entrenchment of digital communication in cultural production, and indeed, in daily life. This is especially evident in the field of fashion, where digital influence has become highly valued. As Susanna Lau reveals in interviews, she achieves a constant stream of 30 000 readers a day, a figure comparable to fashion magazine readerships. Indeed, fashion bloggers have capitalised on the opportunities afforded by the Internet and overcome traditional media hierarchies by creating and disseminating their own fashion content via blogs. This is encapsulated in Daniel Kjellsson’s (i/v, 2013) comment that “now if you can relate to a lot of people; if you can get a lot of people’s attention, who cares where you came from or where you’re going, in that moment you’re influential”. It was
this realization that Susanna Lau had in 2011 that led her to leave DazedDigital.com and focus on her blog saying “I don’t need the publication to anchor onto. I have a publication essentially” (Business of Fashion, 2013a). The advent of online publishing has heralded new approaches to fashion publishing. In the interview with Kjellson (i/v, 2013), he expounds: “My company, Sydney Stockholm, is a digital publisher founded completely on the belief that people will never again consume media from a brand perspective”. Just as digital communication has afforded individuals new avenues for content creation, so has it afforded fashion audiences new avenues for content consumption. In an interview with DazedDigital.com (Mulhall, 2014), Lau proffers that she started her blog in reaction to the lack of diverse fashion perspectives in mainstream fashion magazines. Here, the notion of produsage envisaged by Bruns (2008), aptly encapsulates the way in which individuals now oscillate among roles of production, dissemination and consumption. The fluid role of the Internet user is complemented by the capacity for interaction among like-minded individuals that result in the extension of social networks. Thus, it is the aim of this research to synthesise a working definition of digital capital, which will be addressed in the first Analysis chapter of this thesis. In order to do that, this study first explores the instances of digital capital arising out of the data.

Drawing on the literature, communication online is characterized by being at once one-to-one and one-to-many (Hawkins, 2011). Based on this, the interaction between bloggers and their readers cannot be simply classified as social capital as the relationship features complexities. For instance, while bloggers who tend to reveal more about themselves attract a higher following (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2006), the fact remains that bloggers usually do not get to know their readers on a personal basis. The relationship between superstar fashion bloggers and their readers may therefore be regarded as parasocial. The lack of interaction between bloggers and their readers found in the content analysis demonstrates this, where three out of the four bloggers never actually responded to comments posted by readers at the end of the blog post. Only Patty Huntington ever engaged in a discussion with readers on her blog. While social media platforms were not included in the sample for the content
analysis, it was noted that Susanna Lau occasionally responded to her followers on Instagram. In the interview, Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) explained that it was important for bloggers to reply to their readers’ comments five years ago and turn their blogs into a community platform, though this is no longer an effective practice. Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) explained, “If you look at any fashion blog in the country and look through the comments, it’s basically like, ‘That’s so nice!’ and then their own URL. So it’s only marketing”. Essentially, amateur fashion bloggers tend to post comments on other widely read fashion blogs featuring their own URL in the hope of attracting more readers to their own blogs. Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) acknowledged that some other forms of blogging, such as “mommy blogs”, benefitted more from such interactions, but fashion bloggers could better utilise their time by creating more content. Despite the lack of interaction, fashion blogs do offer a personalised and personable form of journalism that is different from the mainstream. Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) explained that blogs are "more like a friend showing me a sweater rather than an anonymous fashion magazine". He added: "I can’t relate to Vogue. Vogue means nothing, I can’t have a beer with Vogue, but I’d love to have a drink with Anna Wintour... someone that I can relate to as a person, not as a media brand." Thus a level of perceived sincerity is necessary in the practice of successful fashion blogging.

A look at the themes arising out of the interviews revealed a marked shift in the nature of content creation for a digital audience. The immediacy of the Internet has afforded content creators a global audience, spurring practices that seek to maximise exposure and engagement. As Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) explained, “…it is extremely hard work, I mean, they’re basically working 24/7, waking up in the middle of the night Instagramming… for the US audience.” When asked about what she thought set successful bloggers apart from amateur bloggers, Chelsea* (i/v, 2014) said “It think they’ve got a unique point of view. I think they’re consistent with that point of view across everything that they do.” This again highlights the importance of authenticity in online content creation. Over the course of the content analysis, a few instances of digital influence were also recorded, often in the form of bloggers being engaged by brands as collaborators. As mentioned in the section on symbolic capital, Susanna Lau
was engaged by luxury brand Fendi to spearhead their digital engagement campaign. This suggests a high level of trust in Lau’s ability to fulfil Fendi’s desire for a stronger digital presence. Similarly, Lau was also recorded working on a social media project for luxury label, Coach for their #WhatsYourSwagger digital campaign in 2015 where she was tasked with customizing her own Coach handbag and blogging about her experience as part of her ongoing online partnership with the brand. Nicole Warne too is often engaged to create content on her blog for fashion labels and travel destinations. Over the course of this research, Warne was documented producing her personalised style of content for Abercrombie & Fitch, Louis Vuitton, Valentino, Lucky magazine, Hamilton Island Resorts and Tourism Australia. Indeed, her mode of blog coverage primarily entails her modelling the garments at a featured location. Thus, her digital capital is largely accrued by her embodiment of trends and aesthetics that align with her lifestyle, and may be regarded as performative in nature, because while she is marketing a product (i.e. artifice); she is doing so by presenting her own interpretation of how that product should be worn (i.e. authenticity).

The notion of performance is further supported by the content analysis finding that Warne appears in front of the camera in 100% of posts on her blog. This is also evident on Bryan Yambao’s blog, where he too models clothing that align with his personal style and posts images and videos of the events he attends. The fact that he was engaged by supermodel and creator of the show America’s Next Top Model, Tyra Banks, to be the social media judge on the show not only denotes his digital capital, but also signals the point in which he transcended digital media to extend his reach into television, which is essentially a leap across from narrowcast to broadcast media. The concepts of performance and performativity will be explored in greater depth in the following chapter on Habitus.

While superstar fashion bloggers have found a way to accrue digital capital. Louis* and Patty Huntington, who both have experience writing for print and digital platforms, pointed out the lack of constraint in online publishing. As Louis* (i/v, 2014) explained: "It's less rigid, and in that way, I'm very thankful because my own personal voice is
kept... Whereas for my print peers, the structure of the magazine is very rigid." Louis* further divulged that the structured nature of print publishing is centred on the pursuit of a consistent voice.

They want very much to keep a uniform voice throughout the entire magazine, so no flowery, no exuberant words... I think they want to make it appear as if when you flip through the pages of a magazine, you don't feel there's a jarring difference between the different articles that you see, so it's like a smooth voice, but that means taking away a lot of your own individuality and a lot of rounds of subediting. (Louis*, i/v, 2014)

Second, magazines also conform to a strict word limit, which does not permit in-depth details.

When you flip open a magazine, it's very visual... lots of big blown-up pictures of models; copy is very small and tight so in that way you have to really work at keeping it down. Whereas online, you can just keep scrolling. (Louis*, i/v, 2014)

Further, the ability for online writers to update information as it changes allows for a more dynamic creative experience.

If there’s any change in price, for say, a certain product, we can just go back to the article and edit. Whereas for print, once it’s out, and especially since working on a three-month deadline, it’s very hard to change things at the last minute. (Louis*, i/v, 2014)

The fluidity of digital publishing is echoed in the interview with Patty Huntington. When commenting on the difference in the content she creates for print and digital editions, Huntington (i/v, 2013) explains that she particularly enjoys writing for digital "because, you know, there are no space limits.... I find it quite cathartic because I can just do a piece and it's almost free form". Therefore, the ability to express oneself
freely will be regarded as a crucial aspect in the accumulation of digital capital, in alignment with the notions of sincerity and authenticity that will be discussed further in the following chapter on habitus.

In addition to the allowances in length and a greater degree of creative freedom in the creation of content, digital publishing also allows for hyperlinking and the inclusion of video content, which are points of departure from print publishing. In the content analysis, it was found that majority of posts coded contain hyperlinks, while all posts contained multimedia content such as images and videos. This is also mentioned in the interview with Louis* (i/v, 2014) where he says: “there’s all the advantages of being online: hyperlinking, embedding of videos, embedding audio recordings, editing on the fly”. This is especially important in attracting fashion brands to advertise with the publication. ”They leverage on our ability to broadcast or embed videos to gain more coverage for their new product or their new launch, or their upcoming shows" (Louis*, i/v, 2014).

Further, as outlined briefly in the section on social capital, hyperlinking also aids in the extension of the real life social networks among superstar fashion bloggers. This is demonstrated in the formation of online networks like FELLT and NowManifest, where bloggers work together as an elite collective to boost their personal brands through association. In addition to the dynamic nature of blog posts, social media has added another dimension to the dissemination of content, as well as the accumulation of followers. When asked about the importance of social media to bloggers, Kjellson (i/v, 2013) said: “Extremely important... if you look at Nicole Warne, half of her readership is not on her blog, it’s on the social platforms like Instagram. There are a lot of Internet influencers today who don’t even have a blog.” Indeed, the importance of social media is was also emphasised by Chelsea*.

It’s hugely important. There’s nothing more important to us right now. The doors of fashion week have been open to the consumer via social media and livestreaming and digital advances like that, and because of that we’re seeing
that designers aren’t involved in fashion week just to sell to the traders anymore. They’re involved in fashion week to get the consumer hyped about their brand. Social media is changing the influence, so where you used to wait for Vogue to tell you what’s in fashion and what’s going to be in store, the consumer actually has a chance to vote via social media. (Chelsea*, i/v, 2014)

Chelsea* explained that the immediacy of a platform like Instagram cannot be matched by print schedules. Further, “there’s also a level of influence that happens via social media that is a bit jaded from the print magazines”, where content on social media may feel more personable and less elitist, compared to magazines (Chelsea*, i/v, 2014). At the time of the study, Nicole Warne had an Instagram following of 1.3 million and her digital influence across various channels is heavily promoted in her media kit produced by IMG. Such metrics are often used as a guideline and justification for the pricing of advertising or endorsements. However, Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) makes a point that even though bloggers are doing well on social media, they should never neglect to produce quality content, saying “if it were my career, I would never let go of the mother ship, so to speak, because we’ve all seen social platforms coming and going, and that will happen in the future as well”. It is not just bloggers who are capitalising on the opportunities for engagement through social media though. According Louis* (i/v, 2014), who writes for both the print and digital editions of a magazine, social media shares and “likes” have been integrated into his magazine’s key performance indicators (KPI), and it is the role of the publication’s managing editor to inform employees when targets have been reached. The positive social media statistics may then be leveraged on to entice brands or PR agencies to provide exclusive multimedia content to the magazine. Louis* further pointed out that designers and publicists know the importance of creating an event with potential visual impact, as he explained: “when they invite media to like a press event or a press launch of a say fragrance, they do up the place really nicely with bottles and bouquets of flowers and sometimes they employ models to linger around” (i/v, 2014).
While this study focuses on the practice of content producers, it should be acknowledged that digital communication has also affected the way in which fashion content is consumed through blog aggregation portals like Bloglovin’, enabling fashion audiences all around the world to not only curate their own list of blogs that they wish to follow, but also receive a constantly updating feed of content from selected bloggers. In the content analysis, it was found that 100% of posts sampled from all four blogs were shared on Bloglovin’ in an automated process instated by all four bloggers understudy. This highlights a significant difference between consumption habits in narrowcast media as opposed to broadcast, in that consumers are now curators of the content that they consume. Over the course of this study, it was noted that the MBFWA in 2014 and 2015 were also livestreamed to audiences all over the world, while at the observed consumer event MBFF 2013, the application Booodl was made available to consumers who wanted to purchase garments as they appeared on the runway. Drawing on her involvement at a fashion event, Chelsea* (i/v, 2014) said, “we launched Shop The Runway and we did various things that were new this year that were a lot more work than I think we all realised in the beginning but they were all exciting.” Chelsea’s* heavy involvement in the use of new technologies to engage her key audiences highlights the new opportunities presented by the rapid developments in digital media. The conversion from runway show to consumer purchases is also mentioned in the interview with Louis* who cites Burberry as a good example of a brand adept at capitalising on opportunities afforded by digital capabilities.

Burberry is a very good example. It’s a very socially adventurous brand. A lot of their stuff is online. A lot of their stuff has videos. A lot their stuff, you know they live stream their runway presentations. Immediately after that, you can go to the Singapore Burberry site to purchase the items you saw like 10 minutes ago. So they rely a great deal on online media and blogs to get that message across, because there’s no way the print media can do that in real time. (Louis*, i/v, 2014)
The conception of the Digital Fashion Week in Singapore, which relies on live stream technology and social media to engage an online audience, is unique as it sidesteps issues of geography and selective entry. Although there appears to be a greater inclusion of audiences into industry events, there is still a level of segregation between the fashion industry and consumers, as key industry-centred events still often require exclusive invites for entry.

In sum, the affordances by digital technology to the production, dissemination and consumption of fashion content has provided new opportunities for both independent fashion bloggers, magazines, publicists and consumers. The widespread entrenchment of digital technologies in fashion journalism suggests the relevance of a concept like digital capital. In particular, traits of the medium such as immediacy, together with the capacity for hyperlinking and multimedia, plays a key role in the creation of non-linear content in what Rocamora (2012) described as hypertextuality. However, hypertextuality alone cannot be used to define digital capital. A significant finding of this study is the importance of performativity in the engagement of a digital audience. Indeed, it was found that performative bloggers like Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne, seemed to have monetised their blogs successfully, whereas non-performative blogger Patty Huntington was still experimenting with novel ways to make her blog profitable. It is her adherence to authenticity without the artifice that has made her less appealing to marketers. Based on the findings, this researcher finds that digital capital contains element of hypertextuality and performativity, thereby leading this research closer to a synthesis of an operative definition for digital capital. The results of the content analysis presented in the following chapter further solidifies the relevance of these themes in the conception of digital capital.

5.6 Chapter Summary

Throughout this chapter, it is evident that the lines that demarcate the different forms of capital are not distinct. Rather, different forms of capital are fluid and constantly shifting depending on other factors or demands in the field. This is illustrated in the
withdrawal of Patty Huntington’s media accreditation in Paris once she started writing exclusively for online platforms. Thus, the affordance of symbolic capital can fluctuate depending on the key gatekeepers’ perceptions of the individual. Further, the acquisition of one form of capital often also facilitates the accumulation of other forms of capital. For instance, the acquisition of digital capital is often coupled with the extension of one’s social networks in the industry, and thus social capital, as demonstrated in Bryan Yambao’s entry into the field through his acquaintance with Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana. The accumulation of knowledge or competence in the form of embodied cultural capital can lead to a position of prestige within the industry, such as front row seats that denote symbolic capital. Indeed, Nicole Warne’s ability to embody clothing on her blog as a positive representation of designers was recognised by the industry through an invitation to be the first blogger to walk the runway at an Australian fashion week. Her growing influence in the digital sphere also resulted in her engagement as the MBFWA Official Insider in 2014 and 2015 where she conducted interviews for the digital livestream of the events. Susanna Lau’s entry into the field was also facilitated by her ability to engage a digital audience, resulting in her appointment as an editor of a magazine’s digital edition. A significant commonality among Yambao, Warne and Lau is that they attracted the attention of the industry through their possession of digital influence, exemplifying the relevance of digital capital. Indeed, it was the industry’s recognition of Yambao, Warne and Lau’s digital capital that in turn set up the conditions for their accumulation of symbolic capital, and eventually economic capital. On the other hand, Patty Huntington’s symbolic capital was accumulated as a result of her institutionalised cultural capital. Incidentally, it is also her institutionalised cultural capital that works in opposition to her acceptance of certain economic opportunities. Therefore, two separate trajectories based on the acquisition of capital have emerged in this study. In addressing the aims of this research, an examination of the relevance of digital capital has found that notions of hypertextuality and performativity cannot be ignored. As performativity occurs at the level of expression, the following chapter outlines the patterns arising out of each blogger’s practice over three years in the hope of further establishing an operative definition of digital capital.
Chapter 6: The Fashion Blogger’s Habitus – Results of the 2013 Content Analysis

Due to the wealth of information gathered from the content analysis, the results of this method will be presented in two chapters. The first chapter presents the result of the 2013 content analysis, where key defining traits and tendencies of each bloggers’ practice are outlined in great detail. The second section presents the results of the content analysis periods that were conducted in tandem with the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Australia in 2014 and 2015. This was done to aid in the organisation of information, where the 2013 content analysis chapter focused on laying to foundations for understanding the *modus operandi* of each blogger under study, while the 2014 and 2015 chapter captured changes in practice over the three-year period. These results culminate in the establishment patterns in the practice of the sampled bloggers across a three-year period. Indeed, in addition to the field and forms of capital in cultural production, a look at the habitus of the individual completes this cohesive view of cultural production, and is the main focus of this chapter. The habitus is defined as internal structures that have been ingrained since early childhood, which influences the inclinations of the individual (Bourdieu, 1977). It is important to note that the habitus does not definitively predict the choices of an individual, but rather provides an indication of the likelihood of them taking certain courses of action. Of interest to this study is the extension of the existing literature on metamodernism, which tends to manifest at the level of expression.

As defined in the literature review, metamodernism is any mode of expression that encapsulates an oscillation between modern and postmodern sensibilities. These modes of expression relate specifically to individual choices in the creation of a text, and will therefore be examined in the context of the habitus. While the body of knowledge surrounding metamodernism is growing, the two concepts in particular have emerged as modes of expression through which this new paradigm manifests. The concepts performativity and the quirky are the lens through which this study explores the entrenchment of metamodern expression in fashion blogging.
Performativity is a mode of expression that entails a dynamic tension between authenticity and artifice. Likewise, the quirky represents a tonal quality reflecting a dynamic tension between sincere and ironic expression. Previous findings outlined in this thesis also indicate that the ways in which bloggers engage their audience are of particular relevance to the conceptualisation of digital capital. Using the data gathered primarily during the content analysis, and in a contextual capacity the semi-structured interviews, this study set out to discover if the adoption of metamodern modes of expression contribute to a successful career in fashion blogging. As outlined in the methodology, the coding scheme of the content analysis contains both quantitative and qualitative elements to provide an in-depth and holistic understanding the superstar fashion blogger's habitus. Further, note that this chapter references specific details extracted from sampled posts, of which a full list can be found in Appendix A.

Beginning with the data in 2013, it was evident the four blogs understudy produced varying forms of fashion-related content. Before delving into the data, it is pertinent to take note of the way in which each blogger under study has taken to describing themselves as an indication of a self-identified habitus. For example, a look at the official Facebook pages of each blogger shows that Susanna Lau calls her blog a Humanities/Arts Website; Bryan Yambao labels himself an Entertainer; Nicole Warne labels herself a Public Figure; and Patty Huntington classified her blog as a News/Media Website. Already, these archetypal identifications provide a context for a deeper investigation into the habitus of each blogger. The further examination of information on blogs other than fashion also provided a view of the lifestyle that each blogger portrays, allowing for a fuller understanding in the discussion of the habitus. In this coding period, Lau produced 21 posts, Yambao produced 15 posts, Warne produced 10 posts and Huntington produced 14 posts.
6.1 Nature of the content

Chart 1.1. Type of post

Based on the data represented in Chart 1.1, it appeared that of all the bloggers, Lau’s blog Stylebubble.co.uk contained the widest range of content types, though the most prevalent type of post was the feature. In this study, the category of feature referred to any instance where the blogger appeared to have conducted an exclusive interview.
with a designer, or demonstrated a great deal of research undertaken to create the coded post. The prevalence of features suggests a level of cultural capital as Lau took the time to craft cohesive and in-depth pieces of commentary. Likewise, having 19% of content in the category of fashion news showed that Lau’s content came from information released by the designer through press releases and accompanying images from the designer’s catalogue. Thus, even though Lau did not personally attend all events, she was still provided with content to post on her blog, which suggests a good working relationship with designers and their publicists. Lau’s blog also contained outfit posts where she was pictured modelling the latest season’s styles. This bring to the fore the concept of performativity – while Lau personally embodied an aesthetic as an authentic fashion tastemaker, this form of expression simultaneously contained a level of artifice as the image was taken against a carefully selected backdrop, Moreover, the photographer was rarely credited or mentioned on Lau’s blog. Out of the 21 coded posts, only one appeared to implicitly be an advertorial. In the post titled Bug-a-Boo, Lau (2013, December 3) featured Fendi’s latest accessory and proceeds to tell her audience about the upcoming Twitter event that she is hosting for the brand. Here, it can be inferred that Fendi was leveraging on Lau’s digital capital in exchange for economic compensation. Overall though, Lau’s blogging style is often lengthy in regard to text and tends to contain at least 20 accompanying images that she appears to have taken herself, unless they are images of her as the subject. More importantly, she is highly proficient in writing about aesthetics eloquently. A look into Lau’s educational background, which she included in the blog’s Frequently Asked Questions page, found that she pursued a Bachelor of Arts in History, which she revealed taught her “the importance of research and depth” (Lau, 2013b). In tandem with the fashion content on her blog, Lau also included non-fashion elements as part of her blog’s narrative as seen in Chart 1.2. Specifically, Lau tended to reveal the location she visited when photographing for a post (38%), or expound on the artists or illustrators engaged as collaborators with fashion designers (33%). The non-fashion related content classed as Other (43%) on Lau’s blog all pertained to her newfound interest in interior design, and a rediscovery of her paraphernalia, both of which were a direct result of her impending move into a new home. By informing the reader of her relocation process,
the post is deemed to contain an undertone of sincerity as it reflected a departure from her role as a fashion authority. In the post titled *A Different Sort of Move*, Lau explained:

Apologies as I’m still not so useful or functional as a fashion blogger right now because my iMac keyboard is literally rejecting my coarsened non-creative, hands caked in paint, plaster and sawdust. This time will pass, and just to prove that there’ll be no prolonged stop gap, I’m actually writing this from my new house complete with just-installed super duper speedy broadband. I won’t evade the fashions and the internets for long. (Lau, 2013, December 13)

Here, the use of ironic expression to give her audience an update on the recent happenings in her life encapsulated a metamodern quirkiness. In the same post, Lau also mentioned that in addition to moving into a new home, she was also joining the platform NowManifest, using irony to deliver the news to her reader.

It’s been ingrained in me for as long as I can remember to pole position myself into defensive mode whenever I do anything that has a hint of the mercenary about it. I have ads on my page – sorry sorry sorry. I have worked with this brand – sorry sorry sorry. I got a free ride at fashion week – sorry sorry sorry... I know I’m British and all but search for the S word and you might agree its presence is excessive. Even now, I’m standing on the precipice of saying it again. (Lau, 2013, December 13)

Within the same paragraph, Lau rationalised that joining NowManifest would afford her advertising revenue, which was necessary now that she had a mortgage to pay off. The use of honest tact in the pursuit of economic capital demonstrates a transparency that seems to have been effective as the following comments posted by her readers all appear to be supportive. This supports Kjellson’s (i/v, 2013) emphasis on the importance of transparency to readers to keep them engaged with the blog.
On Bryan Yambao’s blog *Bryanboy.com*, there seemed to be an even spread of *fashion news* (27%), *event coverage* (20%) and *outfit* (27%) posts that dominated the type of content he produced, as seen in Chart 1.1. It should be noted that Yambao is frequently invited to fashion shows and parties, where he relishes in the glamour of such events. In the post titled *Just Cavalli NYC Soho Store Opening*, Yambao (2013, December 16) pointed out that his fellow attendees include supermodel Miranda Kerr, *Lucky* magazine editor Eva Chen, and Hollywood actress Heather Graham. This was a strong indication of Yambao’s social and symbolic capital, where his entry to such exclusive events conferred a sense of prestige to his social status in the field. The fact that he associated himself with the people in attendance on the blog further illustrated his penchant for boasting his connections, which reinforced his position as an authenticity fashion insider. His embodiment of aesthetics through his outfit posts also indicated an authenticity in the visible consumption of the latest garments or accessories. However, similar to Lau, Yambao also tended not to reveal the photographer behind the camera when he was the subject of a photo. In this coding set, there were also instances of *fashion news*, which often consisted of promotional videos created by designers, accompanied by a short paragraph of text where Yambao briefly outlined his thoughts on the subject. This was in contrast to Lau, who tended to write more detailed posts. In a post classified as *personal opinion* (13%), Yambao (2013, December 12) wrote about his approval of German *GQ* championing gay rights; a topic he is passionate about as he is openly gay. The presence of this post suggests an authenticity in the lifestyle he leads, giving his readers a glimpse of his identity outside of fashion. Further the post categorised under *other* (13%) featured a video of a man divulging the best way to use air travel points for air ticket upgrades, which reflected Yambao’s interests as a frequent traveller. It should be noted that Yambao’s blog began as a travel blog, which he used to document a trip that he won to Russia. This is reflected in the emphasis of the locale in his photoshoots where the backdrop of his photoshoot often tied in with the visual and textual narrative of his blog posts, as seen in Chart 1.2. Overall, Yambao’s posts revolve around him and his lifestyle choices. They tended to contain one or two images or a YouTube video, followed by a short paragraph of text. It should be noted that Yambao has a high level of objectified
cultural capital as the latest clothing and accessories play a significant role in the narratives of his blog posts, and can be regarded as an extension of his portrayal of a lavish lifestyle. Indeed, the frequent glimpses into Yambao’s lifestyle supports Chelsea’s* (i/v, 2014) argument that successful fashion bloggers tend to offer content that portrays a “lifestyle connection” beyond the scope of fashion.

Similar to Yambao, Nicole Warne is also a highly performative blogger, with a strong lifestyle focus. A look at Chart 1.1 shows that Warne’s content on GaryPepperGirl.com were predominantly outfit posts (60%), which also provided the visual focus of her blog. This is in line with a genre of blogging known as personal style blogging, where the blogger’s style plays a pivotal role in the blog’s content. This means that the clothing or accessories she models also play a big role in the narrative of the blog, exemplifying her objectified cultural capital. This was accentuated in the posts marked as advertorial (30%), where Warne explicitly or implicitly divulged that she was engaged by a designer to feature their products. Here, an implicit instance of an advertorial could be the admission that she was sent items as gifts from the designer.

In such posts, there was often the presence of hyperlinks that led to specific online retail websites where the reader could make a purchase. The remaining post coded as other (10%), was a feature on Hamilton Island in collaboration with the destination’s tourism board. Therefore, the inclusion of travel content in 100% of her posts represented in Chart 1.2 gave readers a glimpse of her international lifestyle and highlighted her use of visually appealing geographical locations to add to the narrative on her blog. The idea of performance permeates Warne’s blog as she was in front of the camera in every blog post. This suggests a high level of performativity because although there was an authenticity in Warne’s embodiment of a range of aesthetics that appealed to her, each image was essentially carefully constructed. The notion of authenticity was emphasised by Daniel Kjellsson (i/v, 2013), who posited that there needed to be an alignment between the featured garments and the blogger’s personal sense of style, as the audience will lose interest otherwise. On the other hand, in the post titled Honey, Warne (2013, December 7) revealed that she meant to use her stay in Hamilton Island as a backdrop for an Abercrombie & Fitch photoshoot, but was
unable to as the package containing the clothes did not reach the resort in time. This suggests a level of artifice as the construction of image on GaryPepperGirl.com was carefully planned and thought out. The opportunity to create high quality editorial images was expedited by the fact that her partner Luke Shadbolt is a professional photographer. Indeed, in this coded data set, Shadbolt was responsible for the images in 6 out of the 10 posts. This highlights the way in which Warne made good use of her social connections to aid in the creation of high-quality content. More significantly, this data set supports the proposition at Warne possesses a performative habitus.

A look at the type of content created by Patty Huntington in Chart 1.1 showed that majority of her posts (57%) were Fashion News items, where the latest collection of designers’ collection were featured, often with accompanying images from the designers of their publicists. 29% of Huntington’s posts were coded under Feature, and often were of models and how their careers have evolved. Similar to Lau, Huntington also tended to write longer articles that involved research. Therefore, the type of content Huntington produced could be taken as a manifestation of her institutionalised cultural capital, which arises from her habitus. It is noteworthy that of all the blogs understudy, Huntington steered clear of outfit posts and was never pictured in any of the sampled posts. This suggests an authenticity as a fashion reporter, though the absence of a constructed persona is a departure from the other three bloggers under study. The instances of non-fashion content (Chart 1.2) on Huntington’s blog included information ranging from punk subculture in China to an exposition on the societal pressures of being thin. Her posts typically contained a long body of text followed a series of high quality editorial images, sent to her by designers fashion publicists (Huntington, i/v, 2013).
Chart 1.3 Multimedia Content

Chart 1.4 Attribution of Content
In addition to written text in blogs, it is evident that bloggers depend on a range of multimedia content to enhance their content, as seen in Chart 1.3. The content analysis found that Patty Huntington, Susanna Lau and Nicole Warne included images in all their blog posts. Bryan Yambao included images in 53% of his posts, and YouTube videos in the remaining 47% of posts. Lau and Huntington were recorded featuring YouTube videos in their posts too, though to a much lesser degree. The inclination of all bloggers to feature a range of multimedia content highlights not only the hypertextuality afforded by digital technologies, but also its necessity in the presentation of engaging content in the digital sphere. It is important to note that in line with the bricolage nature of blogs (Deuze, 2006), not all of the multimedia content on blogs were created by the bloggers. In this study, the presence or involvement of the blogger in the actual creation of content is taken to represent the notion of authenticity.

In order to ascertain whether or not a blogger’s multimedia content was original or reappropriated, the attributions – where the blogger acknowledges the source of the content featured in each blog post – were also recorded in the content analysis and reflected in Chart 1.4. The data shows that Huntington was most consistent and
frequent in acknowledging when images were created by someone other than her. This could be due largely to the fact that in the 2013 coding set, 100% of the images featured on Huntington’s blog were not photographed by her, and were primarily sourced from model management agencies, and magazines. Her access to high quality editorial content further reinforces her institutionalised cultural capital as Huntington is often provided the images through her professional contacts. In general though, the images featured on Huntington’s blog were often taken by professional photographers who were credited, along with all the people involved in the production of the image, including the model, make-up artist, hair stylist and creative director – a practice that aligns with her formal journalistic inculcation. Another blogger that consistently credited photographers was Nicole Warne. Indeed, Warne has undertaken internships in the styling department of fashion magazines, where she worked on photoshoots which might explain her inclination to credit photographers for their work as well. However, Warne differs significantly from Huntington in that all her images were original as she personally embodied and modelled the featured clothing. In this coding period, Warne was documented as the main subject of the photographs in 100% of her posts.

Susanna Lau featured photographs that she personally took in 48% of posts (Chart 1.5), showcasing her embodied cultural capital in that she is capable of taking high quality images for her blog. Lau was also featured as the subject in front of the camera in 38% of her blog posts, thereby highlighting a high level of performativity reflective of her habitus. In such posts, Lau was often shown to be wearing her interpretation of the latest season’s clothing, indicating her objectified cultural capital and her authenticity as a fashion tastemaker. However, Lau never revealed who was behind the camera when she was the subject of the photo, suggesting an artifice as the creation of the image would have required the involvement of someone else. Lau is known to meticulously document her visits to designers’ showrooms or events, and often included accompanying anecdotes of her experiences in the text of the blog post. Lau further featured images from designer’s catalogues (33%) and a range of other sources (33%), including artist portfolios, niche blogs and Google Images. It is noteworthy that
Lau’s style of blogging is highly representative of bricolage as images on her blog tend to be derived through a myriad of ways. Lastly, a closer examination of Yambao’s multimedia content showed that he was present in front of the camera in 47% of posts. Similar, to Warne and Lau, the presence of Yambao in front of the camera suggests a performative habitus, as he is inclined to promulgate his interpretation of an aesthetic or lifestyle. Interestingly, Yambao was not only featured in the images on his blog during this coding period, but in a Youtube video too. In the post titled The Morning Before the Party, Yambao was seen in the video lounging poolside while being interviewed by TeenVogue, where he was asked about his expectations of the Teen Vogue Awards. His natural ability on camera could have been abetted by his tenure as a judge on the television show America’s Next Top Model, and can be taken to reflect a transposability in his practice as a digital celebrity, which supports Bourdieu’s (1977) proposition that an individual’s habitus is transposable across fields.

The notion of gifting and payment for features is an implicit practice in fashion blogging, and this is evident in the posts categorised as advertorial in Chart 1.1. In such posts, a close read of the textual copy was necessary to elucidate statements referring to special collaborations or gift packages from brands. This practice was apparent in Warne (30%) and Lau’s (5%) posts, but not in any of Yambao or Huntington’s posts. However, from the interview with Huntington (i/v, 2013), it was revealed that disclosure of gifting tends to occur at the discretion of the blogger even though it is legally required in the US, UK and Australia. This means that there could have been a higher instance of compensation for featured content in the form of money or free gifts that were not detected but the researcher. Indeed, the inclusion of second variable that recorded the correlation between featured content and paid advertising on a blog found only one of Nicole Warne’s posts for Louis Vuitton was explicitly tagged as sponsored, and had a direct correlation with advertising at the time. That is, Louis Vuitton was featured in both the editorial and advertising sections at the same time. Other bloggers however, tended not to write about their ongoing advertisers, perhaps as an attempt at maintaining the impression of authenticity. Interestingly, that particular sponsored post by Louis Vuitton on Warne’s blog titled Whisper (2013,
November 26) was not shared on any of her social media platforms. This appears to be an attempt at negotiating the expectations of both her advertisers and her readers, as there is a fine line in the blogosphere between the perception of authenticity and selling out (Marwick, 2013). Nonetheless, the lack of explicit disclosure from the bloggers that tend to feature products, namely Lau, Yambao and Warne highlights Kjellsson’s (i/v, 2013) revelation on the fluidity of content on blogs, where the lines between editorial content and advertising are blurred. Such practice is not only common to digital media though, as Louis * (i/v, 2014) pointed out a similar tension in his experience as a journalist for both the print and digital editions of a magazine.

6.2 Professional and Personal Networks

Chart 1.6 Mention of Industry Key Players

![Chart 1.6 Mention of Industry Key Players](image)
As outlined in both preceding chapters on Field and Forms of Capital, the networked nature of the fashion industry cannot be ignored, and this is translated in the content in fashion blogs too. An analysis of the textual copy on the blogs understudy represented in Chart 1.6 found that 100% of both Susanna Lau and Patty Huntington referred to other key players in the fashion industry, while Bryan Yambao (80%) and Nicole Warne (50%) did so to a lesser degree. Lau tended to write about fashion designers and labels (90%), followed by key players classified under Other (62%), including interior designers, art directors, retailers, fashion investment corporations, museums, illustrators, sculptors, fashion academics and digital publisher NowManifest.

In general, Lau was inclined to cover topics and events in an encompassing way, where artisans and investors were mentioned in the same breath as designers. This highlights her informative and research-led approach to blogging. Huntington, on the other hand, adopted a model-centric (71%) focus on Frockwriter.com, choosing instead to save her in-depth industry commentary and features for publications like Women’s Wear Daily.

Despite the focus on model, Huntington also mentioned an array of industry professionals such as designers (57%), editors/ journalists (57%), and photographers (43%). Individuals categorised as other (64%) mainly included celebrities, model management companies and in one post, the hair stylist and makeup artist of a photoshoot. Again, the mention of a wide array of industry players highlighted the
networked nature of fashion as a system of overlapping fields including key players in the production, distribution and consumption of fashion.

A look at the people mentioned on Yambao’s blog posts showed that he mostly mentioned Designers/Labels (73%) and Editors/Journalists (27%). Posts classified as other (27%) included celebrities, retailers and fashion consumers. The acknowledgement of fashion consumers was especially salient as in the post Saint Laurent Stars and Diamonds, Yambao (2013, December 7) disclosed to readers what fashion consumers were buying from the designer’s latest collection, reflecting his knowledge of trends and may be taken as an expression of his authority and symbolic capital. The content analysis also saw Warne mentioning key players in 50% of her posts. It should be noted that Warne’s posts tend to be highly nostalgic and emotive and is often written in the vein of personal reflection akin to a diary, which might explain why Warne did not mention any industry player in 50% of her posts. Nonetheless, in the posts that did mention members of the fashion industry, Warne mostly mentioned Designers/Labels (50%). To a much lesser degree, Warne also mentioned other bloggers (20%) and a photographer (10%).

Overwhelmingly, the portrayal of key players represented in Chart 1.7 tended to be positive, as reflected in 100% of Nicole Warne's posts. Although Warne only talked about key industry players in 50% of her posts, all key players mentioned tend to be portrayed positively. Similarly, key players tend to be featured in positive light in 73% or Yambao’s post, while 7% of posts appeared to be neutral where descriptions appeared perfunctory and did not carry any overtly positive or negative connotations. More significantly, there was no recorded instance of negative critique on both Yambao and Warne’s blogs. This is significant as there are a few complexities present here. The lack of critique can be taken as artifice as it appears to be a conscious decision on the bloggers part to maintain positive relations with designers so as to not jeopardise potentially lucrative relationships. However, as Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) explained, the overt positive portrayal of a particular designer has to be in alignment with the blogger’s own aesthetic in order to translate as an authentic choice.
Moreover, it is not possible for bloggers to feature all the products that are sent or pitched to them, which suggests an implicit process of discrimination by exclusion. Nonetheless, while they were few, there were recorded instances of negative critique of key industry players on Susanna Lau’s (5%) and Patty Huntington’s (7%) blogs. In the post titled *Maison Madness*, Lau (2013, December 5) discussed the revival of certain fashion houses and their aesthetics, and concluded that some styles were better left in the past. Likewise, in the post titled *Filippa Hamilton-Palmstierna For David Lawrence Resort 2014*, Huntington (2013, December 16) was critical of the fashion industry’s unrealistic expectations of models to maintain a certain dress size in order to be cast in a runway show. Both instances of critique reflected a high degree of honesty and authority, which could be linked to both the key themes of sincerity and authenticity.

*Chart 1.8 Non-industry mentions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Networks</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Romantic Partner</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susanna Lau</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan Yambao</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Warne</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patty Huntington</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to key industry insiders, there were also mention of people that were a part of the bloggers personal network beyond the fashion industry as seen in Chart 1.8, giving readers an insight into the personal lives of bloggers. A look at the data found that Patty Huntington made no mention of her personal social networks in her posts, which presents a professional front to readers and can be taken as an indication of her authenticity as a fashion journalist in the print medium and broadcast medium. While Bryan Yambao primarily made little mention of his private life, he did mention is
friends (13%) and family (7%) occasionally. This was especially so in his post titled *Home Sweet Home* (2013, December 1), where he expressed concern for his family and friends back in the Philippines, which had been ravaged by Typhoon Haiyan. Lau similarly made little mention of her personal networks, though when she did, she referred to members of her family (13%), her friends (5%) and a contact coded as *other* (5%), which was the lady that helped her move homes. On the other hand, Nicole Warne mentioned her romantic partner Luke Shadbolt in 60% of her posts. This was a result of the spate of photoshoots shot by Shadbolt while they were both holidaying on Hamilton Island. Pertinently, the constant reference to her romantic partner offers the reader a glimpse into Warne’s personal life. Such revelations fully align with her nostalgic and self-reflexive approach to blogging. Indeed, the romance between Warne and Shadbolt is a dominant theme on *GaryPepperGirl.com*.

### 6.3 Hypertextuality

*Chart 1.9 Types of Hyperlinks*
The nature of digital communication provides new avenues for the dissemination of content, enabling the immediate referencing of texts, and more importantly the extension of discourses beyond the confines of the post. The analysis found that Susanna Lau, Nicole Warne and Patty Huntington included hyperlinks in their blog posts sampled in 2013, as seen in Chart 1.9. Lau tended to include hyperlinks to designers’ websites (76%), online retailers’ point of purchase sites (38%), and news and current affairs websites (29%). Coded under other (81%) are range a portfolio sites of artists, art directors, web designers and photographers, Wikipedia, Fendi’s Twitter page, museum websites, and film company websites. It should be noted that Lau’s posts are often detailed and lengthy with many hyperlinks within a single post. Similarly, Huntington too tended to feature multiple hyperlinks within a post, including previous posts on her own blog (71%), news and current affairs websites (71%), fashion news websites (71%) and other blogs (43%). There were also a wide array of other (100%) hyperlinks, which include an online encyclopaedia, online tabloid websites, portfolio sites of photographers, make-up artists, stylists, a celebrity’s tour dates, a restaurant, a crowd-funding campaign site, the presidential White House website, and most significantly, model management websites. Indeed, Huntington’s focus on featuring models was consistent in 57% of her posts, which underscores her niche in fashion blogging. Thus, both Susanna Lau and Patty Huntington were inclined to provide evidence of their research in the form of hyperlinks, which could be a result of their respective careers in publishing. To recapitulate, Lau was the online editor of a fashion magazine, and Huntington has worked in journalism and broadcast for twenty years. The fact that Huntington does not ever include links to point of purchase websites that direct readers to the point of consumption, is a reflection of her journalistic ethics carried through from her years in traditional media. In the interview, Huntington (i/v, 2013) expressed a disdain towards bloggers who featured undisclosed product endorsements, and pointed out how the adoption of such a practice would adversely affect her credibility as journalist, reflecting her strong institutionalised cultural capital. Here, credibility is taken to reflect an authority and legitimacy, denoted by the clear rejection of commercial interests. This is representative of authenticity, without the artifice. This is in stark contrast to the priorities of Nicole
Warne, where 90% of her blog posts contained hyperlinks to point-of-purchase websites, allowing her readers to easily purchase the featured product. This reinforces her economically-driven decisions to collaborate with designers by being the featured subject in their advertisements. It should be noted that point-of-purchase websites were typically high-end fashion retailers such as Net-a-Porter, Bergdorf Goodman and Neiman Marcus, websites where one would have to be relatively affluent to afford a purchase. While it was unclear if there was a transactional relationship between Warne and all the hyperlinked retail websites, it should be noted that Net-a-Porter has been an advertiser on Warne’s blog GaryPepperGirl.com prior to the commencement of the content analysis, revealing a history of monetary exchange. To a lesser degree, Warne also included hyperlinks to two blogs (20%), a previous post in GaryPepperGirl.com (10%) and a designer’s website (10%). The two blogs hyperlinked are of Zanita Whittington, a fellow FELLT blogger at the time of coding, and Carin Olsson, both of whom are fashion bloggers who photographed Warne in the blog posts where they were mentioned and credited. Finally, a look at Yambao’s hyperlinks showed that 60% of his posts did not contain hyperlinks, though the hyperlinked posts lead to retail points-of-purchase sites (20%), a link to a previous post on Byranboy.com (7%), a link to a news and current affairs website (7%), and a link a to designer’s website (7%).

Chart 1.10 Social Media Sharing
Another hallmark of the content produced online is the ease of dissemination aided by the advent of microblogs or social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. The ability of content creators to not only publish, but also share and promote their own material reinforces Bruns’ (2007a) conception of produsage, which proffered that the boundaries between the producer, distributor and consumer have been irrevocably blurred. Indeed, the bloggers understudy all appeared to be aware of the opportunities to gain a larger readership through the consistent promotion of their content. Chart 1.10 showed at all blog posts sampled were shared on the blog aggregation platform Bloglovin’, which allows fashion consumers to curate a list of blog that they read regularly and kept up-to-date with in a constantly updated feed of fashion content. It appeared that all bloggers had set up automated sharing between their blogs and Bloglovin’. It is important to note that Bloglovin’ only allows for information gather and does not facilitate any interaction between readers and bloggers, unlike other channels of content dissemination. From the data, bloggers also relied on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, with Susanna Lau, Patty Huntington and Bryan Yambao consistently sharing their content through these channels 100% of the time. Nicole Warne shared all her posts through Facebook (90%), Twitter (90%) and Instagram (90%) but there was one anomaly where she consciously decided not to share a post. The post in question, titled Whisper, was an advertorial that she created for Louis Vuitton, which was also a paying advertiser on her blog at the time of coding. It is unclear what her motivations were for refraining from sharing, though there could have been a conflict of interest in Warne’s desire to maintain a level of credibility with her audience. It should be noted that Instagram is also a large part of Warne’s practice as a personal style blogger. As Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) revealed, half of Nicole’s following was on Instagram, which was 1.3 million at the time of the research. The heavy use of Instagram can thus be viewed as an extension of her digital persona.

Patty Huntington too posted images to Instagram linked to her blog posts 100% of the time. However, in contrast to Warne, Huntington was never the subject of the images. Rather, the images tended to be of the person featured in the blog post, indicating an
avoidance of the performative. To a lesser degree, both Susanna Lau (43%) and Bryan Yambao (53%) also posted images associated with their blog posts on Instagram. Lastly, Yambao also has a Tumblr blog, which seemed to be linked to Instagram in an automated process as the content on both of these platforms run by Yambao are exactly identical. Overall, it is evident that social media sharing is a large part of the superstar fashion blogger’s practice as it enables them to disseminate their own content to an international audience. The capacity for automating the dissemination of content further increases the potential reach of each post to a wider audience.

Chart 1.11 Interaction with Readers

![Interaction with Readers Chart](image)

Congruent to the literature on the parasocial nature of blogs where interaction is perceived but not actually occurring (Thorson & Rodgers, 2006), this study found minimal interaction between bloggers and their core readership. There was no recorded interaction with readers in both Yambao and Warne’s blogs as seen on Chart 1.11. The only blogger who responded to the comments of readers during this coding period was Patty Huntington, were she engaged in a discussion on body diversity in the fashion industry with another fashion blogger Zanita Whittington, who is also part of FELLT. In the post, Zanita was complimentary of Huntington’s commentary, which can be taken to reflect both social and symbolic capital. In a separate post, Huntington is also seen asking questions in response to an anonymous reader, who revealed that
they have worked with the model featured in Huntington’s blog post. The willingness to engage in a discussion and ask further questions denotes an investigative habitus, in line with her journalism background. Indeed, such engagement was uncommon among other more performative bloggers like Warne, Lau and Yambao. By asking questions of her readers who comment on her posts, Huntington demonstrates a willingness to embrace new perspectives by engaging in dialogic exchanges. Huntington also announced a call to action for her readers to support cancer research by donating to the Movember\(^4\) cause. The only other instance of interaction between a blogger and reader during this coding period was when Lau directly addressed her audience in a call to action to participate in a Twitter interview between Fendi’s Silvia Venturini and Twitter fans, which Lau was hired to facilitate. Although the social media interactions between bloggers and their followers fell outside the scope of this study, it was qualitatively noted that Lau did respond to a few commenters on Instagram, suggesting that social media was a better platform for interaction compared to blogs. This is supported by the research interview with Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) who expressed that in his personal context, he preferred to engage with followers on Twitter, and that instead of responding to a multitude of similar comments, a blogger could better utilise their time by creating new content.

6.4 Metamodern Modes of Expression

The research was also set up to identify the instances of metamodern expression present in the content. These instances may require a pre-existing engagement with metamodernist ideas to aid in the identification of such modes of expression. Thus the coding variables pertaining to the metamodern expression should be regarded a qualitative aspects of the content analysis. Indeed, the metamodern paradigm is still expanding to include new tensions and sensibilities, though this study specifically focusses on performativity and the quirky. While performativity was readily identified through the study in the decisions of the bloggers in enacting their practice, the tonal

\(^4\) Movember is an annual awareness campaign which challenges men to grow moustaches in the month of November to raise funds for prostate and testicular cancer. http://au.movember.com/about
quality of the quirky required a more nuanced approach in its identification. Therefore, in order to support the instances of sincerity, irony and the quirky identified in this research, key quotes were extracted from blog posts to demonstrate the presence of this complex sensibility. As a starting point the work of Whalen et al. (2013), was utilised as a guide in the interpretation of irony while key definitions relating to the quirky were used to establish examples of this sensibility.

*Chart 1.12 Ironic Utterances*

Out of the four bloggers, Susanna Lau consistently used irony in the creation of her written content in 100% of sampled posts. Indeed, Lau is so adept at expressing ironic humour that there were multiple instances of ironic utterances in some posts. Chart 1.12 shows that Lau tended mostly to express *jocularity* (43%), followed by *hyperbole* (38%), *understatement* (14%), *rhetorical question* (10%) and *sarcasm* (5%). An example documented in the content analysis of jocularity is derived from the post titled *Worthy Winners*, where Lau (2013, December 3) commented on being nominated for an award, expressing: “I was curiously nominated in a big pot of slebs [sic] for the British Style Award (aka the Alexa Chung award as she has notoriously won it for the last three years).” This quote is taken to be jocular as it “conveys a different meaning than the spoken one, without being strictly counterfactual” (Whalen et al., 2013, p. 562).
More specifically, jocularity is taken to reflect a form of irony delivered in a non-serious teasing tone, connoting humorous intent (Gibbs, 2000).

Ironic utterances were also found in half of Patty Huntington’s blog posts, where she utilised jocularity (21%) and sarcasm (21%) in equal measure, and to a lesser degree, understatement (14%) and hyperbole (7%). Indeed, there was one instance where Huntington employed sarcasm a means or critique. In the post titled Filippa Hamilton-Palmstierna for David Lawrence Resort 2014, Huntington (2013, December 16) wryly commented on a designer’s approach towards body image: “because covering up the evidence and shooting the messenger is always better than dealing with criticism, right?” This quote aligns with Whalen et al.’s (2013, p. 562) definition of sarcasm, which reflects “language that is used to convey an intent that is counterfactual to the actual utterance”.

Nicole Warne, on the other hand, only expressed irony in 30% of posts, which were specifically hyperbole (10%), rhetorical question (10%) and jocularity (10%). Warne’s use of hyperbole was in the context of her expressing sadness at having to leave a beautiful place saying: “Now all I need is to pack this Australian heat with me so I’m not so torn about leaving again.” The use of hyperbole is observed through the overstating and exaggeration of reality (Whalen et al., 2013, p. 562). Indeed, contrary to Huntington who used sarcasm to express critique, Warne used hyperbole to overstate her positive experience. Bryan Yambao too gravitated towards hyperbole (20%), and to a lesser degree, sarcasm (7%) and jocularity (7%), in the posts where ironic expression were recorded. In the post titled See by Chloe Sandals, Yambao (2013, December 19) jests: “It’s no secret that I sweat like a whore in church and it’s not a good lewk [sic]”. In tandem with this humorous hyperbolic revelation, Yambao expresses how thrilled he is by his new sandals, highlighting the promotional nature of his blog. A full list of ironic utterances recorded in this coding period can be found in Appendix D. The notion of irony is significant because it is a sensibility linked to postmodernism, which is looked at in tandem with sincerity to find out if a metamodern quirkiness was prevalent in fashion blogging. Previously discussed coding
Variables that could be linked to sincerity include indications of personal connections, as well as mention of other activities outside of fashion, both of which gives the reader a glimpse of the bloggers’ personal lives as individuals with varied interests. More significantly, the use of irony as sincerity within a single utterance was also recorded qualitatively in this study for a deeper examination of the quirky.

*Chart 1.13 The Quirky*

Notably, quirky expression was also found on the blogs that tended towards performative expression – specifically the blogs of Nicole Warne, Bryan Yambao and Susanna Lau. Incidentally, these are the bloggers that have spent the least amount of time entrenched in the hierarchies of traditional fashion media. Conversely, Patty Huntington, who has the most experience working for broadcast media appeared to instinctively write in a non-performative and non-quirky way. This is taken to reflect Louis’* (i/v, 2014) point about the writer’s personal voice being discouraged in print fashion journalism in adherence to a consistent tone throughout the magazine. Chart 1.13 shows that of all bloggers, quirky expression was most prevalent in Lau’s blog, which factored into 57% of her sampled posts during this coding period. An example of quirky expression can be found in the post titled A Different Sort of Move, Lau talks about turning 30 and how that does not deter her at-times outlandish outfit choices.
As for my style, which supposedly is meant to undergo some sort of decades-related shift because all the “wimen’s” magazines say that that is the case, I have this picture, shot by Piczo for a small feature in i-D Magazine about being a collector of clothes, that will always serve to remind me how impossible it would be to live without all the clothes that would be considered overly brash and brazen on the eye to most. (Lau, 2013, December 13)

This quote is taken to be quirky because while Lau acknowledges that her outfit choices are not the norm, she is determined to stay true to her style. Indeed, the above extracted quote aligns with Rombes’ (2005, p.74) definition of New Sincerity (which underpins the quirky), as a mode of expression that “evoke[s] a sincere emotional response while at the same time, [creates] the possibilities for the audience to see through the very mechanisms that elicit response”.

This is further demonstrated in some posts on the blogs of Bryan Yambao (13%) and Nicole Warne (20%). In the post, titled *Missoni Turtleneck Sweater*, Yambao (2013, December 8) commented on his inclination towards womenswear but made an exception in that post saying: “I know I wear a lot of womenswear pieces but there are times when I wear full, head-to-toe menswear lewks [sic].” This way of portraying the designer in positive light through an unexpected personal revelation is taken as quirky. Likewise, in Warne’s blog post titled *Hamilton Island Instagram Diary* (2013, December 15), she demonstrated an awareness of her performative and digital-centric habitus when she began the post with: “Blue, green, yellow, blue, green, yellow, #selfie, blue, green, yellow.” This was taken to reflect the colours she was constantly surrounded by on the beach during her trip sponsored by Qualia Resort on Hamilton Island, and the opportunities for ‘selfies’ it afforded. Overall, quirky expression was less readily observable than performativity as it pertained to the “ineffable matters of tone and mood” (MacDowell, 2013, p. 54). In this coding period, it was apparent that in terms of metamodern modes of expression, the quirky was not as prevalent as performativity. A full list of examples of quirky expression extracted from the sampled post can be found in Appendix E.
6.5 Further Qualitative Notes

The contextual data emerging out of the content analysis in 2013 has allowed for the creation of profiles that typify each blogger under study. A look at Susanna Lau’s Facebook page found that she categorised her blog as an Arts and Humanity website. This is supported by the qualitative notes in the content analysis, which found that Lau tended to discuss the aesthetics of the designer in great depth and with supporting research, lending her an air of authenticity in the public discourse of fashion trends. The is further supported by incidences of performativity, where she is captured in front of the camera physically embodying the aesthetics that she writes about, even though some of her content may have been carefully constructed to convey a mood or feeling central to the aesthetic. Further, it should be noted that Lau does not shy away from economic opportunities in the form of collaboration with designers or advertising. This again aligns with the notion of performativity, which reflects a tension between a modern authenticity and a postmodern artifice, and correspondingly, between cultural capital and economic capital. Lau’s blog also featured multiple instances of quirky expression encapsulated through the simultaneous expression of a modern sincerity and a postmodern irony. The written content in her blogs also revealed a number of notable traits in her upbringing. For instance, the post Shopped-Out, Lau (2013, December 4) recounted her youth scouring the emporiums of London and how a shop called The Shop cultivated her interest in fashion. In the post This is Me... Bidding Farewell to N7, Lau (2013, December 11) posted a video of herself being interviewed for a documentary where she revealed that apart from fashion, her other loves were food and soccer. Lau also revealed that her love of expression through clothing began at a young age.

As soon as I could dress myself, I just remember wanting to DIY things. I’ve ruined a couple of my mom’s blouses in the process.... I always thought of fashion as something to indulge in. I ended up studying History at uni but I didn't even think of it as a career path. The blog was just purely like an escape.
Like the fun thing you do, not for a living but for funsies [sic]. (Lau in Mahon, 2013)

Additionally, in the post *A Walk Around Brompton Cross*, December 18) revealed her tendency to feel out-of-place in the up-market boutiques in Brompton Cross as a result of her frugal upbringing, and that her only reason for venturing into that part of London as a youth was to visit her family’s restaurant. Indeed, each of these revelations indicate that Lau’s interest in fashion is innate and embodied from an early age, and can be seen to be an integral part of her habitus, and is evident in her decision to start a fashion blog. It should be noted that Lau also describes herself as a fashion outsider on the FAQ page of her blog (Lau, 2013b). This is further accentuated in the post *Printed Matter Matters*, where Lau (2013, December 20) featured the handwritten notes from designers that she has accumulated over the years: “I’ll probably get found out to be a fraud one of these days and all of these lovely thank you notes, gifts and greetings cards will disappear in an instance.” Indeed, such expression highlights another tension in the practice of blogger; an oscillation between the roles between fashion insider and outsider. Nonetheless, it is evident that Lau (2013, December 10) has become an authority in the field of fashion, as she revealed that she was allowed access to “Fendi’s closeted atelier, something that has never been granted to journalist or blogger,” as a result of her digital collaboration with the brand. This high level of prestige or symbolic capital is indubitably a strong indication of Lau’s authenticity and legitimacy in the field of fashion.

A look at Bryan Yambao’s Facebook page found that he classified himself as an Entertainer. The qualitative notes recorded for Yambao’s blog found that his written content was often an extension or record of his social life. While he briefly mentioned his relief at his family and friends being safe in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in the post titled *Home Sweet Home*, not much else was actually revealed about Yambao’s personal background. Instead, much of the social interactions referenced on *Byranboy.com* pertained to Yambao’s interactions with industry insiders. In the post *Prada Resort 2014 Ad Campaign Video*, Yambao (2013, November 29) referred to
Miuccia Prada on a first name basis, suggesting a personal familiarity with the designer. Additionally, while in the 2013 INYT Luxury Conference Singapore post, Yambao (2013, December 3) referred to designer Anna Sui as his “partner-in-crime” at the event. Similarly, in the post Just Cavalli NYC Soho Store Opening, half of the post’s written content was a list of names of celebrities and fashion personalities who also attended the event. This way, Yambao can be seen to use his blog as a reproduction of his social status in the fashion and entertainment industry. Another trait worth pointing out is the prominence of fashion artefacts on his blog, signalling a high level of objectified cultural capital. In the post The Morning Before the Party, where Yambao (2013, November 25) was interviewed by Andrew Bevan for Teen Vogue’s Youtube channel, he is seen gifting Bevan with a Louis Vuitton t-shirt, reinforcing his social capital (i.e relationships) through objectified cultural capital (i.e. a gift). Most tellingly, Yambao’s (2013, December 19) consumerist inclinations also emerged in the post See By Chloe Sandals, where he stated his refusal at spending his “hard-earned money towards old merchandise”, indicating his penchant for the newest and trendiest items in fashion.

Referring to herself as a Public Figure on Facebook, Nicole Warne is one of the most recognisable Australian attendees of the international fashion week circuit. Warne is highly performative as she not only is the subject of images in all her blog posts, she is also the focal point of the advertising banners on her own website as well. However, even though garments and accessories are often physically embodied by Warne in her blog posts accompanied with point-of-purchase hyperlinks, she did not mention the designers in four out of the 10 sampled posts. Indeed, there is an undertone of romance in the written content on Warne’s blog, where she chooses to focus on her personal experience and thoughts that encapsulate the moment or aesthetic that she is reflecting upon. In one such post titled Sail, Warne (2013, December 16) described a day on an Hamilton Island: “As I sluggishly attempted to wake up this morning, the refreshing sea breeze trickled in through the balcony doors and delicately danced its way over to my bed.” A nostalgic sensibility also permeates some of the posts sampled in this study. In this post Fluide, Warne (2013, December 9) reminisced about her time
in Paris and her reluctance to release the featured images on her blog as it made her miss her companion and photographer at the time.

I was saving these last photos until I was ready to accept the uncertainty of exactly when I’d get to see and shoot with Carin again. Perhaps with the thought of us being reunited in just a few mere [sic] weeks in Europe, I’m finally ready to let go of these photos in order to welcome our new ones. (Warne, 2013, December 9)

The juxtaposition of commercial promotion through hyperlinks with authentic and sincere emotion further underscores the oscillation between modern and postmodern sensibilities inherent in Nicole Warne’s performative style of fashion blogging.

Finally, a look at Patty Huntington’s official Facebook page found that she classifies her blog as a News/Media website. An evident tenet of her practice is the objective approach to feature-writing on her blog, because of all the bloggers under study, not much about her personal life could be gleaned through her blog content. The adoption of strict journalistic ethics, indicates a lack of artifice in her expression, and in turn a lack of performativity. While Huntington, does convey personal opinion through her blog post, these opinions never deviate from the subject matter of the blog post. The topics of body image and beauty standards in the fashion industry appear to be a focus on her blog as these topics are critiqued in four of the 14 posts sampled during this coding period. Huntington is, however, adept at the use of a wry sense of humour in the discussion of a given topic, as demonstrated in the post Upper Lip Service. While promoting the Movember cause, Huntington (2013, November 29) joked, “According to the AMI/Wahl Trimmers survey, nearly 92% of 1109 respondents allegedly believe moustaches are appropriate attire for the workplace … Take that hipster haters.” This irony does not translate to quirkiness though, because there is a detachment in the way Huntington chooses to avoid any expression could lead to the revelation of her personal thoughts. Huntington’s objective approach coupled with the evident access to exclusive images for her blog posts reinforced the finding that her habitus is closely
linked to her institutionalised cultural capital. With the information gathered in this round of content analysis as context, the following chapter proceeds to outline the finding of the coding periods in 2014 and 2015, with a focus the coverage of MBFWA, as well as potential changes in practice over the three-year research period.
Chapter 7: MBFWA Coverage: Results for 2014 & 2015 Content Analyses

The content analyses of the 2014 and 2015 were implemented in tandem with the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Australia (MBFWA), with the aim of examining the coverage of this key fashion event as it is attended by both Australian and international fashion bloggers. The content analysis found a drastic change in the online coverage of the event between the two coding periods, as MBFWA 2014 achieved a high level of coverage on the blogs of Susanna Lau, Nicole Warne and Patty Huntington. In contrast, MBFWA 2015 was featured to a much lesser degree on the sampled blogs, which suggests a shift in priorities for bloggers and the Australian fashion industry.

7.1 Content Analysis Results for 2014

The 2014 coding set, which analysed all the blog posts in the month of April 2014, found a significant difference in the number and frequency of the posts on the blogs of Bryan Yambao, Patty Huntington and Nicole Warne compared to 2013. Only Susanna Lau maintained a similar content output and posting schedule as, which is an important development between the 2013 and 2014. Specifically, Lau created 19 posts, Yambao created 7 posts and Huntington created 2 posts. While Warne officially created 4 posts in April 2014, one more post relating to her coverage of the MBFWA 2014 posted in May was also included in the sampling, bringing her number of posts to 5. This was done for the sake of continuity, given that Warne was engaged to perform a specific role as the Official Insider for MBFWA 2014.
7.1.1 Nature of the Content

*Chart 2.1 Type of Post*

An examination of the type of posts in this coding set represented by Chart 2.1 showed that Susanna Lau displayed a range of content that predominantly contained *features*. 

*Chart 2.2. Content Other Than Fashion*
(42%), followed by event coverage (31%), outfit showcase (11%), fashion news (11%) and advertorial (5%). The emphasis on creating feature content on StyleBubble.co.uk is consistent with the finding in 2013. However, there was a greater incidence of event coverage, primarily because this coding period coincided with the MBFWA 2014 held in Sydney, where Lau was invited as an international guest seated the front row of every show, and was bestowed the privilege of viewing collections backstage. This indicates a high level of prestige towards Lau’s presence at this key Australian fashion event, signifying symbolic capital. Due to the amount of travel that Lau has undertaken over this period, the instance of travel locations (79%) featured as part of the post, reflected in Chart 2.2, was correspondingly high as she ventured to Tokyo and Hong Kong after Australia. Apart from fashion, another topic that was prominently featured on Lau’s blog was art and illustration (16%), which once again highlighted her proclivity towards the discussion of aesthetics. Similar to the 2013 round of content analysis, Lau’s post tended to be lengthy and in-depth articles on the designers and showrooms she came across in April 2014. The posts were also accompanied by a myriad of photos taken from her front row seat at fashion shows, as well as some exclusive backstage and showroom shots, where access to these restricted areas demonstrates a combination of her social and symbolic capital. This was especially evident in the post Di$count: System Eff Up, where Lau (2014, April 14) is photographed backstage at Di$count’s MBFWA 2014 runway show, rummaging through the racks of clothing debuting that day and picking out her favourite pieces to model in front of a mirror.

Chart 2.1 shows that Yambao too produced a range of posts on his blog, with the most prominent being outfit posts (29%) and event coverage (29%). This is followed by fashion news (14%), feature (14%) and other (14%). In the post categorized as other, Yambao provided the details of an upcoming fundraising event by a museum, of which he was a board member. The incidence of outfit posts in this coding round is similar to the 2013. However, it appeared that Yambao’s initial focus on fashion news, where he featured the latest collection or products of a designer, shifted to a greater emphasis on event coverage in 2014. It should be noted that he was not present in the MBFWA 2013 event though he held a high profile as an international guest in 2013.
Nonetheless, Chart 2.2 shows that Yambao also tended to utilise interesting locales as a backdrop for his images (43%). In one such post titled *Hot Desert Knight*, Yambao (2014, April 20) was pictured on the sand dunes of Dubai modelling a Chanel handbag and Prada sandals. Apart from travel locales Yambao also featured *music* (14%), *food* (14%), and information of a museum’s fundraiser for education (14%).

In this coding period, Nicole Warne reprised her role as the MBFWA 2014 Official Fashion Insider, where she was tasked with interviewing designers backstage for the digital livestream that was accessible to a global audience. Warne was also engaged to assume this role when she was part of FELLT in 2013. However, in the time between coding periods, it is notable that Warne had left FELLT to join talent management and events agency IMG, which incidentally also organises MBFWA. Thus, all her posts in this coding period were related to fashion week. Even her very first post in this coding period on the Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival, referenced her collaboration with the event and Lavazza coffee as their Style Consultant, and mentioned her excitement at the upcoming MBFWA. Therefore, her posts in this coding period were either *outfit* (60%) posts or *event coverage* (40%) as seen in Chart 2.1. Indeed, the posts categorised as outfit posts were of Warne wearing the latest season’s clothing that premiered on the MBFWA 2014 runways, and could be regarded as a digital extension of the spectacle of the event. In addition to fashion-related content, the locale of the event also factored into her content creation in 40% of her posts. For example, in the post titled *MBFWA Day 2*, Warne is photographed in an orange cardigan that matches the orange safety mesh fence in the back area of Carriageworks Sydney, where MBFWA was held.

Among all the bloggers, the change in Patty Huntington’s blogging pattern was most pronounced as only two posts were created in the whole month of April 2014. The two posts pertained to her attendance of the MBFWA 2014 as well, which is why 100% of her posts were classified as *event coverage* in Chart 2.1. In contrast to the coding period in 2013 where Huntington covered a wide range of subject matters, there was no mention of topics that deviated from the featured events of April 2014.
Huntington’s (2014, April 8) blogging style changed as well, as the post titled *Backstage at Maticevski - MBFWA SS1415* was comprised of backstage images that she appears to have taken without any accompanying written content, which is out of character given Huntington’s highly institutionalised journalistic approach to content creation earlier in the research, where she mainly produced in-depth commentary.

*Chart 2.3 Multimedia Content*

![Multimedia Content Chart](chart2.3.png)
Overwhelmingly, the majority of multimedia content across all blogs were images as seen in Chart 2.3. This underscores the importance and value of visual devices in the narrative of the blogs under study. A finding consistent with 2014 was that images were found in 100% of Huntington, Lau and Warne’s blog posts. While Yambao featured images in 72% of his blog posts, he did feature a video (14%) and a graphic
in the remaining posts as well, suggesting that written content alone was not adequate or sufficient to maintain the interest of the fashion audience. As Moeran (2006) found, images play a central role in fashion communication, without which there can be no fashion system, as images are key to illustrating fashion trends to consumers. This practice also suggests that the bloggers under study utilise the capabilities afforded by digital communication. A specific look at Lau’s multimedia content in Chart 2.5 shows that she personally took the images that were featured in 74% of her blog posts. Additionally, Lau was also featured as the subject of images in 68% of posts, where she was often depicted modelling certain clothing while immersed in an experience. Her heavy involvement in the creation of personalised content lends her an authenticity as a fashion blogger as she is the one interpreting the clothing to express an aesthetic that she favours.

However, it should be noted that in the posts where Lau featured as the focal point in the images, the person behind the camera was not revealed save for two posts where she credited Phil Oh of the street style blog StreetPeeper.com. The lack of acknowledgement of the collaborative nature of blogging suggests the presence of performativity as the reader is made to think that Lau being captured on camera as she goes about her day is a natural occurrence. This reflects a transcendence of daily life into the realm of the ethereal and sublime encapsulated by New Romanticism. Correspondingly, such an elevation reflects an artifice in the contrivance of a photoshoot, and an authenticity in the personal embodiment of clothing. While Lau occasionally featured images of designer’s catalogues (5%), she never featured images out of magazines’ online galleries. This aligns with her recognition of her blog as a stand-alone publication (Business of Fashion, 2013a). Lau also featured two videos in this coding period, one of which was an Instagram video of designer Phoebe Philo being interviewed at the Vogue Festival 2014 filmed from her seat in the audience; and the second featured Lau (2014, April 1) making use of the digital self-portrait animation booth in Harrods in the post Eggs Par Excellence. Lau also appropriated and credited images from various blogs and websites that featured niche aesthetics in the post Gaultier Redux (Lau, 2014, April 1), as well as retailers in the post An Earful (Lau,
2014, April 29). It is important to note that each post can contain a combination of multimedia content highlighted above, emphasising the fluid and bricolage nature of blogging.

While Bryan Yambao’s posts were primarily images (72%), he also posted a graphic (14%) and a video (14%) as seen in Chart 2.3. Yambao’s style of blogging was consistent with the 2013 content analysis in that his posts generally consisted of a short paragraph, accompanied with one to three images, with the exception of the post Paper Magazine’s 2014 Beautiful People Party (Yambao, 2014, April 29), which contained 12 images featuring the famous company that he kept at the event. Chart 2.5 shows that Yambao was found in front of the camera in 57% of posts, which is an increase from 2013. Where Yambao featured a significant number of videos taken from designers’ Youtube channels in 2013, he appeared to be more involved in creating original content in 2014. Indeed, he even appeared to be behind the camera in 29% of posts. The only piece of multimedia content that Yambao was not involved in was the electronic poster that he shared with his readers containing the details of a fundraising party held by the Whitney Museum of American Art.

In reference to Chart 2.3, Nicole Warne demonstrated the same consistency in blogging style in both 2013 and 2014, as she was visible in all sampled posts in 2014, even in posts categorised as event coverage. In contrast to the other bloggers under study, Warne consistently makes it a point to credit the photographer responsible for her images as seen in Chart 2.4, and even credits herself for some of the images in the post Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival Diary. All of Warne’s other posts were of the MBFWA 2014, which Patty Huntington also covered. Indeed, Huntington’s blog Frockwriter.com featured the greatest discrepancy in regard to blogging style in comparison to the 2013 content analysis. Instead of utilising images sent from secondary sources typical of her practice in 2013, Huntington appeared to have shot the featured images herself in the sampled posts for 2014 (Chart 2.5). The inconsistencies in her blogging practice between 2013 and 2014, taken together with an interview statement where Huntington revealed she was “still trying to work it out”
(i/v, 2013), could be regarded as a blogging practice in flux. However, an aspect of Huntington’s blogging that remained unchanged was the fact that she was never the subject of the blog’s images. Rather, images on her blog were primarily of models backstage at the MBFWA 2014, which could be taken as a reflection of her high level of social capital given the unrestricted access she secured at the event. Overall, there was no correlation between featured brands and advertisers across all blogs in the 2014 coding period. However, it should be noted that while there was no advertising on Lau’s blog in 2013, her partnership with NowManifest saw a re-design of her blog to include advertising in 2014.

7.1.2 Professional and Personal Networks

*Chart 2.6 Mention of Key Industry Players*

Reinforcing the findings of 2013, Chart 2.6 shows that the work of other key industry players feed heavily into the content featured in blogs, with the most mentions being of fashion designers or clothing labels. On StyleBubble.co.uk, designers and labels were mentioned in 89% of posts, followed by key players classified under other (58%), including fashion consumers, the British Fashion Council, visual artists who collaborated with fashion designers, fashion retailers, creative director Mark Vassallo...
and the Museum of Costume. Lau also mentioned fashion editors and journalists (26%) to a larger degree in this coding period compared to 2013. It should be noted that Lau appears to be gaining a larger profile as a fashion journalist, especially with her new affiliation as a contributor to online fashion industry publication the Business of Fashion. Lau also mentions other bloggers (11%) in her posts, namely Phil Oh of Streetpeeper.com, who took the images featured in two posts, as well as a photographer (5%) Nick Knight who contributed to the creative direction of a fashion show. The mention of other bloggers such as Phil Oh, in Other Other Story and Philo’s the Word, as well as Rei Shito in An Earful demonstrated her social capital among other members of the fashion industry who also possess digital capital. Further, Lau (2014, April, 21) was the only blogger to mention fashion PR/publicists (5%), acknowledging their presence in her discovery of a few Australian jewellery designers in Pieces of Eight.

Bryan Yambao also predominantly featured fashion designers in 86% of his posts, and to a lesser degree other bloggers (29%) and editors/journalists (14%). Given that Yambao did not mention key players in some posts in 2013, it can be said that he exhibited a greater industry focus on his content in 2014. Similar to his content in the previous coding period, Yambao tended to mention key industry players in a social context, which reinforces the argument that his blog can be taken as a reproduction of his social life within the industry. This is similar to Nicole Warne in this data set, as she mentioned fashion designers in 100% of posts, all of whom presented their latest collections at the MBFWA 2014. Warne also mentioned photographers (20%) and international fashion bloggers (20%) who made a trip to Australia for the MBFWA 2014. In the post MBFWA Day 1, Warne (2014, April 17) is pictured interviewing fashion photographer Tommy Ton, and bloggers Susanna Lau and Steve Salter, as part of her duties as the MBFWA 2014 Official insider. One of the images in this post depicts Warne and Lau laughing together, which highlights the social nature of these events. Indeed, while the candid nature of the images suggests an undertone of a sincerity. Warne described these interviewees as “some of the sweetest people in the industry”. It should also be noted while there was no mention of Susanna Lau’s
romantic partner Steve Salter on her own blog, Warne’s post revealed his presence at the event.

Lastly, given Patty Huntington’s sole focus on the MBFWA 2014 during this coding period, fashion designers were the focal point of all her posts. The only other (50%) brand mentioned was Tiffany and Co., a luxury jewellery brand that awarded the designers behind Strateas.Carlucci a national design award. Even though there was little mention of other industry players at the event, Huntington demonstrates a consistent focus on fashion models, as the images tended to be close-up shots of models backstage waiting to strut down the runway.

Chart 2.7 Portrayal of Industry Players

A consistent finding in this research was that key industry players tended to be discussed in positive light, as shown in Chart 2.7. This is especially so of Nicole Warne, who was highly flattering in her references to other players in the industry. For example, in the post MBFWA Day 3, Warne (2014, April 19) wrote, “The second day of Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Australia belonged to my favourite shows of the week – Maticevski and Michael Lo Sordo. Both happen to be dear friends…” In the same post, Warne is seen wearing clothes from both the latest collections the day after they previewed on the runway, indicating her access to clothing before they are available in
stores. More significantly, Warne’s posts in this coding period also appear to be a reproduction of her social status within the Australian fashion industry.

Susanna Lau was another blogger that demonstrated a high degree of positivity (84%) towards designers. However, in contrast to Warne, Lau was more likely to express positivity towards an aesthetic, instead of her social relations with designers. For example, when rationalising the positive reaction of the fashion industry towards designer Dion Lee’s new diffusion clothing line in the post Bigger Fish, Lau (2014, April 14) positively surmised, “that’s because the clothes spoke directly to the audience”. Lau’s blog also contained two instances of neutrality (11%), where designers were written about in a descriptive matter-of-fact tone that did not feature any overt positive or negative sentiment. For example, in her coverage of her stopover in China where she came across the magazine Little Thing, Lau (2014, April 24) wrote, “It can be twee overload but it’s nonetheless interesting to see Little Thing foster a like-minded community”. Most significantly though, is the fact that Lau was the only one among all the bloggers in this coding period to express any negative (5%) sentiment towards a clothing label. In the post Tumble Jumble, Lau (2014, April 26) wrote about a movement called Fashion Revolution, which encouraged consumer consciousness through asking their favourite fashion labels whether or not their garments were made under ethical conditions. Here, Lau conducted an investigative enquiry into how her favourite pieces of clothing were manufactured and expressed disappointment at the lack of response from some brands saying, “The likes of Topshop might ignore these questions for the time being but piling on the pressure consistently will make them listen. It would be bad business on their part not to”. It is important to note that Lau had a pre-existing professional relationship with Topshop having curated a collection for them in 2011 (DazedDigital, 2011). This willingness to express critique that might potentially jeopardise future economic opportunities reflects both an authenticity and sincerity in her role as a cultural intermediary of fashion consciousness.

Bryan Yambao also expressed positive sentiment in 79% of his posts, which tended to be directed at products or people that he featured. For example, upon receiving a
handbag as a gift, Yambao (2014, April 29) wrote, “This gorgeous ivory laser-cut leather ‘Daphne’ clutch by Jason Wu is the most perfect thing ever”. The use of hyperbole to accentuate his positive sentiment is also evident in this statement. In regard to other industry personnel, Yambao (2014, April 29) featured the singer Brooke Candy who performed at the Diesel runway show, where he said, “I love her. She’s definitely one talent to watch”. In the same post, Yambao is seen in the YouTube video dancing with the singer, which once again highlights the use of his blog to document and extend his social status. The emphasis on his role in the video further emphasises the transposable nature of his inclination towards performativity, which indubitably stems from his habitus. In addition, Yambao (2014, April 24) also made statements that reflected a neutrality in some posts, specifically in Whitney Art Party, which is consisted of an invitation to readers for the event, giving the impression of a perfunctory post.

Lastly, while Patty Huntington created two posts in this coding period, only one post contained written content that could be examined for tone. In the post Backstage at Strateas Carlucci MBFWA SS1415, Huntington (2014, April 7)) expressed positivity when she said, “…Strateas.Carlucci was in fact a very welcome addition to the week's lineup.” The other post on Frockwriter.com during this coding period contained only images, and was categorised as neutral. While there was limited activity on Frockwriter.com in April 2014, Huntington’s focus seemed to be directed towards her Instagram account, which featured 34 posts, often accompanied with a brief description of the shows over all six days of MBFWA 2014. These Instagram images were primarily backstage images of models, though there were instances of street style, where she featured an attendee’s outfit. Notably, Huntington was given front row seats at the Romance was Born show, suggesting a level of symbolic capital. Her reliance on Instagram, together with the lack of content on her blog, demonstrates a practice that has deviated from the pattern of content creation established in 2013 and may therefore be taken to be a practice in flux. From the Instagram images on Huntington’s account, it appeared that after conclusion of the MBFWA 2014, she was engaged by the Australian Broadcast Corporation (ABC) twice in the later part of April
2014 to comment on the Duchess and Duke of Cambridge’s royal tour of Australia. This suggests a high level of symbolic capital within the institutional hierarchies of the traditional media, as Huntington was deemed the expert in commenting on the fashion trends from the royal tour.

*Chart 2.8 Non-Industry Mentions*

Beyond the industry personnel mentioned in the posts, some of the bloggers understudy also alluded to their informal networks that afforded readers a glimpse into their personal lives, suggesting a level of sincere expression, as well as reveals their social capital. Chart 2.8 shows that out of all the bloggers studied, Nicole Warne was most likely to mention her social life. Specifically, Warne’s romantic partner (40%) Luke Shadbolt was referenced as the photographer in two posts, while she referred to the designers Michael Lo Sordo and Toni Maticevski as a “dear friends” (Warne, April 19), which suggests a crossover from them being mere professional contacts, to part of her social group (20%). While 84% of Susanna Lau’s post pertained only to the fashion industry and the people operating within it, Lau did mention her family (11%) as well as her romantic partner (5%). In the post *Risque Business*, Lau (2014, April 12) compared the aesthetics referenced by a designer at MBFWA to her mother’s clothes in the 1980s. Her recollection of this aesthetic recalls part of her childhood spent rummaging through her mother’s wardrobe, suggesting that her interest in fashion
began from a young age and that her mother’s style played a significant part in the formation of her fashion habitus. In the post *The Beginnings of PMQ*, Lau (2014, April 28) mentioned her fashion designer cousin Elizabeth Lau, who initiated a retail venture in Hong Kong. Lau also mentioned her romantic partner for the first time in a sampled post, revealing that he too was a fashion insider as she enviously recounted how he once gave designer Miuccia Prada a kiss on the cheek. Indeed, the mention of her family and boyfriend in relation to the field of fashion offers this research an insight into how her social networks further legitimate her position as a fashion insider.

While Bryan Yambao typically refrains from revealing too much about his social background (86%), he provided details of his birthday dinner in the post *Jason Wu Laser-cut Leather Clutch*. In the post, Yambao (2014, April 29) mentioned a friend called Gustavo who gifted him with the titular handbag, revealing not only his social group (14%), but also the fact that his friends possess the economic capital to buy him a designer handbag. It should be noted that there was a higher instance of documented social interactions on Yambao’s Instagram, though the quantification of that fell outside of the scope of this study. Lastly, in contrast to the other bloggers, there was no specific mention of Patty Huntington’s personal networks in 100% of her posts, which is a finding consistent with the 2013 data set.
7.1.3 Hypertextuality

Chart 2.9 Types of Hyperlinks

With the conception of digital capital being a focal point of this study, this content analysis also looked at the practice of fashion bloggers specific to digital media. Of all the bloggers studied in this 2014 coding set, Susanna Lau appeared to utilise hyperlinks in all her posts, which is a finding consistent with 2013. As seen in Chart 2.9, by far the most common type of hyperlinked material on Lau’s blog was designer’s websites (84%). This suggests an authenticity in regard to the role that Lau plays as a cultural intermediary of fashion where Lau creates original content through synthesising current trends with her personal immersion in the fashion industry – a result of formal and informal cultivation of her habitus. This coding period also saw a marked increase in hyperlinks to point-of-purchase websites from 38% in 2013 to 58% in 2014 on StyleBubble.co.uk, indicating a greater emphasis on driving consumption, and thus a greater artifice in the promotion of products and brands. To a lesser degree, Lau also featured hyperlinks to fashion news websites (32%), current affairs and news websites (26%), other blogs (21%) and previous posts from within StyleBubble.co.uk (11%).
There was a high number of hyperlinks classified as other (58%) as well, including links to galleries, a museum, visual artists, Wikipedia, the British Fashion Council, retailers, and a crowdfunding website to raise funds for ethical fashion consumption awareness. The use of hyperlinks not only extends the narrative of the post beyond its confines, but also suggests the possession of digital capital, where an awareness of the capabilities afforded by the Internet factors prominently into practice. Indeed, Lau’s inclination to enhance her written content with hyperlinks signifies the possession of a habitus adept at harnessing digital communication. This is supported by Schradie’s (2011) research on the digital divide, which found that producers of online content possessed the necessary habitus influencing their inclination to utilise digital capabilities.

Another blogger who utilised hyperlinks in all her posts was Nicole Warne, who featured point-of-purchase links in 60% of her posts. This focus on driving consumption appears to be part of her role as an MBFWA 2014 ambassador, as all the products hyperlinked were debuted on the runway that week, and thus suggests contrivance or artifice. However, it is important to note that Warne also personally models the items of clothing hyperlinked, which demonstrates an embodiment of the product and, therefore may be taken to reflect an authenticity in her role as a fashion intermediary. This simultaneous expression containing artifice and authenticity underscores Warne’s performative habitus. Warne also included hyperlinks to bloggers (40%) that she interviewed in person, or who took the photos featured on her blog. The fact that she is personally acquainted with these bloggers indicate the possession of social capital that can be also associated with digital capital. The hyperlinks classified as other (60%) primarily led to the credited photographer’s page.

An analysis of Bryanboy.com showed that 43% of Yambao’s posts during the 2014 coding period did not contain hyperlinks. The posts that did contain hyperlinks were mainly point-of-purchase (29%) hyperlinks, followed by equal measures of fashion news (14%) and posts categorised as other (14%). Indeed, the link classified as other led to Whitney Art Museum’s events website, which Yambao was actively promoting in
the post. Given that Yambao was a web developer prior to fashion blogging (Business of Fashion, 2015), the lack of hyperlinks suggests a conscious choice of exclusion. It appears that Yambao might include hyperlinks for products if he has an incentive to do so, though this requires further investigation. Finally, only one of Patty Huntington’s posts (50%) contained two hyperlinks which led to a designer’s website as well as a retailer that stocked the featured designer. There are two traits here that deviates from the 2013 data set. First, Huntington utilised a multitude of hyperlinks in her in 2013, which reflected an embodiment of a journalistic habitus rooted in the investigative foundations of her long-term career in traditional journalism. While the lack of hyperlinks does not necessarily mean a change in her inclinations, it does suggest a level of experimentation in her practice as a blogger. Second, while it seemed that Huntington made a conscious effort to avoid hyperlinking retail-related websites in 2013, there was an instance of a hyperlink to the homepage of a Russian retailer that stocked clothing from the featured designer. While there were not enough posts to conclusively establish a pattern of blogging for Huntington in this coding set, a definite shift in her blogging practice was noted.

*Chart 2.10 Social Media Sharing*
A consistent finding of this study is that social media sharing facilitates a function that is complementary to blogging, as seen in Chart 2.10. Indeed, all posts sampled in this coding period were shared through Facebook, Twitter and the blog aggregation platform Bloglovin’, in what appears to be an automated process of content dissemination. The conscious distribution of content among all three bloggers suggests a degree of digital capital. Both Nicole Warne (100%) and Patty Huntington (100%) also took to posting Instagram images associated with their blog posts, while Susanna Lau (79%) and Bryan Yambao (71%) tended to adopt a more selective approach towards their Instagram posts. Consistent with 2013, Yambao’s Instagram posts were also shared on his Tumblr platform in an automated process.

**Chart 2.11 Interaction with Readers**

[Chart illustrating interaction with readers]

Chart 2.11 demonstrates that interaction between bloggers and readers in the comments section of the sampled blog posts was consistently minimal, suggesting that responding to comments was not actually an important part of fashion blogging. This is in contrast to other forms of blogging where the notion of community building is emphasised. This finding reflects a highly individualistic approach to content creation, where the audience is made conscious of the lives of blogger through content, though without much social reciprocity. The only semblance of interaction was Yambao’s call
to action (14%) to attend a charity event, and Lau’s call to support (5%) ethical fashion consumption. However, it should be noted that although there was minimal interaction between Lau and her readers on her blog, she did respond to readers’ questions on Instagram, which falls outside the scope of this study.

7.1.4 Metamodern Traits

*Chart 2.12 Ironic Utterances*

Of all the blog posts sampled in 2014, Susanna Lau demonstrated a consistency in ironic expression, as seen in in Chart 2.12. In line with her content in 2013, Lau tended to favour *jocular* expression (63%). For example, in the post *Buono Bonito*, Lau expressed her excitement at her newly acquired glitter-encrusted shoes by P.A.M x Diemme:

Glitter legend has it that there’s a factory somewhere in the depths of home counties where designer shoes and bags routinely get sprayed and applied with glitter and sparkle with deft skill and supposedly specialist machinery. I’ve yet to track it down exactly but when I do, I will demonstrate my devotion to all things glitter with a naff Powerpoint presentation tracking the various instances where I’ve been glitter-bombed... (Lau, 2014, April 14).
The use of irony to express her genuine and sincere appreciation for all things glitter can further be taken an expression of quirkiness, which will be discussed in the following section. The use of rhetorical question was also demonstrated in 26% of sampled posts on StyleBubble.co.uk. When discussing the honour of being approached by the Museum of Costume to the pick the dress of the year, Lau (2014, April 23) asked, “Who whudda thunk (yes, it’s a whudda thunk moment…) then that over a decade later, my own mug would be in a display at the Fashion Museum.” There were also instances of hyperbole (21%), expressed in Second Life Knit Wit, where Lau (2014, April 7) described how a designer’s work “steamrollered into a collection”. To a lesser degree, the content analysis also documented instances of sarcasm (11%) and understatement (11%), while only one post did not appear to contain ironic expression (5%). For a list of all recorded ironic utterances, please see Appendix D.

Bryan Yambao also utilised irony in some posts with the most prominent being jocularity (29%), followed by hyperbole (14%) and sarcasm (14%). In the post titled Hot Desert Knight, where Yambao (2014, April 20) featured his new Chanel bag, he wrote: “This gorgeous ivory laser-cut leather ‘Daphne’ clutch by Jason Wu is the most perfect thing ever.”. The use of exaggeration here can be taken as a prime example of hyperbolic expression. For Nicole Warne, her instance of ironic utterance manifested through jocularity (20%) in the post MBFWA Day 1. While coveting the latest collection of Karla Spetic, Warne (2014, April 17) jest, “How she always finds the perfect balance between polished yet playful will always have my wallet and wardrobe crying (with happiness, of course).” Lastly, Patty Huntington also expressed irony in the form of understatement in the post Backstage at Strateas Carlucci MBFWA SS1415. When writing about the prestigious accolades recently awarded to the young designers behind Strateas.Carlucci, Huntington (2014, April 7) joked, “It's not a bad result for two entirely self-taught fashion designers, who nevertheless both boast design backgrounds.” While Huntington expressed a high level of irony in 2013, it was difficult to establish a pattern of expression for her owing to the sporadic frequency of posts on
*Frockwriter.com* in 2014. Overall, of all the bloggers studied, only Susanna Lau exhibits a habitus adept at consistent ironic expression.

**Chart 2.13 The Quirky**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blogger</th>
<th>Quirky Expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patty Huntington</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Warne</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan Yambao</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susanna Lau</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Incidentally, Chart 2.13 detailing the instances of quirky expression in 2014 reflects a similar pattern in 2013. Predictably, the high amount of ironic utterances on Lau’s blog provided the conditions for a greater likelihood of quirky expression. This mode of expression was noted in 63% of blog posts on *StyleBubble.co.uk*. An instance of this can be seen in the post *Dress of the Year*, where Lau (2014, April 23) addressed the Bath Museum of Costume’s decision to engage her as the fashion industry member to select the United Kingdom’s Dress of Year for 2014.

As an interloping bloody blogger (as some would like to see us) and moreover as someone with an unconventional induction into the industry… me choosing this dress, is also representative of a changing media landscape in fashion. (Lau, 2014, April 23)

By referring to herself as an “interloping bloody blogger”, Lau acknowledges her unconventional trajectory to the upper echelons of fashion journalism, and sets up the mechanisms for perception of genuine self-awareness through jocular expression.
Yambao (2014, April 23) also exhibited quirky expression in the post *X Marks the Spot*, where he talked about his newfound love of wearing white clothing, saying “Yes, I know the white memo arrived late in my inbox, in any case, I’m loving this ‘new’ look on me.” Note that the word ‘new’ was in parentheses as it contained intent that was counterfactual to what is being remarked upon (Whalen et al., 2013, p. 562). This admission that he was late to adopt a trend, given that he was an opinion leader in fashion, reflected a sincerity through a discourse of the self, which will be explored further in a later analysis chapter. As seen in Chart 2.13, neither Nicole Warne nor Patty Huntington demonstrated quirky in their blogging practice. Thus, in tandem with the findings of 2013, the 2014 content analysis also found that the quirky was not a common metamodern sensibility in fashion blogging.

7.1.5 Further Qualitative Notes

An examination of the qualitative notes made in this coding period also reinforced certain traits of particular bloggers identified in the previous coding period. Once again, Susanna Lau’s knowledge of cultural aesthetics reflected an embodiment of her humanities education. Her focus on aesthetic was also apparent in *Prada Playground*, where Lau (2014, April 30) was able to recall specific collections in the Prada exhibition, and provided anecdotes related to the collections. In this post, Lau also used the term “we journalists” when describing the attendees present at the exclusive preview of the Prada exhibit, suggesting a growing recognition of her own blogging practice as one encompassed by fashion journalism. This is further demonstrated in her approach to content creation in the *Second Life Knit Wit*, where Lau (2014, April 7) personally interviewed the featured designer, displaying an adoption of an investigative tendency that can be associated with journalism. The notion of authenticity also factored prominently into Lau's practice. In the post *Philo’s The Word*, Lau was noted modelling a pair of shoes by Celine that she recently purchased, which suggested that she genuinely had an appreciation for them. In the same post, Lau also expressed quirkiness by revealing that up until recently, she had only bought heavily
discounted Celine pieces as that was all she could afford. Another significant development in this coding period was her partnership with the fashion trade online publication The Business of Fashion, where Lau became a contributor. This not only reflects her authenticity and authority as a fashion commentator, but also can be regarded as an extension of her digital capital, given that she is lending her voice to another successful digital platform.

Indeed, Lau’s authority in the field has led to her accumulation of symbolic and social capital as seen in the post Di$count System Eff Up, where she was allowed backstage to try on and procure a jacket just off the runway, though it was not clear if the jacket was gifted or purchased. While Lau’s blog contained many instances of authenticity, there were also instances of accompanying artifice. The practice of hyperlinking to point-of-purchase websites suggested endorsements that could have been compensated for, though this was not clearly disclosed on the blog. Nonetheless, Lau appeared to be the only blogger under study to consistently express sincerity through ironic statements. On a separate note, in the post on StyleBubble.co.uk, Lau (2014, April 8) posted images taken from her seat at the Matcevski runway presentation, which also captured high profile Australian bloggers Nicole Warne and Margaret Zhang in the facing front row. This further demonstrates the notion that fashion week can be regarded as a social arena where fashion hierarchies are visibly reproduced.

For Bryan Yambao, it was noted that he too possessed a high level of social and symbolic capital in the field. This is demonstrated in the post Backstage at Diesel Fall 2014 Show, where he revealed that designer Nicola Formichetti was nervous before the runway debut of his collection, and that Yambao reassured him that the collection would be well received. This exchange legitimises Yambao’s position as an authentic industry insider. His penchant for being highly visible at fashion events was demonstrated in a few posts, where he documents his social interactions with other celebrities on his blog. Therefore, it can be said Yambao possesses a performative habitus given that he is consistent in his portrayal of a lavish lifestyle, utilising his blog as a reproduction of his social status.
A significant development in Nicole Warne’s career occurred between the coding periods of 2013 and 2014 when Warne switched managements from Sydney Stockholm, to international talent management and event agency IMG. This resulted in a greater involvement in MBFWA – an event by IMG – which was reflected in her blogging as all the posts on GaryPepperGirl.com during this coding period had to do with MBFWA 2014. The social nature of her position as the Official MBFWA Insider saw her interviewing Susanna Lau, and referring to designers Michael Lo Sordo, Toni Maticevski as her close friends. Along with social capital, Warne’s social position was also legitimised through instances of distinction (i.e. symbolic capital). In the post MBFWA Day 4, Warne revealed she was given a replica of an outfit debuting at MBFWA by designer Alice McCall.

I visited Alice’s showroom the weekend before where I secretly previewed her MBFWA collection and chose a runway ensemble to have duplicated to wear to her show. Not many Australian designers have the resources, time and budgets [sic] to do this, which is why I can appreciate Alice’s thoughtfulness all the more. (Warne, 2014, April 8).

Notably, there was a delay in Warne creating posts about her MBFWA experience, presumably due to her hectic schedule as the event’s Official Insider. In the post Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival Diary, Warne (2014, April 16) could be seen managing her readers’ expectations by explaining that she might be too busy to create blog posts during this period, though she would endeavour to keep them up-to-date with her activities through Instagram. This suggests a consistency in the performance of her lifestyle through other digital channels, reinforcing the argument that Warne possesses a high level of digital capital. That fact that she is consistently the subject of all images posted on her social media accounts further highlights they performativity of Warne’s practice as a digital cultural intermediary.
Lastly, this research found that no cohesive pattern of expression could be drawn from Patty Huntington’s practice due to the limited number of posts created in this coding period. Drawing a link to the research interview with Huntington (i/v, 2013) where it was revealed that she was still experimenting with novel ways to monetise her blog in alignment with her journalistic ethics, it appeared that Huntington might have directed her focus towards creating content for other platforms and publications that would yield better personal income. Overall though, between the coding sets of 2013 and 2014, it could be noted that Huntington embodied a habitus that reflected her authenticity inculcated through her long-term immersion in traditional media, and therefore was not inclined to be performative or quirky.

7.2 Content Analysis Results for 2015

The final coding period in 2015 also coincided with the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Australia, where blog posts from the whole month of April were analysed. In comparison to the findings of 2014, there was significantly less coverage of the MBFWA 2015 on the blogs under study. Another noteworthy development was the dissolution of the NowManifest network of high profile bloggers in February 2015, of which Susanna Lau and Bryan Yambao were a part, resulting in the absence of advertising on these blogs. In this coding period, Susanna Lau created 19 posts, Bryan Yambao created 5 posts, Nicole Warne created 9 posts and Patty Huntington created 1 post. It should be noted that between the coding period of 2014 and 2015, the FELLT network launched a new industry targeted news website called FELLT Industry, which featured Huntington as its primary contributor, indicating a new outlet for her digital content, though that website was excluded from the sample in order to preserve continuity.
7.2.1 Nature of the Content

Chart 3.1 Type of Post

In line with the 2014 findings, Chart 3.1 indicates that Susanna Lau exhibited the widest range of content types featured in her blog with the most prominent being features (53%), fashion news (21%), advertorial (21%) and to a lesser degree, events coverage (5%). This focus on the creation of feature content is consistent with the
findings of 2013 and 2014. Interestingly, there has been a progressive increase in Lau’s inclination to post content in collaboration with designers, which suggests the presence of monetary compensation, thus falling into the category of advertorial. Viewed in the context of the dissolution of NowManifest which managed her advertising, the greater instances of advertorial could be Lau’s way of adapting to the change in income stream. In the post Melbourne Trail, Lau (2015, May 18) revealed that she had been making trips to MBFWA for the last four years but was not able to in 2015, which explained a lack of MBFWA content on StyleBubble.co.uk. A look at the non-fashion content on Lau’s blog, represented in Chart 3.2, shows that travel-related content was once again prominently featured on Lau’s blog. This was especially evident in the posts The Art of Being a Flaneur (Lau, 2014, April 3) and Flanerie in London (Lau, 2015, April 17), where the idiosyncrasies of a new place were the focal point of both the textual and visual narrative. Other non-fashion content featured on Lau’s blog include art/illustration (21%), food (11%) and music (5%). Content classified as other (11%) pertained to youth subculture, politics, dance and film, exhibiting a range of topics drawn upon in relation to fashion.

For Bryan Yambao, Chart 3.1 shows that the make up of his posts were 80% outfit showcase and 20% features. This finding was not consistent with previous coding periods in 2013 and 2014, where Yambao featured an array of content types. This suggests that Yambao is redirecting the focus of his blog to include more outfit posts. A major change in the visual layout of Yambao’s blog in 2015 was the lack of advertising following the dissolution of NowManifest, which is the platform that managed his advertising opportunities. While it is difficult to establish a link between the stark increase in outfit posts and the sudden absence of advertising, it should be noted that these changes occurred simultaneously. In addition to fashion, Yambao’s posts also tended to feature the location used as a backdrop for his photoshoots in 100% of his posts as seen in Chart 3.2. He further featured music (20%), and art/illustration (20%). Indeed, in the post Ultra Music Festival Miami 2015 Diary, Yambao (2015, April 1) wrote exclusively about his experience attending an electronic dance music festival on his own, with no mention of fashion. This suggests a high level of sincerity as Yambao
wrote a passionate and lengthy in-depth post containing anecdotes, reflecting a genuine appreciation for the event. In a separate post titled *Coach X Gary Baseman*, Yambao (2015, April 25) revealed that he was unaware of the involvement of artist Gary Baseman in this collection until a follower mentioned it on Instagram, exhibiting a level of interaction and awareness of his followers online.

Nicole Warne’s blog demonstrated a wider range of blog content type in 2015 as seen Chart 3.1, where she primarily created *outfit posts* (67%), and to a lesser degree *advertisorial* (22%) and *personal opinion* (11%). In line with her performative habitus, there was a strong focus on visually expressing the aesthetic of an outfit in all posts. Even the post *Serendipity*, which was categorised as personal opinion, entailed Warne (2015, April 26) modelling a Michael Lo Sordo dress as her partner and photographer Luke Shadbolt proposed to her. While this post documented a personal moment in Warne’s life, there is an element of artifice as the original intention of that photoshoot on a lake in Japan was to feature the dress, suggesting a metamodern performativity. Drawing on Chart 3.2, *travel* featured prominently in 100% of posts, as well as *food* (11%) and a post classified as *other* (11%), which contained a public service announcement on proper sun protection.

In regard to Patty Huntington, only one post was created on her blog during the coding period, which was a fashion-related *feature* (100%). However, in the lead up to April 2015, Huntington was noted posting content to the FELT Industry blog, of which she was the primary contributor together with Daniel Kjellsson. This adoption of a different platform suggests that Huntington might be more comfortable working as part of a collective than as an individual blogger. This rationale coincides with the consistent lack of performativity in 2013 and 2014, where Huntington never featured as the subject of the images on her blog. Indeed, it could be surmised that Huntington’s journalistic habitus has constrained her career as a fashion blogger, where her adherence to ethical practices has resulted in a reluctance to promote products through personal embodiment, as demonstrated by the other bloggers under study.
**Chart 3.3 Multimedia Content**

Multimedia Content

- Patty Huntington
- Nicole Warne
- Bryan Yambao
- Susanna Lau

**Chart 3.4 Attribution of Content**

Attribution of Content

- Patty Huntington
- Nicole Warne
- Bryan Yambao
- Susanna Lau

Other Model Fashion Stylist Hair Stylist Make-up Artist Photographer None
Once again, as reflected in the results in 2013 and 2014, Chart 3.3 shows the importance of images in the narratives of blogs, with all sampled posts in 2015 containing images. Additionally, embedded videos from YouTube were also featured in 40% of Yambao’s posts and 16% of Lau’s posts. The prevalence of multimedia content in all posts in 2013, 2014 and 2015 suggests that written information alone is insufficient to keep an audience engaged online. A specific look at Lau’s multimedia content showed a consistent pattern of blogging, where posts contained a high number of images accompanying lengthy in-depth commentaries. In reference to Chart 3.5, the majority of images on StyleBubble.co.uk appear to be taken by Lau (47%), followed by images from various designers’ catalogue (37%) and magazines’ online gallery (11%). Lau was also featured as the subject of the images in 37% of posts, which suggests an inclination towards performativity as she was depicted physically embodying the items featured. Image sources classified as other (5%) included an image taken off an image-sharing platform called Flickr. Indeed, her presence in front of or behind the camera suggests an authenticity as she was personally involved in the creation of these images in addition to writing her own
content. Lau’s high instance of being behind the camera compared to other bloggers also suggests the possession of cultural capital pertaining to photography, and may be viewed as part of her habitus. Chart 3.4 shows a higher incidence of content attribution on Lau’s blog in 2015, compared to other coding periods, as she attributed her content to photographers in 21% of her posts, as well as vintage clothing auctioneers, Vogue UK, choreographers, directors and dancers categorised as other (16%).

An examination of Yambao’s multimedia content in Chart 3.5 demonstrated a greater consistency of him being in front of the camera (100%), which is a deviation from the previous two coding periods in 2013 and 2014. This suggests that Yambao’s blogging practice has evolved over the course of this research. This is supplemented by the fact that he demonstrated a greater tendency towards attributing his images to photographers in 80% of his posts as seen in Chart 3.4, mirroring a format of blogging that is increasingly similar to Nicole Warne. Yambao’s consistency with being the focal point of all his multimedia content also suggests the possession of a habitus tending towards the performative, and is visible through the simultaneous embodiment and promotion of an aesthetic. More significantly, the instance of him being in front of the camera, both in images as well as a YouTube video, in the post Ultra Music Festival Miami 2015 Diary, illustrates the transposability of a performative habitus across mediums.

Nicole Warne, on the other hand, has demonstrated a great consistency in her blogging style across the three coding periods with her being the subject of the images in 100% of posts (Chart. 3.5), reinforcing her performativity. Notably, while the post #NYFW Diary contained images of Warne (2013, April 5), it also contained images of other attendees at New York Fashion Week taken by photographer Madelyn Wray. Indeed, in alignment with her practice, Nicole credited photographers for the images in 100% of her posts as seen in Chart 3.4. For Patty’ Huntington’s single post, it can be seen that the images were taken from a source classified as other (100%) in Chart 3.4, which was American Vogue’s online gallery featuring transgender model Andreja Pejic.
This appears to be a return to the pattern of content production established in 2013, though Huntington’s frequency of posts in 2015 was markedly diminished. In line with her practice, Huntington did continue to credit the photographer, which could be taken as a reflection of the practices learned from her time in print publishing.

7.2.2 Professional and Personal Networks

Chart 3.6 Mention of Key Industry Players

Overall, it was evident that fashion blogging was a networked activity that drew heavily upon the work of other members in the field of fashion. Congruent to the findings of 2013 and 2014, the practice of blogging revolved around featuring the latest trends, as well as the people involved in the production of the latest trends. In reference to Chart 3.6, Susanna Lau featured the work of designers in 100% of her posts. She also tended to mention editors/journalists in (32%) of posts, which has seen a steady increase from 2013 to 2015. This is significant as Lau’s role as a fashion critic seems to be progressively cemented in the industry. This is demonstrated by her self-identification as a journalist in the post Into the Rookery (Lau, 2015, April 20). This is a marked shift from her earlier days as a blogger, when Lau (2013b) described herself as a “fashion outsider”. Additionally, Lau also tended to mention other bloggers (11%), photographers (11%) and PR/publicists (5%). The mention of a publicists is a rarity
among the bloggers studied, as only Lau appears to acknowledge the presence of these gatekeepers who provide her with the information she needs to create content. Other (58%) industry related member include illustrators, textile makers, craftsmen, costumiers, retailers, auctioneers, fashion scholars, and a trend forecaster. Indeed, Lau’s focus on the various aspects of fashion production reveals the networked nature of the industry and offers the reader a glimpse into areas that they might not typically have access to. This simultaneously highlights Lau’s authenticity as one who is innately interested in the inner workings of fashion, as well as symbolic capital reflected through her exclusive access.

A look at the industry members mentioned on Bryanboy.com showed a primary focus on designers (80%) as well. In tandem with designers, Yambao also tended to mention other bloggers (40%), as well as an illustrator classified as other (20%). Indeed, the bloggers mentioned were Rumi Neely of FashionToast.com (whom Yambao frequently refers to as his best friend), as well as Tina Craig of BagSnob.com. This reflects his natural inclination to socialise with fellow members of the industry who also possess digital capital. On the other hand, Nicole Warne appeared to exhibit a wider range of industry mentions in her 2015 posts. Deviating from her practice in 2014 where she mentioned fashion designers in 100% of posts during her coverage of MBFWA 2014, designers are only mentioned in 59% of her posts in 2015, though they still make up the majority of industry mentions on Warne’s blog. Indeed, there was no mention of industry members at all in 33% of posts. This suggested a return to a style of blogging more consistent with 2013, where Warne tended to write about personal moments during photoshoots without reference to products. The consistency between 2013 and 2015 underscores the artifice of the contrived promotion of designers in 2014. In addition to designers, Warne also mentioned photographers (44%), bloggers (11%), editors/journalists (11%) and other (5%), which was the hotel that hosted Warne’s stay during New York Fashion Week. Compellingly, Warne’s overstated praise of her hotel begged the question of whether her stay was sponsored. For Patty Huntington’s single post, a combination of models, photographers, editors and journalists and designers were all mentioned. This, once again, reflected Huntington’s inclination to create in-
depth and well-researched pieces in line with her blogging practice of 2013. In contrast to 2014 though, there was no reference to her professional networks in 2015 as most of the information included in the blog post was sourced from an American Vogue feature story on the transgender model Andreja Pejic.

*Chart 3.7 Portrayal of Industry Players*

![Chart showing the portrayal of industry players](chart)

Chart 3.7 shows that the positive portrayal of members of the fashion industry was continued on the blogs of Susanna Lau (74%), Bryan Yambao (80%) and Nicole Warne (78%). Some of Warne’s (22%) and Yambao’s (20%) posts were coded as *Not Applicable* as there were no mention of other industry members in those posts, suggesting a sincerity in the written content, which focused on each blogger’s personal experience at the time of the photoshoot. On Patty Huntington’s blog, it should be noted that the single sampled post in this coding period exhibited both positive and negative statements, and was thus coded as neutral (100%). 26% of Lau’s posts were likewise marked as neutral as they appeared to be informative or perfunctory, without any real opinion expressed on the subject. Most importantly, none of the posts sampled in 2015 contained any strong negative critique, supporting Kjellsson’s (i/v, 2013) revelation in the interview that a dislike of a product or style manifested as exclusion from blogs, as opposed to outright criticism.
In the 2015 coding period, Susanna Lau (84%), Patty Huntington (100%) and Bryan Yambao (60%) made little or no reference to their personal networks and social connections. Consistently, it was Nicole Warne who tended to write about her romantic partner who accompanies her on her travels as seen in Chart 3.8. In the post *Serendipity*, Warne (2015, April 26) wrote about the moment that her partner proposed to her during a photoshoot on a boat in Japan. This personal moment offered the reader a glimpse into Warne’s seemingly private life, and could be interpreted as metamodern as it encapsulated a tension between sincerity and artifice. This is demonstrated in the candid revelation: “Luke was trying in vane [sic] to be knelt on one knee and I’m so uncoordinated that we laughed in disbelief that neither of us fell overboard” (Warne, 2015, April 26). This anecdote provided a light-hearted and romantic facet to the post, but the accompanying images prominently featured the white Michael Lo Sordo dress that was the original reason for the photoshoot. It should be noted that this post was included in the advertising banner two days after it was created. Indeed, the main purpose of this photoshoot in Japan was to feature the dress. Thus, even though this blog post comes across as fortuitous announcement, it is nonetheless, an instance of marketing. In addition to her partner, Warne also mentioned her professional affiliation with The Cancer Institute in a separate post, where she offered her readers advice on sun protection.
Susanna Lau, on the other hand, mentioned her romantic partner (5%) Steve Salter in one post. Mentions classified as other (11%) included her interaction with real estate agents, as well as actors who were hired to enhance her experience walking around London in a self-guided tour organised by luxury label Hermes in the post *Flanerie in London* (Lau, April 17). This suggests that in contrast to Warne, Lau does not tend to use her blog to document her personal life. A look at Bryan Yambao’s blog revealed that he mentioned his family (20%) and friends (20%) in the a few posts in 2015, though he mainly referred to them in passing and did not provide specific details about them. This is a departure from 2014, where Yambao boasted of his social connections in a number of posts. Lastly, demonstrating a consistency in her inclination to keep her social life private, Patty Huntington did not make any mention of her personal connections, though she did post some images on Instagram featuring her friends and family, which fell outside of the scope of this study.

### 7.2.3 Hypertextuality

*Chart 3.9 Types of Hyperlinks*
In line with the findings of 2013 and 2014, Susanna Lau utilised hyperlinks in all her posts, demonstrating an authenticity as an in-depth content producer by providing the trails for her readers to find out more about the topic or person featured in the post. Chart 3.9 shows that the most prevalent type of hyperlinks utilised by Lau were that of designer’s websites (84%), point-of-purchase sites (58%), fashion news websites (47%) and previous posts within the same blog (21%). To a lesser degree, Lau also provided hyperlinks to news websites (16%) and other blogs (16%). Hyperlinks coded as other (63%) included the websites of photographers, a trend forecaster, a film festival, a theatre company, galleries, museums, artists, Wikipedia, a restaurant and a fashion institution. The varied nature of the hyperlinks reflects the diversity of sources that Lau draws upon, and further reflects a habitus adept at creating and enhancing digital content through hypertext. While Patty Huntington also demonstrated a wide variety of hyperlinking, including a fashion news website (100%), a news website (100%), a previous post (100%) and a model profile website classified as other (100%), the fact remains that Huntington only created one post in this coding period, which means that no definitive pattern of content creation could be established.

For Nicole Warne, the hyperlinks on her blog primarily led to point-of-purchase websites (44%); while links to photographers’ portfolios and the hotel that hosted her stay in New York was classified as other (33%). Notably, one of the hyperlinks included Zanita Whittington’s blog, whom Warne has been friends with since her stint at FELLT, or possibly longer. In the post Welcome to the Jungle, Warne (2015, April 7) modelled the Ralph Lauren’s next season collection in an editorial campaign photographed by Whittington, highlighting their social capital that may be converted to both cultural capital and economic capital. Of all the bloggers under study, Bryan Yambao utilised hyperlinks the least, featuring a point of purchase link (20%) and a link to a previous post on his blog (20%). The sparing use of hyperlinks on Bryanboy.com is consistent with his practice in previous coding periods too.
Another consistent finding in this study was the use of Facebook, Twitter and Bloglovin’ in the dissemination of all blog content as seen in Chart 3.10. Further, Warne and Huntington also displayed a consistent tendency to post images on Instagram associated with their 100% of their blog content. Yambao, on the other hand, tended to post blog-related images to Instagram for 80% of posts, which is the same incidence as his Tumblr posts marked as other (80%). Yambao also posted a Youtube clip on his channel of him dancing at the Ultra Music Festival in Miami. This suggests that Yambao’s performative inclination is transposable from images to video, which is supported by his stint as a judge on the television show America’s Next Top Model. Of all blogger sampled, Lau appears to be the most selective of the blog-related images shared on Instagram (53%).
The 2015 content analysis reinforced the finding that interaction with readers was not necessary for the success of superstar fashion bloggers. Yambao put out a call to action (20%) to his readers to attend the Ultra Music Festival if they ever had the opportunity, and Lau similarly urged her readers to spend a day as flaneurs, exploring chosen locales while paying attention to the details encountered on the walk (5%). Lau (2015, April 22) also directly addressed her readers in the post *Trying on Savage Beauty for Size*, where she asked them about their thoughts on designers that have left the same type of legacy as Alexander McQueen, which was classified under other (5%). In the post *The Perfect Summer Shirt Dress*, Warne (2015, April 28) directly addressed her audience by telling them to practice the right sun safety for the prevention of skin cancer – a discursive statement that was also classified as other (11%). It should be noted that Warne did post an image on Instagram of her and her fiancé, where she thanked her followers for their support of her engagement, which fell outside of the scope of this study. Huntington exhibited no overt interaction with her readers. Overall, the interaction on blogs are of a perceptual nature, where readers perceive the bloggers as someone they know personally as a result of the performativity of the blogger. However, there is no evidence of the bloggers under study forming actual personal relationships with their readers.
7.2.4 Metamodern Traits

_Chart 3.12 Ironic Utterances_

An important variable preceding the investigation into quirky expression is the presence of irony. From Chart 3.12, it is evident that Susanna Lau once again demonstrated the widest range of ironic utterances, tending towards *jocularity* (53%) followed by *rhetorical question* (16%), *hyperbole* (11%), *sarcasm* (11%) and *understatement* (5%). An example of jocularity can be seen in the post *Koryo Saram*, where Lau (2015, April 13) modelled the clothing of a Russian designer of Korean descent, saying: “As someone averse to looking like I’ve fallen out of the doorway of an Asian restaurant, wearing J.Kim is one surefire way of testing its nuanced ethnic credentials.” This positive critique expressed through ironic humour could be seen to be a part of Lau’s habitus, given that jocularity was consistently expressed in majority of her posts across all coding periods.

In 2015, Bryan Yambao exhibited a marked increase in the use of ironic expression, which was present in all posts. This shift in expression highlights the progression of Yambao’s blogging practice, and shows that each blogger’s practice can evolve over time. Yambao mainly tended towards the use of *hyperbole* (60%) and *jocularity* (60%) and to a lesser extent *rhetorical question* (20%). A good example of hyperbole was
found in the post Prabal Gurung where Yambao (2015, April 24) praised the featured designer saying, “I tried many of the coats and the sweaters – his knits are to die for!” Such positive exaggeration is frequent on Yambao’s blog and suggests a contrivance in his performance as a fashion insider.

For Nicole Warne, ironic utterances were employed to a small extent as there was no instance of irony in 67% of posts. However, in the posts that did exhibit irony, Nicole tended towards hyperbole (11%), sarcasm (11%) and jocularity (11%). A good example of sarcasm exhibited by Warne (2015, April 6) was in the post How to Wear Olive, where she modelled her heavily layered outfit amid the harsh New York winter remarking, “Not being able to bend your elbows and waddling through shows is so chic”. Indeed, this moment of self-deprecation also contained a sense of sincerity, making this a quirky statement. Lastly, Patty Huntington’s (2015, April 22) post on transgender model Andreja Pejic ended with a rhetorical question: “Will recognition from arguably the world’s most high profile fashion magazine make a difference to the typically less than pro-active Australians? Watch this space”. Taken in the context of the blog post, this rhetorical question may be taken as an expression of scepticism towards the acceptance of transgender Pejic into the mainstream consciousness of the Australian fashion industry, indicating authentic commentary from Huntington. A full list of ironic utterances extracted from the sampled posts during the 2015 coding period can be found in Appendix D.
A look at the specific expression of the quirky in Chart 3.13 shows that Susanna Lau consistently made quirky statements in majority (58%) of her posts. This is illustrated in the post *Patchwork No Brainer*, where Lau (2015, April 10) described her love of handbags as having a “bag lady inclination”. Further, in the post titled *Trackie Times*, Lau (2015, April 16) remarked on the how the colour scheme used by a designer reminded her of her favourite football club’s jersey, saying the clothes were “like Arsenal footie kits made feminine”.

Similarly, majority (60%) of Bryan Yambao’s posts contained quirky expression that encapsulated the simultaneous expression of sincerity and irony. In the post *From the Marc Jacobs Barracks*, Yambao (2015, April 29) joked, “My main man, Marc Jacobs, has been killing it (and mind you, killing my finances) lately”. Yambao’s admission that his monetary resources were finite appeared to be a sincere concern expressed through hyperbole. Overall, there was a marked increase in Yambao’s use of quirky expression in comparison to the data derived in 2013 and 2014, denoting an evident shift in his approach to blogging in 2015. To a lesser extent, Nicole Warne also expressed quirkiness in 22% of her posts. In the post *The Perfect Summer Shirt Dress*, where Warne (2015, April 28) wrote, “I guess you can’t really put a price on your health. It’s
all about being sun smart in style, no matter the cost. End preach.” The fact that she demonstrated a self-awareness of her advisory tone towards her readers, set up the mechanisms for that statement to be perceived as sincere. Expectedly, there was no instance of quirky expression in Patty Huntington’s posts. A full list of quirky expression extracted from the sampled posts can be found in Appendix E.

7.2.5 Further Qualitative Notes

From the qualitative notes documented for this coding period, it can be seen that Susanna Lau was not present at the MBFWA 2015, though she still did a great amount of traveling in this time. Lau was engaged to go to Russia to do a series of talks with Russian retailer Tsevtnoy and Russian Vogue, suggesting international recognition, and thus a high level of symbolic capital. It is important to note that some brands were featured in this coding period more than once on StyleBubble.co.uk, indicating a good relationship with these brands. For instance, in the post Coaching Creature, Lau (2015, April 2) included a disclaimer at the end of the post stating that the post represented an ongoing social media collaboration with the brand Coach. This suggested the presence of economic compensation for the Coach related posts. The same was observed in the post Patchwork No Brainer, where Lau (2015, April 10) was photographed modeling Liberty London’s latest collection in the streets of London as part of their marketing campaign. Indeed, compared to 2013, there appears to be a greater amount of advertorial content present on Lau’s blog in 2014 and 2015. The influence of monetary benefit suggests a level of artifice in the promotion of a brand or designer. However, by the same token, Lau increasingly recognised her role within the fashion industry as that of a journalist. In the post Long Way Home for Joe Richards, Lau (2015, April 8) photographed and interviewed Richards for this blog post, reflecting a journalistic approach to her blogging practice. A trait that remained consistent throughout the three coding periods was her focus on the description of aesthetics, reflecting a habitus embodied through an innate authentic interest and strong understanding of fashion styles. This level of authenticity was also reinforced by
other members of the industry as evidenced by her access to the manufacturing process of the brand Mulberry.

Bryan Yambao’s blogging practice, on the other hand, appears to have evolved. Yambao’s marked change in blogging style appears to be a reaction to the dissolution of NowManifest, which had previously managed his online revenue opportunities. The return to a more personal mode of expression in 2015 suggests a carefully thought out relaunch of his own blog to engage his audience once more, consequently creating his own opportunities for generating online revenue. Specifically, in 2015, there appeared to be a greater focus on outfit posts accompanied by written candid reflections or anecdotes. Indeed, as opposed to the straight forward product features and marketing campaign videos of designers in 2014, there appeared to be a return to sincerity in way Yambao creates his blog posts. This is especially evident in the post Ultra Music Festival Miami 2015 Diary, where Yambao (2015, April 1) wrote about his decision to attend this music festival on his own as no one else in his social group was interested in the event, emphasising the importance of pursuing happiness. The lack of fashion content suggested that Yambao was presenting a different facet of his interests to his readers, while the presence of a Youtube video of him dancing in the crowd reinforced his possession of a performative habitus. However, it should be noted that the rest of the posts in this coding period are outfit posts, though it is unclear if Yambao was paid to feature any of the outfits. Nonetheless, this indicates that objectified cultural capital, in the form of trendy clothing and accessories, plays a central role in Yambao’s practice.

In contrast, Nicole Warne’s blogging practice has demonstrated a great consistency over the coding periods, where she was always the visual focal point of the posts. Her images were often accompanied with her written personal experience associated with the creation of the post. Indeed, the posts created during this coding period exhibited a strong undercurrent of romance, most notably present in the post Serendipity (Warne, 2015, April 26), which documented the moment her partner proposed to her. This post was significant because the purpose of that photoshoot in Japan was
originally to feature a long white dress by Michael Lo Sordo, whom Warne (2014, April 19) previously referred to as a “dear friend”. On the blog, this post was tagged as a personal announcement, and was also featured in the advertising space on the blog. In this regard, Warne expertly manages the tension between the personal and the promotional, highlighting the nuanced nature of her performativity. Is should also be noted that despite Warne’s strong involvement in the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival in from 2012 to 2014, there was no content in this coding period pertaining to this event on her blog. Instead, all her content pertaining to MBFWA 2015 was found on Instagram, where she commands a strong digital following.

Finally, for Patty Huntington, this coding period saw a return to a style of content creation more consistent with 2013, where she created in-depth articles profiling fashion models. In the case of 2015, Huntington featured Australian transgender model Andreja Pejic who appeared to be gaining acceptance in the broader international fashion industry but not in Australia. Thus, this post used the rising profile of a model to launch into a deeper commentary on the need for greater gender diversity in Australian fashion, reflecting Huntington’s authentic cultural capital through confident commentary. However, given that there was only one post available for coding in this period, not much else could be gleaned from the blog. Of significance though, was the fact that Patty also became the primary contributor to FELLT Industry, a fashion trade website launched by Daniel Kjellsson. In tandem with the interview finding where Huntington (i/v, 2013) revealed that it was a challenge for her to monetise her blog given her adherence to journalistic ethics, the dwindling content on her blog could indicate the redirection of her focus towards better paying ventures. A greater implication of this is that the monetisation of an online persona can only occur with the consent of the blogger. Indeed, digital monetisation is a commercial venture, much like other business ventures. For Huntington, this presented a conflict of interest as the commercialisation of her blog would jeopardise her credibility as a journalist.
7.3 Chapter Summary

Based on the data gathered, it can be concluded that the blogosphere is a highly fluid environment where change happens quickly depending on the needs of the blogger, or the demands of external players who have influence over the blogger’s practice. Over the course of this three-year content analysis, Susanna Lau demonstrated the greatest consistency with her blogging practice, keeping to a similar number of posts across all three coded months. A standard format for each post containing numerous images accompanied with in-depth information of the featured product or aesthetic was noted. However, Lau has had to adapt to her circumstances, citing her mortgage for her decision to join the NowManifest network that allowed her greater opportunities for advertising revenue. At the same time, the number of advertorial content on her blog also increased significantly in 2014 and 2015, signaling a greater focus on the acquisition of economic capital. A seamless transition of her practice was noted between 2014 and 2015 despite the dissolution of NowManifest. Concurrently, Lau demonstrated a greater recognition of her role within the fashion industry by referring to herself as a journalist, cementing her authenticity as a commentator in the fashion industry. Based on the findings, it can be said that among the bloggers studied, both performativity and the quirky contribute to Lau’s habitus, along with her education in the humanities that has evidently nurtured her ability in expounding on aesthetics.

Bryan Yambao’s blog also displayed a definite shift in the way content was created, going from a bricolage of product features, outfit posts, event coverage, and video content from designers, to a more concentrated focus on outfit posts where he features as the model. In regard to his written content, Yambao demonstrated an increase in the use of irony in his candid approach to his writing the 2015 coding period. This shift in practice happened in tandem with the dissolution of NowManifest, which suggests that the new approach to blogging could be Yambao’s way of reassessing and adapting to new circumstances. Thus, while Yambao consistently demonstrated the possession of a performative habitus, there was a definite shift towards more personable and quirky expression in the last data set. Overall, both
Yambao and Lau seem to have similar approaches to blogging in that they provide personal anecdotes in their blog posts but are guarded about their personal relationships.

Nicole Warne also demonstrated a high level of performativity on her blog that was permeated with an undercurrent of romance. Indeed, the boundary between editorial and advertising was not clearly demarcated on Warne’s blog as promotional content was often conflated with her personal life. Warne’s heavy involvement as an ambassador for the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Australia in 2014 heavily influenced her content in 2014 where she only featured Australian designers associated with that event. More importantly, Warne was consistently the focal point of her featured images, both in blog posts and her advertising banners from 2013 to 2015. Lastly, Patty Huntington’s shift in focus away from her blog suggests that it has not been a lucrative venture for her and that she has had to pursue other more economically viable pathways within the fashion industry. Notably, while Huntington exhibited a high amount of authenticity in the fashion industry, there was a lack of artifice on her blog. Incidentally, it is her adherence to strong journalistic codes that has presented challenges in the commercialisation of her blog. This is reflective of her habitus as a traditional journalist, where her objectivity is extremely formal and deeply ingrained.

Therefore, the presence of metamodern modes of expression are most prevalent on the blogs of Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne, all of whom have successfully capitalised on the economic opportunities presented to them as a result of their positions as digital cultural intermediaries. More specifically, performativity was present in the practice of Lau, Warne and Yambao, though quirky expression was only consistently noted on Lau’s blog. Nonetheless, the findings of the content analysis strongly suggests that the ability to negotiate between the tensions inherent in a metamodern performativity plays a significant role in establishing a strong digital presence. Together with the preceding chapters, a synthesis of the findings of the field, forms of capital and habitus will be analysed in congruence with metamodern ideas.
The following analysis chapters will directly address the research questions that have guided this inquiry on the complex practice of superstar fashion bloggers.
Chapter 8: Analysis Chapter 1 – The Emergence of Digital Capital

Research Statement 1: The new trajectories to dominance by fashion bloggers indicate the emergence of a new capital representative of metamodernism.

Guiding this inquiry into the practice of successful fashion bloggers is the relevant literature from which the four research questions were derived. The entrenchment of digital communication in daily live has afforded bloggers the means to carve out novel pathways to dominance in the fashion industry to become cultural intermediaries, leading to widespread engagement with both producers and consumers of fashion. However, there is a scarcity of research that specifically examines the role of fashion bloggers at both the micro and macro level, where their individual practice is looked at in the context of the social structures they work within. Modes of expression at the individual level will be addressed in greater depth in the next analysis chapter with regard to the habitus. This chapter first addresses the trajectories of the bloggers under study using a Bourdieuan framework where the objective hierarchies of the field of fashion journalism was considered in relation to the distribution of capital that allowed individuals to move within the ranks of these hierarchies. Drawing on the data from the direct observation, semi-structured interviews and content analysis, this chapter identifies the forms of capital pertinent to gaining a profile through blogging. More specifically, the existing literature as well as the results of this study point towards the growing cultural relevance of the concept of a digital capital as an asset in the accumulation of influence online. The notion of digital capital will be discussed further in regard to the emergent structure of feeling, metamodernism, by highlighting the tensions present in the practice of fashion blogging. In order to do so, this chapter delves into the above research statements, by first exploring the forms of capital possessed by fashion bloggers.
8.1 Research Question 1 – The Operative Forms of Capital

RQ1: What are the forms of capital possessed by fashion bloggers?

This research question specifically addresses the cultural, social, economic and symbolic capital accumulated by the bloggers under study throughout their careers, all of which appear to be operative in the field of fashion journalism. More significantly, this study finds digital capital to be a legitimate form of capital that is also operative in the field of fashion journalism. Indeed, the various forms of capital appear to be cumulative and the right amount of each form of capital contributes to the blogger’s success. Cultural capital is a starting point for this discussion as it refers to an individual’s knowledge and competencies, and may be taken to be a necessary asset in content creation. Drawing on Bourdieu’s (1986) definition of the forms of capital, cultural capital may manifest in three ways: embodied, objectified and institutionalised. The featured outfit post is one example of the personal embodiment of fashion trends. Examples of this were seen in the blogs of Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne, all of whom featured outfit posts throughout the three coding periods, where clothing and accessories modelled by the bloggers were the focal point of the posts. Correspondingly, both the possession of objectified cultural capital and embodied cultural capital is inherent in the creation of outfit posts. The interview with Daniel Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) confirms the importance of possessing a strong personal sense of style that brands could relate to. Ultimately, it is the ability to make a designer’s garments look appealing to a wide audience that attracts collaborations with brands, which is convertible to economic capital. The prevalence of objectified cultural capital among bloggers supports the finding that fashion blogging provides an avenue for brand storytelling, where myths and archetypes that the brand seeks to evoke are expressed to consumers through the fashion blogger (Kretz & de Valck, 2010). This is especially apparent in the practice of Nicole Warne, who not only consistently modelled her outfits and accessories in all sampled posts, but also in the advertisements on her blog. In addition to objects in the form of consumer products, objectified cultural capital also refers to the tangible tools of the
trade needed for cultural production, such as the cameras that Susanna Lau carries with her when she visits designer’s showrooms to capture images for her blog. According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital can also refer to access to proxies or people who possess the tools and skills needed for an aspect of the production process. This is illustrated in the case of Nicole Warne, who has access to a host of photographers willing to capture images of her modeling outfits when she travels. Coupled with the romantic and nostalgic tone of writing where Warne recounts the events surrounding her photoshoots, often involving her romantic partner behind the camera, her blog posts provide readers with a glimpse into both her personal and glamorous international lifestyle. This is in turn a reflection of embodied cultural capital as Warne personifies the luxury fashion brands that she features.

The close link between the object and embodiment also contributes to the creation of value in products. Embodied cultural capital refers to innate proclivities that can be further cultivated through personal investments of time and labour, and may be regarded as an integral part of the individual’s practical sense or habitus. In the context of fashion, embodied cultural capital is taken as the interpretation and representation of fashion trends on blogs, where the bloggers draw on their personal tastes to style an outfit. As found in the content analysis, Lau, Yambao and Warne not only tend to feature pieces from a few designers in a single post, they also decide on interesting locales as backdrops for their street photoshoots. Indeed, the immersion of these bloggers in the everyday scenes of a location depicted in carefully constructed images is reflective of the New Romanticism inherent in performativity, where a transcendence of daily life into the realm of the sublime is enacted. On a separate note, the physical embodiment of these garments by bloggers imply an endorsement, which is supplemented by the content analysis finding that bloggers generally tend to write positively of featured fashion brands. As Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) explained, negativity towards brands tend to manifest in the form of exclusion from the blog. Therefore, taken together with the notion of an aesthetic economy, where the value of a product fluctuates depending on gatekeepers who decide the presiding tastes; products that are deemed covetable undergo a process of consecration, where
symbolic value is generated by players in the industry other than the designer (Bourdieu, 1993a). Just as the traditional fashion media played a pivotal role in driving demand, fashion bloggers have entered into this role in the digital age, albeit from a more personalised angle. The presence of positive endorsement creates the conditions for reciprocity prevalent in print journalism and fashion blogging. The interview with Louis* (i/v, 2014), a fashion writer for both print and digital editions of a women’s interest magazine, found that magazines tend to positively feature selected brands in the hope of enticing them to consider becoming advertisers on the publication. Similarly, the interview with Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) found that designers are more inclined to initiate contact and facilitate opportunities if they are visible and well-represented on a particular blog, which could lead to monetary profit in the form of collaborations or advertising. Nonetheless, a level of authenticity that reflects bloggers’ cultural capital is necessary to create an engaging experience for readers. The interview with Chelsea* (i/v, 2014) supports this as she observed that successful bloggers tended to express a unique point of view and lifestyle connection, in addition to their personal sense of style. Notably, the content analysis found that travel was a large component of the lifestyle connection offered on the blogs of Lau, Warne and Yambao. This reference to a lifestyle connection is pertinent as it not only indicates a prominent display of the lifestyle bloggers embody, but can also be regarded as a reflection of the blogger’s habitus, which will be discussed further in RQ 3 addressing performativity.

Another aspect of cultural capital that needs to be considered is institutionalised cultural capital. Patty Huntington’s long-term entrenchment in the hierarchies of traditional media is reflected in her strong adherence to journalistic ethics. Specifically, the interview with Huntington (i/v, 2013) revealed that she once turned down a five-figure endorsement deal as it jeopardised her credibility as a print journalist, and therefore her contracts with various print publications. Such journalistic codes, however, does not appear to be as clearly demarcated in the digital space. Indeed, Susanna Lau too possesses institutionalised cultural capital having been the commissioning editor for DazedDigital.com, the digital edition of Dazed & Confused
magazine. Lau’s direct entry into digital publishing as her first job in fashion media appears to have afforded her a deeper understanding of how to navigate between the creation of interesting engaging content and economic self-interest. This is evident in her disclosed social media collaboration with luxury brand Coach in the 2015 content analysis, where she created positive content for the brand through a highly personalised perspective, which included the coverage of a Coach event in one post, and a subsequent feature of her intricate process of personally customising a Coach handbag. In comparison to the traditional journalistic ethics that Huntington adheres to, it appears that the notion of ethics in the digital space may be more fluid and malleable. Notably, Lau also possesses a tertiary degree in History, which aligns with the positioning of her blog as an Arts and Humanities website. This manifests in her strong focus on the mood and aesthetic of each featured fashion collection, which may also be regarded as an embodied expression of her habitus. Moreover, her consistent practice of hyperlinking demonstrates to readers the sources of information she utilised to create a cohesive post, which reinforces her statement in her FAQ webpage that undertaking a degree in the humanities taught her “the importance of research and depth” (Lau, 2013b). This, nonetheless, indicates Lau’s possession of a cultural capital that is inclined towards the production of digital content.

For Nicole Warne, her brief experience with traditional fashion media lasted the duration of two internships in the styling departments of luxury fashion magazines Grazia and Harper’s Bazaar (Warne, 2015). This reflects the cultivation of a habitus that is manifests in her practice of styling and modelling all her outfits on GaryPepperGirl.com. Notably, a look at Warne’s (2015) official LinkedIn profile also reveals that she has undertaken a Diploma in Business at a fashion college in Sydney, which might explain her acumen in converting her embodied tastes into economic opportunities, and correspondingly her cultural capital into economic capital. On the other hand, not much is known about Bryan Yambao’s educational background or career pathway except that he was a former web developer (Business of Fashion, 2015). Thus, Yambao may be considered as one who possesses low institutionalised
cultural capital, suggesting that his knowledge of fashion was inculcated informally, and that his legitimation in the field was acquired through other forms of capital.

Undeniably, this study found that the accumulation of digital influence provided the leverage necessary for bloggers to acquire other forms of capital that aided in their success as key players in the fashion industry. This strongly suggests that such influence is a form of capital in its own right. For instance, the fact that Susanna Lau (2013, December 10) was engaged by luxury fashion brand Fendi to facilitate their foray into the social media platform Twitter demonstrates an acknowledgment of Lau’s relevance as a cultural intermediary in the digital sphere. More pertinently, the internet has evidently afforded individuals like Lau a “megaphone” to reach a global audience (MacQuarrie, Miller & Phillips, 2012, p.136). This is reflected in Lau’s rationale for leaving her job as commissioning editor of DazedDigital.com, where she explained “... I don’t need the publication to anchor onto. I have a publication essentially” (Kansara, 2011, para. 2). This lucid acknowledgement drives home the point that fashion blogs are a site where the blogger’s cultural capital and digital capital overlap. Drawing on the content analysis, hyperlinking was present in all bloggers’ practice, and was especially apparent in Lau’s blog posts. Hyperlinking serves a function to expand the narrative of a post beyond its confines and leads the reader down potential pathways of information finding, supporting the notion that blog content is not static. Rather, content on blogs can be regarded as highly dynamic and rhizomatic in what is called hypertextual (Rocamora, 2012). Included in the concept of hypertext is the use of multimedia content that further enhances the communication experience. This is supported by the content analysis finding that all posts coded contained multimedia content, with the most prevalent being images, and to a lesser degree, videos.

Contrary to the idea of the Internet being a space for interactivity and participation (Deuze, 2003), this study found that interaction and participation on fashion blogs was minimal and that replying to reader’s comments was an unnecessary activity in becoming a successful fashion blogger. This was explained in the interview with Daniel
Kjellsson (i/v, 2013), who posited that instead of responding to the multitude of comments on the blog, bloggers could better utilise their time creating new content for their readers. Thus, engagement with readers on fashion blogs should be regarded as parasocial, and cannot be conflated with social capital. Nonetheless, while interaction with fashion consumers appear to be parasocial, bloggers’ online influence have made it possible to build real life relationships with another key audience: fashion producers. The accrual of influence online can lead to the accumulation of social capital within the fashion industry, which is pertinent in not only gaining access to exclusive events, but also in the conversion of cultural capital into economic opportunities. This is illustrated in Bryan Yambao’s entry into the field where he first caught the attention of Marc Jacobs by posting a video of himself praising the designer. This resulted in Jacobs naming a bag after Yambao. His exponential growth in readership in 2008 and 2009 led to an invitation into the front row of a Dolce & Gabbana show in 2009 (Yambao, 2009).

The social capital of Yambao (2014, April 29) was further documented in the content analysis, where he created posts to highlight his association with other celebrities at events. Hence, Yambao’s blog can be regarded as reproduction of his social status in the fashion industry facilitated by his performativity. This is further bolstered by Yambao’s use of Instagram to post selfies of his events-related experiences with other attendees. Indeed, all bloggers under study all possess social acquired through different means, highlighting its importance in a social arena like the field of fashion. For Lau, social capital is evident through her connection and interactions with publicists that have afforded her exclusive information. Warne’s social capital is observed through her consistent practice of collaborating with photographers or fellow bloggers to take her photos while she models outfits in international locales. Lastly, Huntington’s access to the backstage of fashion shows, as well as her ability to procure exclusive images, implies her possession of social capital.

This study further found that in the fashion industry, social, cultural and digital capital are closely linked to symbolic capital. Throughout the literature, it was evident that
individuals who possess symbolic capital had to undergo a process of legitimation by others in the industry. Central to this process is a recognition by key fashion industry members of the fashion blogger’s competencies. Specifically, the right combination of the forms of capital possessed by the blogger, and their embodied habitus, facilitated this recognition, resulting in their occupation of positions of prestige in the field. A good example of this is Yambao’s invitation to be a panellist at the International New York Times Luxury Conference 2014 by Suzy Menkes, the international editor of Vogue. Her recognition of Yambao’s opinions as valuable in an international business arena endows him with a high level of distinction, and thus symbolic capital. Similarly, Nicole Warne’s ability to represent clothing in an aspirational way has afforded her the privilege of picking outfits straight off runway shows to don and feature on her own blog (Warne, 2015, April 8), demonstrating how a high level of embodied cultural capital may lead to further accumulation of symbolic capital in the fashion industry.

The close link between social capital and symbolic capital is especially apparent in Warne’s coverage of MBFWA 2014, where she was bestowed the status of Official Insider for the event for the second year running. In her posts, she often referred to designers as friends and even had a replica of an outfit debuting at the event made for her by designer Alice McCall (Warne, 2014, May 8). This level of personalised attention operates on a tacit agreement of reciprocity as the Alice McCall dress replicated for Warne was featured exclusively in a single post on Warne’s blog, and garnered 19 700 “Likes” on Instagram.

For Susanna Lau, symbolic capital is observable in the form of sponsored international trips and her involvement awarding the Dress of the Year in 2014. In the 2014 coding period, Lau was invited to the MBFWA 2014, where she was guided from showroom to showroom by the public relations personnel representing Australian designers. Lau’s special treatment at MBFWA 2014 underscores Chelsea’s* (i/v, 2014) statement that the choices of designers to afford certain individuals within the field privileges such as front row seats, often depends on the desired outcomes of the designer. If the aim is to achieve international awareness, designers will seat bloggers in the front row (Chelsea*, i/v, 2014), a position of prominence in the social arena that is fashion week.
Similarly, in the 2015 coding period, Lau was invited to Russia to speak at events hosted by retailers Tsvetnoy and Russian Vogue.

While Patty Huntington’s presence in the front row at MBFWA 2014 was limited, she was allowed backstage access to take photos for her blog. More significantly, during the British Royal Tour that fell within the same coding period as the MBFWA 2014, Huntington was engaged as an expert to comment on the fashion choices of the Duchess of Cambridge on two television programmes, as documented on her Instagram account. Therefore, it appears that Huntington’s symbolic capital, is largely conferred by the other members of traditional media, and to a lesser degree, fashion designers. While the level of symbolic capital varied among bloggers under study, it is evident that possessing it often leads to greater access to events and information that in turn supports the bloggers’ roles as cultural intermediaries.

In regard to the acquisition of symbolic capital, two main trajectories to positions of prestige were identified in this study. On the one hand, bloggers like Susanna Lau, Nicole Warne and Bryan Yambao appear to have started out with the possession of a high level of digital capital, which was pivotal in their accrual of other forms of capital. That is, it was their digital influence that caught the attention of the fashion industry, which eventually led to industry recognition resulting in the acquisition of symbolic capital. On the other hand, instances of symbolic capital pertaining to Patty Huntington’s career seem to primarily be a result of her high level of institutionalised cultural capital. That is, her long-term entrenchment within the field has provided her with the professional contacts from whom access to events and exclusive images can be acquired. Further, it tends to be other members in the traditional media that regard Huntington in high esteem. These two trajectories are likewise mirrored in the acquisition of economic capital.

While the principles underlying cultural capital may be seen as inverse to the pursuit of economic capital, it can be said that all forms of capital are fundamentally misrecognised forms of economic capital (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 75). Indeed, it is the
disavowal of economic self-interest that allows the process of legitimation to occur, where symbolic capital may be accumulated. Thus, the acquisition of symbolic capital, which is a capital of consecration, indicates that the endorsement of a blogger’s legitimacy by designers in turn gives bloggers the authority to decide what cultural products are coveted and are of value. The involvement of bloggers in the symbolic production of value in the aesthetic economy of fashion appears to have yielded lucrative monetary benefits to three of the four bloggers under study. For Susanna Lau, it was revealed that her main source of income was through special projects with other brands (Kansara, 2011). The presence of such collaboration was evident throughout the coding periods, including projects with Fendi, Coach and Temperley London. For Nicole Warne, the presence of advertising on her blog in which she was the subject also suggests economic compensation. However, the monetisation of blog content appeared to be highly problematic for Patty Huntington, whose institutionalised cultural capital played a central role in her adherence to journalistic ethics, resulting in a reluctance to pursue monetary rewards at the expense of her credibility. This is demonstrated by Huntington’s focus on profiling people in the fashion industry, as opposed to the endorsement of fashion products on her blog. On the other hand, the latest fashion products appeared to play a central role in the narratives of the blogs of Lau, Yambao and Warne. Notably, while some of the products featured were gifted to bloggers, Lau, Yambao and Warne also featured products they personally purchased. The expenditure of personal funds, or economic capital, towards the acquisition of objectified cultural capital reflects an authenticity in their embodiment of the trends, as such investment requires a commitment to an object that aligns with their personal tastes.

Overall, this study has identified numerous forms of capital possessed by fashion bloggers, which are cultural, economic, social, symbolic and digital. This study confirms that the different forms of capital are interconnected and this makes demarcation in a singular form problematic. This is reinforced by the finding that all the bloggers under study possessed the various operative forms of capital to varying degrees. The possession of one form of capital outlined above could also lead to the acquisition or
transference of other forms of capital. As the study utilises Bourdieu’s (1993b) approach to cultural production as a framework, it is also important to look at the forms of capital in regard to the broader structures of the field, as well as the individual’s habitus that manifests through practice. Indeed, the embodiment of knowledge and dispositions, that signify each blogger’s habitus, influences the decisions that a blogger is likely to make which leads to the unique accumulation of capital. The possession of capital in turn allows bloggers to move up the rungs of the social hierarchy of fashion. More pertinently, Lau, Yambao and Warne’s trajectories to positions of prestige in the field of fashion confirms the emergence of a new form of capital that is highly relevant to fashion journalism. Specifically, the growing relevance of digital influence in the diffusion of fashion trends heralds the emergence of digital capital. It is the possession of digital capital that has cemented the superstar fashion blogger’s position as a cultural intermediary in the digital space, which is addressed in greater depth in the following section.

8.2 Research Question 2 – Digital Capital Defined

RQ 2: Does the digital remediation of fashion indicate the emergence of a new metamodern capital, namely digital capital?

The entrenchment of digital technologies in the diffusion of fashion is undeniable. Throughout the research, it has become evident that digital media is a key medium for the consumption of fashion products. This is evident in a range of findings – from the engagement of Susanna Lau in facilitating a brand’s entry into the digital sphere, to the use of mobile application Booodl in driving purchases at the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival 2013. Thus, this study has explored the notion of digital capital within the fashion industry while also elucidating the traits associated with this form of capital. According to Bourdieu (1993a), specific forms of capital may exist in relation to particular cultural fields. The contextual findings of this study have confirmed that digital capital is indeed a legitimate form of capital in the practice of fashion blogging. Contrary to Tapscott, Ticoll and Lowy’s (2000) mercantile conception of digital capital
where the confluence of knowledge, customer networks and inherent value of a product or service simply leads to commercial success, this research instead argues that digital capital has a deeper cultural relevance. The argument that the value of a product needs to be symbolically generated by other industry players in an aesthetic economy is especially valid to this study. From the data gathered, it is evident that the field of fashion journalism has expanded to include bloggers as legitimate cultural intermediaries, in addition to the existing print fashion journalists and editors.

The role of fashion bloggers as intermediaries is especially evident by the events studied in the research. The direct observation, noted that Margaret Zhang of the blog *ShineByThree.com* played a key role in spotting and photographing stylish attendees at the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival (MBFF) 2013, as a means of engaging attendees at this key consumer event. Incidentally, MBFF 2013 was organised by IMG, which also manages Zhang’s advertising and event appearances. From the 2014 content analysis, it was noted that Nicole Warne of *GaryPepperGirl.com* was also engaged by IMG to be the official ambassador of the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Australia for the second year running, where she was tasked with conducting backstage interviews with participating designers and prolific attendees. Of significance is the employment of bloggers, Margaret Zhang and Nicole Warne to facilitate both key fashion consumer and industry events respectively. These findings underscore the unique position that bloggers are able to occupy where they oscillate among the roles of consumer and producer of fashion content.

This study observed how the four fashion bloggers move between the audience categories outlined by Sawyer (2012), from public, amateur, connoisseur to intermediary. Indeed, the study of these four bloggers over the last three years confirmed that successful bloggers transition through each of these stages while maintaining their relatability with various audience groups, suggesting a great dynamism in the way they are perceived. Here, the notion of a context collapse is evident (Marwick & Boyd, 2011), where multiple audiences – in this case, both industry insiders and fashion consumers – are collapsed into a single entity that comprehends
the blogger based on the tacit belief that the persona presented is authentic. This idea is supported by the information derived from the interviews, where Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) proffered that bloggers represent a voice in fashion that is highly relatable due to their personable approach towards promoting a product. Chelsea* (i/v, 2014) further supported this when she said that bloggers are able to generate more meaningful connections with their readers as they appear less dictatorial than magazines and more inclusive of the fashion consumer in the discourse of fashion. Additionally, it is clear that digital engagement with readers continues beyond the blog and into other social media platforms. The content analysis found that the four bloggers under study tended to utilise Facebook, Twitter and Bloglovin’ in the dissemination of information, and to a more selective degree, Instagram. While there were almost no instance of interaction in the comments section of fashion blogs, there were noted instances of bloggers responding to comments or queries from their followers on Instagram, which indicates that a more informal engagement occurs on social media. This is worth deeper investigation and should be considered for future research.

Indeed, the acceptance and adoption of certain digital practices in the field as a means of adapting to the shifting technological landscape is reflected in the push by print publications to establish an online presence. From the interview, Louis* (i/v, 2014) mentioned that whenever he attended an event, he was expected to post images on his publication’s Instagram account as a way of reaching readers through a different channel. The fact that social media metrics have been integrated into his publication’s key performance indicators further reinforce the increasing importance of generating content tailored to a digital audience. Louis* (i/v, 2014) further explained the differences in writing for print and digital editions, revealing that writing for the digital edition allows for the retention of his own authorial voice, whereas he is required to adhere to strict guidelines to achieve a uniform voice with other writers when writing for print. Instead, Louis* (i/v, 2014) consciously acknowledges that writing for an online audience requires a friendly and approachable tone. This is echoed by Patty Huntington (i/v, 2013), who similarly described her process writing for her blog as
being more organic and free flowing, as compared to writing for print. Louis* (i/v, 2014) further emphasised the importance of multimedia content in the form of images and embedded videos in the creation of digital content. The fact that journalists have learned to adapt their style of writing to suit the conventions of the digital space suggests an acknowledgement by traditionally print based publications that the digital audience has different expectations with the content they consume online. Over the course of this study, Nicole Warne appeared alongside two other successful bloggers on the cover of Lucky magazine, an American fashion catalogue specifically targeted at consumers. This can further be regarded as an attempt by a print magazine at harnessing the cultural and digital capital of these cultural intermediaries to appeal to a digitally savvy audience. Thus, it can be argued that the field of fashion journalism has not only remediated the practices characteristic of fashion blogging, but has also sought to capitalise on the same economic opportunities presented to successful fashion bloggers.

By the same token, the lure of advertisers to the blogosphere has also enticed bloggers to monetise their blog through elite networks, leading to the formation of symbiotic relationships driven by economic gain. This is especially evident in the network NowManifest, a platform owned by Conde Nast, which also publishes the American edition of Vogue. NowManifest included Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and prolific Vogue editor Anna Wintour among its ranks at various points in time. It should be noted that prior to the content analysis period in 2015, Conde Nast made the executive decision to dissolve the NowManifest network in order to direct more funding and effort towards their websites Style.com and Vogue.com (Abnett, 2015). This has led to a stark change on Bryanboy.com, which has since seen an absence of advertising, though an increase in outfit posts and brand collaborations was noted on the blog following the announcement. Lau’s blog too appeared to be thriving two months after the dissolution of NowManifest, during the coding period of April 2015. Thus, although Louis* (i/v, 2014) proffered that “ultimately you live and die by the number of advertisers you are able to keep throughout the years”, the fluid nature of
blogging under the banner of the self-presentation seems to be more readily adaptable to changes in the industry, as opposed to a print publication.

In the broader field of fashion, there is also a growing recognition of the importance of digital engagement by designers, sidestepping traditional media outlets, such as magazines, to reach consumers directly. In the literature review, it was mentioned that luxury fashion brand Burberry channelled 60% of their marketing budget into social media marketing in 2011 (O’Reilly, 2011). Louis* (i/v, 2014) also mentioned Burberry in the interview, where he praised the brand for being socially adventurous when Burberry set up the technological capacity for a global audience to purchase outfit moments after each collection debuts on a runway. Louis* (i/v 2014) further explained, “they rely a great deal on online media and blogs to get that message across, because there’s no way the print media can do that in real time.” This point on the immediacy of online media can be regarded as another hallmark of digital communication. The fact that consumers are able to preview the brand’s latest collection at the same time as fashion editors not only reflect a space and time compression, but also the diminishment of privileges previously reserved for the traditional print fashion media. Such blurring of lines has become synonymous with the digital landscape, which suggests a highly fluid environment where key individuals who draw upon their habitus in making strategic communication decisions can contribute to the success of a brand.

While fashion magazines are now clamouring for a stake in digital space, the main focus of this study centres on the practices of successful fashion bloggers. A recurring theme throughout the literature and the interviews is the importance of authenticity as bloggers are regarded as a more personable (Daniel, i/v, 2013) and less elitist (Chelsea*, i/v, 2014) source of fashion inspiration for digital consumers. Indeed a few of the traits mentioned above in congruence with digital influence have also been associated with the notion of authenticity. According to Rocamora (2012), the immediacy of publishing on fashion blogs facilitated the perception of authenticity as the immediate presentation of up-to-date material gave the audience the illusion of watching a ‘live’ performance. Notably, the notion of authenticity is often perceived in
opposition to commercial interests (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). This supports the notion that cultural capital has an inverse relationship with economic capital (Bourdieu, 1993b). This puts authenticity in the realm of cultural capital in that it is fundamentally disinterested in nature, though it can be converted to economic capital. The finding that bloggers are regarded as authentic but also possess economically lucrative careers highlights the complexity inherent in the notion of authenticity.

Authenticity may ultimately be regarded as a construct, in that people inevitably adopt contrived personas as representations of themselves in differing contexts (Goffman, 1971). Authentic constructs have also been identified in religious rituals where the enactment of authentic gestures is closely intertwined with artificiality within the same ritualistic performance (Nauta, 2003). The ability of a pastor to perform their role authentically is commensurate to the authority they wield in that context (Nauta, 2003). Taken in the context of the fashion blogger, it can be argued that the ability of a fashion blogger to negotiate these tensions of which authenticity plays an intrinsic role is crucial to their success.

On a deeper level, the interwoven nature of authenticity and artifice is neatly encapsulated in the concept of performativity (Albrecht, 2008). The study of these fashion bloggers have highlighted that performativity is crucial to the conception of a digital capital rooted in cultural practice. Thus, this research is able to confirm that the remediation of fashion does indicate the emergence of a digital capital, as a new metamodern capital. Specifically, this research defines digital capital as a form of embodied cultural capital that reflects influence accrued online through the use of performative expression facilitated by hypertextual content to engage multiple audiences. While digital capital is an economically disinterested form of capital, the fact that it reflects the superstar fashion blogger’s wide following online inevitably attracts advertisers and thus may be converted to economic capital. Further, the embodiment of digital capital enables the conditions for the accumulation of symbolic capital where other members of the industry legitimise a blogger’s presence in the field by conferring them with a high level of prestige in the production of taste. This
definition of digital capital aligns with the practice of Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambo and Nicole Warne, as they are often deeply involved in the commercial projects featured on their blogs, either as blog content or advertising. On the other hand, the lack of performativity expressed by Patty Huntington, who ascribes to traditional media’s notion of ethics to safeguard her journalistic credibility, has resulted in her rejection of monetary opportunities from brands even though she has maintained her good standing with various traditional media outlets. Indeed, the tenuous nature of online popularity requires both the authenticity of legitimate authority, as well as an aspirational artifice akin to a hypereality. Given the importance of performativity online, it can be argued that digital capital is underpinned by metamodern sensibilities.

8.3 Chapter Summary

The new trajectory to dominance by fashion bloggers indicate the emergence of a new capital representative of metamodernism. Throughout the research, Bourdieu’s ideas of field, capital and habitus were consistently utilised as a lens through which fashion journalism was examined. This study has found that the fundamental forms of capital – economic, cultural, social and symbolic – are largely operational in fashion communication. While successful bloggers do not necessarily possess a large amount of economic capital when they first enter the field, they do however over time, accumulate cultural, social and symbolic capital, which certainly sets them on a trajectory of sustainable career pathways. This is demonstrated through the blogs of Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambo and Nicole Warne. In addition to these fundamental forms of capital, an emergent form of capital has also come into play with the entry of superstar fashion bloggers into the inner circles of the fashion industry. Specifically, digital capital has become a desirable asset in fashion journalism, with designers recognising its value through bloggers, and fashion magazines likewise pushing to claim a stake in audience engagement in the digital sphere. Nonetheless, the employment of fashion bloggers as mediators in both consumer and industry events is significant as it represents a shift in power dynamics in traditional fashion hierarchies. While this does not necessarily mean that the role of the fashion editor has been
superseded, it is evident that the practice of fashion journalism has expanded to reflect new digital skills, capabilities and techniques promulgated by bloggers. In particular, the inclusion of multimedia and hyperlinks as a means of creating engaging content has led to remediation of fashion journalism, where digital communication technologies have profoundly changed the way fashion is communicated. By the same token, journalistic practices rooted in information gathering have also shaped blogging practices, as seen in the example of Susanna Lau who now labels herself a fashion journalist. An essential contributing factor to the success of a fashion blogger is the ability to present a carefully constructed persona that reflects an authenticity as a legitimate fashion insider, though it accompanied with an underlying artifice. This mode of expression is fundamentally metamodern in nature, which makes the accumulation of digital capital contingent on the individual’s inclination towards performativity. Thus, this study defines digital capital as a form of embodied cultural capital that reflects influence accrued online through the use of performative expression, facilitated by hypertextual content to engage multiple audiences. The possession of digital capital then creates opportunities for the acquisition of other forms of capital, namely social and symbolic capital, further cementing the individual’s position within the field. While digital capital is a disinterested form of capital, it can ultimately be converted to self-interested economic capital. Overall, it is evident that movement within the social hierarchies of fashion is dependent on possession of the operative forms of capital, as well as the inclinations of the individual in the enactment of their practice, none of which occur in a vacuum. This analysis supports a systems view of a cultural field where the field, capital and habitus are inevitably intertwined and must be considered simultaneously in the examination of cultural practice.
Chapter 9: Analysis Chapter 2 – Fashion Blogging as a Metamodern Practice

Research Statement 2: If metamodernism is an emergent cultural logic, then the metamodern strategies of performativity and the quirky are expressed through the habitus of the superstar fashion blogger.

Metamodernism is situated historically beyond, epistemologically with, and ontologically between the modern and postmodern (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010). The results of this fashion blogging study clearly show that metamodernism has taken a foothold in online engagement where metamodernism is defined as a cultural sensibility that demonstrates a constant and dynamic oscillation between modern and postmodern sensibilities; between the sincerity, unity and purity of modernism, and the irony, plurality and promiscuity of postmodernism (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010). A defining characteristic of metamodernism is the encapsulation of tensions that were traditionally viewed as oppositional, but can be regarded as complementary through the metamodern lens. This study explored the presence of metamodernism in digital communication, utilising the fashion industry as an example of such cultural practice. Overwhelmingly, the results of this study point towards notions of the metamodern concept of performativity as being a central part of the practice of fashion blogging. Two brief examples that illustrate this are the creation of outfit feature posts and bloggers’ high level of visibility at fashion events. In contributing to the growing body of research on metamodernism, this study tested two well-developed metamodern concepts of performativity and the quirky within the discourse of fashion blogging. While these two concepts are by no means exhaustive of the cultural tendencies representative of metamodernism, they are relevant starting points given their previous applications to the cultural fields of film, art and architecture. In alignment with a Bourdieuan framework, these metamodern sensibilities were also viewed as expressions of an individual blogger’s habitus, referring to their unique dispositions, attitudes and inclinations to enact certain actions. Given the nuanced nature of these metamodern sensibilities, qualitative data
was primarily used to address the following research questions. Specifically, the interviews, and content analysis were used as sources from which arguments were synthesised.

9.1 Research Question 3 – The Performative Fashion Blogger

RQ3: Is the oscillating tension between authenticity and artifice encompassed by the concept of performativity integral to the habitus of the superstar fashion blogger?

The content analysis of the four fashion bloggers allowed for the critical examination of the occurrences of authenticity and artifice. The occurrences of authenticity and artifice identified in these blogs provided evidence that was critical to discern the bloggers’ embodiment of these metamodern sensibilities. Indeed, drawing on the analogy of a pendulum oscillating between innumerable states of being (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010), there is no real demarcation between the authentic and the artificial in the metamodern performativity as these two intertwined concepts are discursive and occur at the same time. This tension pervaded the practice of the performative bloggers identified below in their enactment of their *feel for the game* (i.e. habitus) via the aesthetic and content of a blog post. Interestingly, there were times when some of these bloggers favoured one sensibility over the other. However, as is inherent the performative tension, whenever an expression swings towards a modern authenticity, it inevitably gets pulled back to a postmodern artifice.

This study found that the instances of authenticity, where the blogger exhibited an embodiment of their position as a fashion insider, were recorded in the content analysis, and also supported through the interviews. While the overarching traits of some bloggers’ posts were similar, no two bloggers exhibited the exact same format of content creation. For example, Patty Huntington is highly authentic in her role as a fashion journalist of traditional media, which is reflected in her access to backstage areas at key events and exclusive images. However, the lack of artifice on her blog has resulted in an inability to produce a viable revenue stream through blogging. Essentially, there is a conflict of interest stemming from a habitus cultivated through
years of immersion in the traditional media environment, which pits self-interested commercial pursuit in opposition to journalistic credibility. Therefore, Huntington’s mode of authenticity is based on her journalistic knowledge and ethics. This is evident in the type of content Huntington creates, where she is more likely to provide details of key happenings between fashion individuals and organisations, than model clothing that was sent to her.

Bloggers Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne, on the other hand appear to exhibit a carefully constructed authenticity underpinned by artifice, which is better described as performativity. Here, instead of thinking of authenticity as a sincere expression of the self, it should instead be viewed as contrived representation where the individual draws on elements of performance to reproduce a desired persona to further their agenda within the field. For example, these bloggers detailed their personal experiences of styling outfits or exploring new locations during photoshoots, but the interviews confirmed that bloggers are paid to feature these products in some instances (Huntington, i/v, 2013). This tension is demonstrated in the way Susanna Lau creates outfit posts, where a featured product is integrated with other pieces of clothing that she already owns to create a whole outfit reflective of her personal aesthetic. Similarly, the content on Nicole Warne’s blog pivots on her ability to personally embody the items that she features, which means that products play a central role in her performative self-expression on her blog. In addition, Bryan Yambao’s knowledge of what consumers are buying from a featured collection further reflects his insider’s status that is complemented by his tendency towards self-promotion. Thus, the boundaries between self-expression and product promotion overlap on the blogs of Lau, Yambao and Warne. Another example of this is seen through the jet-setting lifestyles of Lau, Yambao and Warne, and how the content analysis confirmed that travel (often sponsored), was used as an anchor onto which the blog posts’ narratives were built. This blurring of the boundaries, and conflation between economic capital with habitus, is supported by the interview with Chelsea* (i/v, 2014) which revealed that successful bloggers tended to create content beyond fashion. Instead, they offer a lifestyle connection that includes other interests,
resulting in the performance of a persona that is engaging. It is also noteworthy that
organisers of key fashion events recognise and seek to leverage on the performativity
of fashion bloggers. As Louis* (i/v, 2014) revealed, fashion week organisers tend to
invite bloggers as they add to the generation of a festive atmosphere to the overall
spectacle of fashion week. This performance of a relatable, yet aspirational, lifestyle
permeates the practice of performative bloggers who possess a high level of digital
capital.

Further evidence of the presence of artifice was noted through the illusion of one-to-
one communication on fashion blogs, where blog content tends to be grounded in the
same consistent voice, perpetuating the perception of personal rapport. The literature
argues that interactivity on blogs tends to be perceived, where readers are not
necessarily befriending bloggers on a personal face-to-face level, even though they are
aware of the intimate details of the blogger’s life (Thorson & Rodgers 2006). Thorson &
Rodger’s (2006) concepts were confirmed and extended through the finding that
successful bloggers do not have to spend time responding to comments of readers to
keep readers engaged; rather readers were kept engaged by a constant stream of new
content across various platforms of the blogger, such as the blog and social media
(Kjellsson, i/v, 2013). The artifice of the engagement with audiences, coupled with the
authentic embodiment of an aesthetic by a blogger, therefore strongly supports the
proposition that fashion blogging thrives on performativity, making it a metamodern
practice.

The contrived promulgation of an aspirational lifestyle is also apparent throughout the
space of works in fashion journalism. For example, fashion magazines serve a function
in driving consumption through implicitly advocating to readers that an aspirational
lifestyle can be achieved through the acquisition of desirable products. It should be
noted that blogs also fulfil the same purpose, even though readers’ perceptions of
magazines are different to blogs. Kjellsson’s (i/v, 2013) analogy that he cannot relate to
the magazine Vogue but he would love to have a drink with its editor Anna Wintour,
highlights the element of the personal which is missing from fashion print publishing.
Chelsea* (i/v, 2014) takes this argument further when she explained that trends proffered by magazines may feel dictatorial, whereas information and styling tips from bloggers may feel more discursive as it can be perceived as information gathered from friend. However, magazines too are being influenced by the best practices in the digital arena, as evidenced by their adoption of the modes of expression common on blogs. Louis* (i/v, 2014) commented that he is encouraged not to “write down” to an audience by editorial staff, but rather to sound friendly and approachable, in what he likens to a “pseudo-blog” style. Louis* (i/v, 2014) also pointed out that social media has become an integral part of his job as he is expected to keep readers engaged whenever he attends a launch. Further to this, Louis* has also appeared in front of the camera in his publication’s Instagram account over the duration of this research, suggesting that the authorial tone of the fashion magazine is being challenged and it is more acceptable to break down the anonymity traditionally used in fashion publishing in the digital space. However, this practice has not carried through to print publication and remains confined to social media. As found in the interviews with Louis* and Patty Huntington, fashion journalists in print tend to work collectively, contributing towards a unified voice for magazine, instead of creating unique personas for self-interest or celebrity.

The research further finds that it is essential for fashion blogs to maintain a level of professional excellence by adopting a strong visual design standard required by the milieu of the fashion industry. As Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) pointed out, readers have limited time in a day where they consume media and they want the best possible experience. The content analysis found that all blog posts contained multimedia content to complement the written content, of which a large majority were professionally taken images. This is reflected in the blogging practice of Nicole Warne, who boasts a strong visual narrative on her blog where she performs her embodiment of the latest collections through the lens of professional photographers. Notably, all the images on her blog are of a high quality, and are presented in a large format. The content analysis also found that Susanna Lau tends to carry a camera whenever she attends a fashion show or visits a designer’s showroom to document her insider’s experience for her
readers. The multitude of images on her blog also serves to enhance her written critique of trends by visually presenting the aesthetic under examination in her blog posts. Indeed, the importance of creating a visually pleasing environment worth capturing and sharing on social media is also recognised by designers and public relations personnel. As Louis* (i/v, 2014) explained, “they know that it’s important... they do up the place really nicely with... bouquets of flowers and sometimes they employ models to linger around”. Chelsea* (i/v, 2014) revealed that while designers and publicists used to be concerned with ensuring a large quantity of images being shared on social media, designers are now more conscious of the quality of images entering the digital sphere, resulting in the employment of professional photographers at event launches for the purpose of generating images for Instagram. Thus, it is argued that images play an especially crucial role in the performance and representation of narratives occurring online.

Delving deeper into the literature, the notion of a New Romanticism proffered by Vermeulen and Van den Akker (2010), in their magnum opus on metamodernism, underpins this discussion on performativity. The notion that New Romanticism strives towards self-actualisation through the elevation of the commonplace and mundane of everyday life to the realm of the sublime and the ethereal, is evident in the blogs under examination. For example, Nicole Warne embodies haute couture as she uses the street landscape as a backdrop. The coupling of the everyday with the aspirational emulates the tension between the concepts of the real and the hyperreal as encapsulated in performativity. Both Bryan Yambao and Susanna Lau also exhibited the inclination to utilise international locales as backdrops of their photoshoots where they are photographed immersed in interesting scenes, characteristic of their jet setting lifestyles. It is this ability to embody and integrate this mode of performative brand storytelling in their practice that distinguishes bloggers from other members of the traditional fashion media. Of key importance to the findings of this study is the fact that it is possible for a blogger to embody an authenticity without encountering a conflict of interest when compensated for promoting a product. This finding supports the ongoing conversion of capitals that fashion bloggers engage in. For example, in the
post *Welcome to the Jungle* (Warne, 2015, April 7), Warne was engaged by Ralph Lauren to model in their upcoming marketing campaign, which implies that Warne received payment for her work. It should be noted that Warne utilised the streets of New York as her backdrop where she modelled clothes for spring, despite it being winter. In the text, Warne revealed that she fell ill after being in the cold for this photoshoot. Her enactment of a stroll through New York City elevates the mundane action of walking into the realm of the ethereal and sublime as she is captured in the next season’s clothing with her hair and skirt billowing in the wind, at the expense of her health. This example strongly highlights the lengths that are taken by the superstar fashion blogger in the performative production of high quality images that result in the conversion of embodied cultural capital into economic capital. That is, not even a harsh winter can prevent Warne from performing her role as a paid brand ambassador. On the one hand, Warne fulfils her authenticity as the consummate fashion professional. On the other hand, it is evident that Warne had contractual obligations to fulfil with the designer, denoting artifice.

In addition to the undertone of New Romanticism in performativity, a central trope in Warne’s blog revolves around the narrative of romance, which is enacted in real time. This is best demonstrated in Warne’s (2015, April 26) post titled *Serendipity*, where Warne details the moment her romantic partner and photographer Luke Shadbolt proposed to her. On one level, the post operates as a real-life love story, but on another level, she reveals that the reason they were on a lake in Japan was to shoot the white Michael Lo Sordo dress featured in the post. Tellingly, a hyperlink to a retail website where the dress may be purchased is prominently featured under the images. Despite the presence of product promotion, the comments in reaction to the post are largely congratulatory, which suggests that her audience was mostly taken by the latest happy event in her life. This supports the notion that bloggers who tended to reveal more intimate details of their lives also amassed a larger audience (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). More importantly, this example confirms the conversion of capital that bloggers draw on as Warne appears to convert her cultural capital into economic
capital for the designer, through the hyperlink used to sell a white dress online, drawing on the semiotic representation of a white wedding.

The artful performance of a lifestyle is also apparent in Bryan Yambao’s and Susanna Lau’s blogs. Yambao, who describes himself as a socialite despite growing up in a middle class family in the Philippines, enacts a lifestyle driven by hedonistic pursuits. In the post titled *Home Sweet Home*, Yambao (2013, December 1) is depicted lounging in a bath robe in his luxurious New York apartment with shopping bags of luxury fashion brands at his feet. In the same post, Yambao mentions he is thankful that his family and friends in the Philippines are safe in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan. While seemingly incongruent, this juxtaposition between his consumerism and personal life is taken to be encapsulated by performativity, which correspondingly reflect artifice and authenticity. On the other hand, Susanna Lau’s performativity is tied in with her increasing trajectory towards the institutionalised hierarchies of fashion. At the start of the research period, it was noted that Lau tended to describe herself as a fashion outsider. However, towards the end of the third research phase, she increasingly identified herself as a fashion journalist, preferring to go by her real name Susanna Lau in interviews, instead of her blogging nickname Susie Bubble. This action suggests a formalisation in self-presentation. Lau’s strong knowledge of aesthetics is complemented by her quirky online persona, as depicted through her unconventional approach to modelling. In the post *Philo’s the Word*, Lau (2014, April 3) is captured in mid-jump in a back alleyway as a means of modelling her new shoes. Notably, Lau rarely discloses the presence of the photographer in images where she is the subject, which indicates an artifice. On the other hand, Lau’s authentic embodiment of her role as a journalist is demonstrated in her information gathering capabilities, where she utilises her access to exclusive venues to create engaging content. Moreover, Lau was the only blogger among the performative bloggers (i.e Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne) to negatively criticise a designer, jeopardising potential commercial opportunities in the interest of honesty and truth. This adherence to ethics is also demonstrated by Patty Huntington, whose journalistic practice is the benchmark by which traditional media is represented in this study on fashion blogging.
A cross-analysis of data noted many instances of personalised performativity in the blogs due to the individual-centred nature of blogging. Performativity, which is fundamentally a metamodern mode of expression, manifests through the habitus. The habitus is defined as “practical sense” that influences behaviour in a way that is not always calculated but rather results from a set of dispositions and attitudes that generates thought and behaviour in relation to a field (Bourdieu, 1990, p.66). Thus, while the notion of the field provides an objective hierarchy where relational positions that agents can occupy reflect the type and amount of capital they possess (Thompson, 1991), the habitus represents the agency of the individual to make decisions as an embodiment of the position they occupy in the field. Indeed, fashion bloggers are interesting in that they occupy a multi-faceted position in the field of fashion journalism. Susanna Lau exemplifies this, as despite fulfilling a role as a fashion reporter, she is simultaneously able to capitalise on commercial opportunities without jeopardising her perceived authenticity. The skillful negotiation of what would normally be a tenuous conflict of interest is dependent on her ability to establish an engaging and unique voice indispensable to the psyche of fashion readers, which is demonstrated in her continued numbers in readership and Instagram followers.

The highly personalised and performative approach to fashion reporting offered by bloggers appears to be effective in the engagement of the people that not only consume, but produce fashion as demonstrated in the previous analysis chapter. As Lau rightly pointed out, she does not need a publication to anchor onto as her blog is her publication, or her “megaphone” (MacQuarrie, Miller & Phillips, 2013, p.136), through which her unique voice is heard and circulated. Conversely, Patty Huntington’s choices are also the result of a habitus shaped by her lengthy tenure in the traditional hierarchies of fashion, where her journalistic credibility has been contingent on her adherence to a code of ethics. Indeed, although magazines possess an aspirational quality, the artifice of magazines occur through a group of largely unseen individuals working collectively to promulgate the publication’s persona, where performativity manifests on wider structural level. This is supported by the revelation that in print publishing, each writer is expected to write in a way that results in a consistent voice
throughout the magazine (Louis*, i/v, 2014). In contrast, the performativity of the blogger is enacted at a personal level and is intrinsic to the product that the reader engages with, where readers are able to associate a person to the opinions proffered on a blog. Thus, bloggers like Patty Huntington encounter a conflict of interest when transitioning between media platforms. Despite a shift in fashion publishing towards a greater recognition of the importance of personable content in the digital space, it is evident that the unspoken rules of conduct in digital publishing are more fluid and malleable than in print publishing, especially in regard to the commercialisation of a blog.

The findings of RQ3 on performativity serve to provide a deeper insight into the findings of RQ2, which conceptualises a culturally relevant digital capital, of which the notion of performativity plays a central role. Specifically, this study defines digital capital as a form of embodied cultural capital that reflects influence accrued online through the use of performative expression, facilitated by hypertextual content to engage multiple audiences. From the data gathered in this study, it is evident that performative bloggers – such as Bryan Yambao, Susanna Lau and Nicole Warne – tend to amass a larger following and may therefore be said to possess high levels of digital capital. On the other hand, non-performative blogger Patty Huntington, who has exhibited a high level of authenticity but not artifice, is regarded as embodying a high level of institutional cultural capital instead. In addressing this research question, it is evident that performativity, which encompasses a modern authenticity and postmodern artifice, plays a crucial role in the success of the superstar fashion blogger where it is expressed through the habitus of the individual. A high level of performativity possessed by a blogger correspondingly reflects a high level of digital capital, which in turn leads to economic success in their trajectory to dominance within the field.
RQ4: Is the oscillating tension between sincerity and irony encompassed by the quirky integral to the habitus of the superstar fashion blogger?

Another metamodern *structure of feeling* investigated in this study is the quirky, which encapsulates the simultaneous expression of a modern sincerity and a postmodern irony. Rombes (2005, p.74) succinctly posited that New Sincerity, which results in the quirky, functions to “evoke a sincere emotional response while at the same time, to create the possibilities for the audience to see through the very mechanisms that elicit response”. As Vermeulen and Van den Akker (2010, p. 6) described, “one should be careful not to think of this oscillation as a balance however; rather, it is a pendulum swinging between...innumerable poles...the moment its irony sways toward apathy, gravity pulls it back toward enthusiasm”. In the case of the quirky, the moment ironic expression sways too much towards a postmodern apathy, it inevitably gets drawn back towards a modern sincerity and enthusiasm.

The nuanced nature of this sensibility meant that a qualitative approach was necessary in its identification. The elucidation of quirky expression first involved the identification of irony in the sampled blog posts. This study utilised the five forms of verbal irony on blogs identified by Whalen et al. (2013) – namely, hyperbole, rhetorical question, understatement, sarcasm and jocularity – as a starting point. Upon identification, the researcher subsequently examined the specific ironic statement to assess the presence of sincerity. Trilling (1972, p.2) defined sincerity as “a congruence between avowal and feeling”, or a representation of oneself truly to others without falsification or subterfuge. Often viewed in the same vein as *authenticity*, sincerity differs from authenticity in that it stems from a moral perspective, and is aligned with the modern ideals of truth, honesty and virtue. Sincerity is thus associated with the notion of selfhood, and can be identified through evidence of personal autonomy, as well as a recognition of one’s personal limitations (Trilling, 1972, p. 56). Specifically, in the content analysis, instances of self-deprecation were categorised as sincerity, as were
instances of negative critique of the fashion industry as it goes against the expectations of the fashion industry for a fashion blogger to do so. While authenticity involves an enactment of a role specific to a given context, sincerity reflects honesty and an alignment of internal and external states of being (Targoff, 1997). Taken together, the tension between irony and sincerity results in a sensibility often described as quirky (MacDowell, 2013), where the use of irony simultaneously subverts meaning and reveals an underlying sincerity.

In this study, quirky expression is less prevalent in the expression of successful bloggers compared to performativity. Only Susanna Lau consistently expressed quirky statements throughout the content analyses. A few sporadic instances of quirky expression were also noted on the blogs of Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne, eliminating quirky expression as an essential element in the conceptualisation of digital capital. Nonetheless, the strong undertone of quirkiness on Lau’s blog can be regarded as a contributing factor to her success, as it accentuates her unique authorial voice. This is illustrated in her post A Different Sort of Move, where Lau (2013, December 13) announces her decision to move onto the NowManifest platform. In the post, Lau cites her British sensibilities for her inclination to apologise for doing “anything with a hint of the mercenary about it”, but within the same breath, adopts an honest tact by listing the reasons for her decision. This mode of admission appears to have been effective with her audience as there was no visible backlash, and the comments left by readers were generally positive and supportive.

In another instance, Lau (2014, April 23) refers to herself as an “interloping bloody blogger” in the post Dress of the Year, when she was engaged by a fashion museum to pick the winner for this prestigious accolade. This moment of self-deprecation reveals her awareness of her unconventional entry into the field of fashion. Even though Lau has undergone a transformation over the course of this study from self-professed fashion outsider to fashion journalist, she remains aware that some people might have remained sceptical about her belonging to the field. Consistently, in 2015, Lau demonstrates a metamodern style of expression using irony to describe how a
designer’s clothing was reminiscent of “Arsenal footie kits made feminine.” (Lau, 2015, April 16). Although it is unexpected for a fashion insider to describe clothing this way, this jocular statement can be regarded as Lau’s honest and sincere reaction towards the featured garment. It is noteworthy that in the post This Is Me... Bidding Farewell to N7, Lau (2013, December 11) reveals in the featured video that aside from fashion, her two other passions are food and football, with Arsenal being her favourite club. Therefore, this inclusion of sentimentality, showing how her non-fashion interests influenced her perception of fashion, results in a quirky revelation that is unique to Lau and is thus sincere. More importantly, such quirky expressions should also be discussed in the context of the individual’s habitus. As detailed in the previous section, the habitus refers to a set of attitudes and dispositions often inculcated from childhood that manifests in the behaviour and influences the likely choices of the individuals. The consistency of quirky expression noted on Susanna Lau’s blog suggests that the quirky is indeed expressed through her habitus. Indeed, it has been argued that the use of ironic expression can lead to a deep engagement, requiring a mutual understanding and recognition of the subverted meaning. This results in an “identification of two minds” between the ironist and the interpreter (Booth, 1983, p. 729). Lau’s natural tendency to utilise irony as a means of sincere expression therefore adds a unique tonal quality to her blog posts that is engaging.

Although sporadic, the occurrence of the quirky was also noted in other blogs. Commenting on the success of Nicole Warne, Chelsea* (i/v, 2014) explained that in addition to being an attractive model for designers, Warne’squirkiness was attracting a growing base of followers online. This was supported by the content analysis, where Warne occasionally exhibited statements reflective of a metamodern quirkiness. In the post How to Wear Olive, where Warne (2015, April 6) describes how she was so cold on her trip to New York, that she wore every item of clothing she possessed to keep warm, and sarcastically remarked “not being able to bend your elbows... is so chic.” Here, a light-hearted side to Warne is revealed through her admission of discomfort in her clothing, which is an unexpected comment from a fashion insider. Significantly, Warne demonstrates honesty through the use of subversive humour. Likewise, Bryan
Yambao occasionally exhibited a metamodern quirkiness, as noted in the post *Missoni Turtleneck Sweater* (2013, December 8), when he revealed that even though he normally preferred womenswear in his daily life, he enjoyed modelling an outfit that comprised fully of menswear for this blog post. This nonchalant challenge of gender roles through the use of jocularity highlighted Yambao’s unique sense of style and informed the audience of his fashion tastes. Nonetheless, the rise to dominance of performative bloggers like Yambao and Warne who do not consistently exhibit a quirky sensibility in their blog posts, indicates that quirky expression is not crucial to the success of a blogger. Notably, Patty Huntington did not exhibit any instance of expression that may be regarded as quirky. Although there were instances of irony recorded in her blog posts, they did not serve to reveal her internal state of being, but rather was used as a tool for critique in her authentic role as a fashion journalist. Indeed, not much is known about Huntington’s personal life through her blog as she remains the consummate professional whose practice is rooted in her institutional cultural capital throughout this study.

Overall, quirky expression appeared highly subjective, and was only consistently evidence in Susanna Lau’s blog. The presence of two modes of metamodern expression on Lau’s blog – performativity and the quirky – suggests that they are not mutually exclusive and can occur simultaneously. Indeed, for a blogger like Lau, it could be argued that her quirkiness feeds into her performativity, where her consistent use of irony to reflect self-awareness complements her unconventional and highly personalised approach to the creation of fashion-related content. After all, she revealed in an interview that the lack of diversity in the coverage of fashion provided the impetus for her to start her blog so that she could depict fashion in a way that she felt was missing from the discourse (Mulhall, 2014). The quirky tone in which Lau writes serves not only to inform, but also reveal sincere moments and opinions linked to the creation of the blog post. This reiterates Hawkins’ (2011) finding that the confessional nature of blogging exemplifies Foucault’s (1989) hermeneutics of the self, where bloggers engage in a discourse of identity with both themselves and their audience. While less common than performativity, the quirky appears to be an
appealing mode of expression, as the use of irony for sincere revelation highlights the blogger’s unique voice in the discourse of fashion. Nonetheless, the fact that this sensibility only occurs occasionally on other successful blogs under study suggests that quirky expression rooted in New Sincerity is not necessary for acquisition of the various forms of capital, though it can be a reflection and embodiment of an individual’s habitus.

9.3 Chapter Summary

A core aim of this research was to find out if fashion blogging encapsulated a shift in cultural practice through the lens of metamodernism. This chapter looked at the prevalence of two metamodern modes of expression, performativity and the quirky in fashion communication. Though by no means exhaustive, these two sensibilities have gained traction in other cultural fields and were well-defined enough to warrant application to the practice of lucrative fashion blogging in the field of fashion journalism, as a contribution to the expanding literature. It was found that performativity was central to the practice of successful fashion bloggers, where the creation of fashion content was based on an authentic embodiment and an aspirational artifice, often involving the use of fashion products interwoven into written and visual narratives. While seemingly disparate, the dynamic tension between authenticity and artifice encapsulated by performativity was evident in the practice of Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne. However, these priorities appear to be acting in opposition to that of an individual entrenched in traditional fashion journalism. That is, even though a publication is essentially driven by commercial interests, the journalists working within a publication are conversely expected to adhere to a code of ethics or risk their journalistic credibility. Patty Huntington’s years of experience in the traditional hierarchies of journalism has led to a high level of institutionalised cultural capital, which in turn has presented a conflict of interest in her effort to monetise her content. This accounts for a high level of authenticity in her practice without the artifice necessary for her blog to be deemed performative. As such she experimented with novel ways of monetisation without comprising
journalistic integrity. On the other hand, having launched their careers through digital publishing, Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne are more adept at negotiating the fluid ethics of the blogosphere. While laws have been put in place to encourage a greater transparency from bloggers in regard to disclosure of payment for the benefit of consumers, these laws are not internationally formalised, remaining at the discretion of the blogger. Through the content analysis and interviews, it was evident that the artifice accompanying paid product endorsements is closely intertwined with the bloggers' authentic personification of the qualities associated with the brand, requiring a habitus that tends towards performative expression. The bloggers who demonstrated a high level of performativity also boasted a digital capital that was readily convertible to economic capital. In the digital sphere, it is clear that commercial pursuits carefully tempered with genuine interest and embodiment by a blogger does not deter readers from supporting a blog. Therefore, it can be concluded that performativity, expressed through a blogger’s habitus, plays a necessary and integral part of propelling a blogger to a position of acceptance and dominance in the field of fashion.

On the other hand, while the quirky is an engaging mode of expression, it is not crucial to the success of fashion bloggers. Among the bloggers under study, Susanna Lau most consistently exhibited this quirky tonal quality in her writing, where sincere revelations were expressed through ironic utterances. To a much lesser degree, instances of quirky expression were also sporadically noted on the blogs of fellow performative bloggers Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne. The highly subjective nature of quirky expression suggests that it is an inclination that results from the habitus of the individual. Although the literature suggests that the use of irony leads to effective engagement between an author and an audience that can recognise it, this study finds that it is not integral to the success of a blog. Quirky expression can, however, accentuate the unique voice that a blogger possesses in their coverage of fashion. Overall, it appears that the fluidity of the digital space mirrors the tensions in the metamodern structure of feeling, where the roles, priorities, and modes of expression encapsulate a
complementary dynamism. Indeed, it is the individuals who are not only aware of, but can also negotiate, these tensions who tend to succeed in fashion blogging.
Chapter 10: Conclusion Chapter – The Punch Line

The field of fashion journalism has drastically adapted to the inclusion of digital communication platforms in the creation of fashion content. The growing influence of individual bloggers who typically begin as consumers but progress to become cultural intermediaries is a phenomenon recognised by fashion designers eager to tap into successful bloggers’ vast audience. This is especially pertinent in an aesthetic economy where the desirability of a product is largely driven by gatekeepers involved in the diffusion of trends. While the prominence of the superstar fashion blogger in the field of fashion stems from their global popularity, little research has been done to find out the conditions and practices necessary for such success to occur. In tandem with the growing profile of fashion bloggers is the cultural paradigm of metamodernism, which reflects tensions that describe the dynamic practice of successful fashion bloggers. Metamodernism is defined as a *structure of feeling* that encapsulates a dynamic oscillation between modern and postmodern sensibilities. This study identified the relevance of a Bourdieuan framework in establishing the pathways that facilitate entry into the field and the subsequent trajectories towards positions of dominance. Specifically, Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production was utilised, which involved a holistic examination of the field, forms of capital and the individual’s habitus. The field is regarded as a social arena of contestation represented by an objective hierarchy. The position that an individual occupies within the field depends on the forms and amounts of capital they possess, while their attitudes and inclinations towards making certain decisions may be viewed as a manifestation of their habitus. It is the individual’s habitus that provided a structure through which metamodern modes of expression were examined. Specifically, this study sought to not only find out if the notion of digital capital was an evident form of capital, but also provide a working definition for this concept based on its growing cultural relevance. While this research acknowledged a previous conception of digital capital in regard to online businesses, this research argued that digital capital contained complexities beyond the mercantile.
Drawing on the literature, two research statements guided this line of inquiry. The first research question pertained to the level and sequence of acquisition of each form of capital, and how certain types of capital – including digital capital – affected an individual's position within the field. The second research statement investigated if the metamodern modes of expression, performativity and the quirky, were necessary manifestations of the habitus that lead to the success of the fashion blogger online.

This research employed a mixed-method approach consisting of quantitative and qualitative elements that were later triangulated in the analysis phase of the study to ensure both depth and breadth of the data collected. Under examination were two international blogs, namely StyleBubble.co.uk and Bryanboy.com, as well as two Australian blogs GaryPepperGirl.com and Frockwriter.com. Specifically, a content analysis over a three-year period where all blog posts in a selected month for each year were coded for evidence of the forms of capital, as well as instances of performativity and quirky expression. In addition, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with industry insiders, namely: Patty Huntington of Frockwriter.com; digital publisher of the FELLT network of fashion blogs Daniel Kjellsson; fashion events and publicity coordinator Chelsea*; and women's fashion magazine writer Louis*. The data gathered was further contextualised using a secondary method of data collection, which was a direct observation of a fashion event geared towards consumers, the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival (MBFF) 2013. All methods employed in the research yielded rich data that contributed to a multi-layered understanding of the phenomenon of the superstar fashion blogger. While the bloggers who write these sampled blogs all demonstrated varied ways of entering and adapting their practice to the changes in the field, it appeared that there were commonalities among some bloggers that could be explained as being metamodern in nature.

10.1 Key Trajectories Based on the Forms of Capital

The forms of capital examined in this study were economic, cultural, social and symbolic. While these forms of capital are found to be operative in various fields of cultural production, Bourdieu (1993a) also posited that it was possible for each field of
cultural production to contain other forms of capital specific to it. Hence, the perception of digital influence as an important form of capital in the fashion industry was a focal point of this research. In synthesising the data gathered in this study, digital capital is defined as a form of embodied cultural capital that reflects influence accrued online through the use of performative expression, facilitated by hypertextual content to engage multiple audiences. The relevance of digital capital is evident in the series of acquisition of the various forms of capital, which showed that the bloggers under study followed two distinct trajectories within the field. Indeed, the fact all four bloggers had to undergo a process of legitimation involving a recognition of their competence and belonging in the field by pre-existing members was a key finding of this study. The first trajectory is demonstrated by Patty Huntington, who has been immersed in various forms of traditional media reportage through radio, television and print. It was evident that the recognition or symbolic capital she holds within the industry stems from her institutionalised cultural capital. Her movement through the different forms of media over twenty years shows that she has adapted to changes in communication technology, and that her adoption of digital publishing seemed to be a natural progression. However, the fact the she struggled to acquire media accreditation at Paris Fashion Week after becoming an online writer indicates that her entry into exclusive events is highly contingent on her existing professional relationships with mainstream fashion publications, and thus her institutionalised cultural capital. Further, while Huntington maintains a sustainable career by being a fashion journalist writing for traditional media platforms, this has presented a conflict of interest in the monetisation of her own platform as opportunities for endorsement jeopardised her journalistic credibility. It can thus be said that a combination of Huntington’s institutionalised cultural capital and social capital has facilitated her acquisition of symbolic and economic capital. While Huntington plays an authentic role as a fashion journalist, she does not possess the artifice reflective of the performativity of digital capital that allows for the commercialisation of her online presence. It is bloggers like Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne whose rise to dominance in the fashion industry demonstrates a second trajectory based on the possession of digital capital.
Susanna Lau acquired institutionalised cultural capital after she established a strong online presence, and was subsequently offered a job as commissioning editor for *DazedDigital.com* the online edition of a print magazine. From a self-professed fashion outsider, this move further cemented her position as an integrated member of the fashion industry and her dual role of blogger and editor afforded her access to key exclusive events, which signified social and symbolic capital. Although she left her job at *DazedDigital.com* and was a full-time blogger at the time of this study, she has maintained her following, and her level of prestige in the industry is evident in her continued involvement in collaborative projects with fashion designers. Similarly, Nicole Warne undertook internships in the styling departments of two fashion magazines. However, it was Warne’s personal style blog that captured the attention of a global audience, enthralled with the way she embodied the aesthetic she sought to sell. As a result, she was invited as the first fashion blogger in Australia to walk the runway at MBFWA. This pivotal moment legitimated her presence in the field. Her position in the field was further cemented in 2013 and 2014 when she was engaged to be the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Official Insider, tasked with conducting backstage interviews with designers and models for the digital live stream of the event. Warne’s possession of digital capital consequently led to the acquisition of high levels of social and symbolic capital. Finally, Bryan Yambo was the only fashion blogger who did not have any prior affiliation to the fashion industry when he caught the attention of fashion designers whose products he positively reviewed online. This led to an invitation to the front row of Dolce & Gabbana’s fashion show in 2009, which signified the start of his acquisition of symbolic capital. All three of these performative bloggers not only accrued symbolic capital through the presence and following they established online, but also managed to create lucrative careers from their acceptance in the field.

Through having a following online, all three bloggers have been engaged for collaborations and endorsements, and are frequently invited as esteemed guests at fashion events all over the world. The direct observation and content analysis found that bloggers have become the key cultural intermediaries in facilitating engagement in both industry and consumer events. Additionally, while digital capital may appear to
be a *disinterested* form of capital at first glance, it provides the capacity for the conversion of the fashion blogger’s online persona into economic capital. After all, Bourdieu (1993, p. 75) surmised that all forms of capital appearing disinterested of economic interests are merely misrecognised, and that the accumulation of any form(s) of capital guarantees economic profits in the long run. The willingness of a performative blogger to be in front of the camera to personally endorse a product highlights both authentic embodiment and promotional artifice driven by commercial interests. However, the fact that Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne have maintained a loyal following despite capitalising on economic opportunities shows that cultural capital and economic capital do not have to be viewed in opposition as the literature suggests. Instead, these three performative bloggers demonstrate that it is possible to negotiate such tensions encapsulated by a metamodern performativity, which this study has found to be integral to the acquisition of digital capital. Indeed, the possession of digital capital is highly significant in the digital age, where bloggers have become key intermediaries driving consumption at an international level.

### 10.2 Fashion Blogging as a Metamodern Practice

Metamodernism is situated historically *beyond*, epistemologically *with*, and ontologically *between* modernism and postmodernism. Therefore, instead of viewing metamodernism as a separate and anomalous paradigm, modernity should be viewed as a continuum from which metamodernism appears to be emerging. A deeper look at modes of expression that have emerged out of the metamodern paradigm finds that performativity is not the only manifestation of metamodern sensibilities in fashion blogging. Though it is expressed to a much lesser degree than performativity in blogging, quirky expression also plays a contributing role in the propagation of the bloggers’ unique voice. Owing to the highly nuanced nature of these modes of expression which occurs at the level of the individual’s decision-making toward their blogging practice, it was concluded that performativity and the quirky were manifestations of the individual’s habitus. The utilisation of this Bourdieuian concept of the habitus was useful in understanding bloggers’ inclinations towards expressing
themselves in a performative or quirky manner, and should be closely examined with the contextual knowledge gained from the mapping of trajectories through the acquisition of capital. Indeed, the compatibility of Bourdieuian ideas with metamodern fluidity was highly apparent throughout this research. In the same way that metamodernism encapsulates modern and postmodern modes of expression, Bourdieu’s synthesis of objective structures and individual inclinations highlights the notion of complementarity between seemingly opposing dichotomies. That is not to say that Bourdieu’s ideas are fundamentally metamodern. Instead, this study recognises the commonalities between metamodernism and Bourdieu’s framework of cultural production in that they both seek to find synergy between traditionally dichotomous concepts or sensibilities. While the concepts of field and capital address the social structures in the field, the notion of the habitus directed the content analysis and semi-structured interviews to elucidate indications of each blogger’s family environment, upbringing and educational pathways as insights into their inclinations and attitudes that have shaped their blogging practice.

Drawing on the metamodern New Romanticism outlined by Vermeulen and Van den Akker (2010), the elevation of daily life into the realm of the ethereal is a hallmark of the practice of fashion blogging, which is observable in the form of performativity. Performativity is inherently metamodern as it entails a constant oscillation between a modern authenticity and a postmodern artifice. Previous research has found that the notion of authenticity requires the conscious enactment of a role, suggesting a level of contrivance or artifice, in order for a persona to be perceived as authentic. However, just as authenticity should be considered in regard to artifice, the notion of artifice comes with its limits too. As proffered by Kjellson (i/v, 2013), any product that a blogger chooses to endorse must align with their lifestyle and aesthetic in order for the representation to translate authentically. That is, readers are able to discern dissonances between the blogger’s self-expression, and blatant promotion of a product that does not align with the blogger’s lifestyle, which could result in a loss of readership (Kjellsson, i/v, 2013). This further underscores the need to look at such oppositional concepts, such as authenticity and artifice, as encompassing dynamic and
complementary tensions. The prevalence of performativity on fashion blogs, where bloggers at once present their authentic aesthetic tastes while simultaneously perform an artificially idealistic lifestyle can be said to be reflective of a tension between two sensibilities that are usually viewed in opposition to each other. Essentially, the tension between genuine self-expression and exaggerated self-promotion was of key interest to this research. In alignment with the findings on digital capital, Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne were identified as performative bloggers. A key aspect of their practice includes international travel where they frequently utilise interesting new locales as backdrops for documenting the moments in which they embody a designer’s clothing or product. Indeed, that they enact luxurious and well-travelled lifestyles creates aspirational narratives for brands grounded in their personal day-to-day experience. Nicole Warne takes her performativity further by incorporating romance as a strong undercurrent in her content. The fact that her partner is a professional photographer who frequently travels with her, and whose proposal was documented on her blog, supports the notion that bloggers who reveal personal details about their lives tend to gain a larger following.

Further, a key characteristic of the habitus is its transposability, where a trait or inclination acquired through one activity may be transferred and applied to a different field. For Byran Yambao, his digital influence accrued in the Philippines set up the conditions for him to become a judge on an American television show, highlighting the transference of his performativity to a different broadcast medium. Similarly, while Susanna Lau typically functioned as a fashion critic on her blog, her affiliation with industry online publication The Business of Fashion, also saw her commenting on fashion on the website’s video content. Additionally, her trip to Russia documented in the 2015 content analysis saw her exercising her status as a fashion authority on panel discussions and talks. Therefore, given that performative bloggers are able to both attract a large audience through a perceived authenticity in their self-expression while capitalising on economic opportunities, it is concluded that performativity is integral to the habitus of the superstar fashion blogger.
On the contrary, this study found that quirky expression was not crucial to the success of the superstar fashion blogger. The quirky is regarded as metamodern as it encompasses the simultaneous expression of modern sincerity and postmodern irony. Of all the posts sampled, only Susanna Lau demonstrated a consistent expression of this quirky sensibility where irony was expressed as a means to sincere revelation. Essentially, statements that revealed a self-awareness of the individual’s position in the field expressed through an ironic utterance was deemed to reflect the quirky sensibility. For instance, the way Lau referred to herself as “an interloping bloody blogger”, reflects a self-deprecating awareness of how she might still be perceived by incumbents in the traditional fashion media. Another interesting finding of the study was the fact that Lau’s fellow performative bloggers, Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne, also intermittently exhibited such quirky expression. However, even though Patty Huntington expressed some instances of irony, those statements did not function as self-revelation, but tended to be instances of critique towards the fashion industry. Thus, bloggers who exhibited a metamodern performativity were also more likely to utilise irony as a mode of sincere expression, where the blogger engaged in a discourse of the self with both themselves and their audience, through truthful admissions. Moreover, earlier research on the use of irony has found that it can result in deep engagement between the ironist and the interpreter as it requires a meeting of minds for the recognition of irony to occur. While this study found that quirky expression was not crucial to the success of the superstar fashion blogger, it is nonetheless an appealing mode of expression that readers might find engaging.

While the metamodern concepts of performativity and the quirky were mainly discussed in the context of fashion blogging, it is important to note that these modes of expression also manifest in different ways in other forms of cultural production. For example, even though this study has found that performativity is central to the acquisition of digital capital, performativity can be said to exist outside of digital capital as well, and has been applied to education, literature and performance studies. Similarly, just as quirkiness was found to be a less common form of expression on the blogs under study, it should be noted that such a quirky sensibility could be present on
other genres of blogs. A review of the literature also saw the prominence of metamodern quirkiness in film, indicating that the quirky has assimilated into other forms of cultural production. Therefore, the crucial finding of this study is that metamodern tensions pervade the practice of fashion blogging and it is the right cultural paradigm through which the fluid practices of successful fashion bloggers are rationalised and explained.

10.3 Implications

The wider implication of this study points towards an industry in flux. The practice of fashion reportage has largely been confined to print media but the growing ubiquity of fashion consumption through e-commerce, as well as the migration of advertising to digital platforms has meant that new avenues to accruing influence has opened up in the digital space. More importantly, the growing integration of digital technology in daily life has signalled the need for cultural intermediaries in the digital sphere to facilitate brand engagement. This has allowed bloggers like Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and Nicole Warne to emerge, whose blogs are platforms for the performance of a lifestyle where they personally embody featured products and trends. Further, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are utilised for the dissemination of content and may be regarded as an extension of the persona presented on blogs. The lure of advertisers to the digital sphere has also provided an impetus for print publications to invest in the development of a strong online presence. However, as both Daniel Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) and Chelsea* (i/v, 2014) pointed out, magazines have yet to achieve the same level of engagement that appears personable and authentic achieved by individual bloggers. Therefore, while magazines present a collective persona, there is value in incorporating performativity in the fashion journalist’s practice. This study is not in any way forecasting that blogs will become the dominant medium in the dissemination of fashion news. Instead, this study served to highlight the fact that fashion journalism is undergoing a remediation where the print media are increasingly incorporating digital practices, while members of digital media like Susanna Lau are adopting institutional practices. As such, this
study affirms that the traditional demarcations and hierarchies in fashion content producing have been blurred. This research thus supports the notion that metamodernism has taken a foothold in fashion journalism, where dynamic tensions between modern and postmodern sensibilities permeate practice.

10.4 Recommendations

As a starting point, this study recommends that the same coding scheme be applied to a content analysis of a range of fashion magazines. The interview finding that bloggers offered readers a sense of authenticity unmatched by magazines, suggests that magazines tend towards a postmodern artifice. Hence, a comparative study on the differences in expression between magazines and their digital editions would further complement the findings of this study, to find out if metamodern modes of expression have also started to permeate these forms of fashion media. Interestingly, the interview with Louis* (i/v, 2014) found that magazines too exhibit a collective persona which requires all writers to consciously craft stories in a manner that is uniform with the desired tone of the publication. This contrivance for a cohesive publication identity is also driven by commercial interests. As Louis* (i/v, 2014) revealed, it was common practice for magazines to write favourably about certain brands in order to attract them as advertisers. This is especially pertinent to magazines as they depend on advertising revenue to stay in business. Pertinently, the definition of digital capital proposed by this study should also be applied to this examination of fashion magazines, in order to test the applicability of digital capital to other styles of content production.

Another potential area of research for the expansion of the ideas explored in this study could be the application of the same research in other genres of blogging, which have also seen bloggers rise in status to become key cultural intermediaries in their given fields of interest. For instance, Daniel Kjellsson (i/v, 2013) revealed that other niche areas that have been similarly lucrative for bloggers are food and technology. The application of a Bourdieuvian framework to map the career trajectories of bloggers in these respective fields based on the sequence of capital acquisition would also yield
findings that could be compared to this study. While the notion of performativity appears to be intrinsic to self-promotion in the digital sphere, it would be interesting to find out the specific ways in which performativity is enacted on food or technology blogs. This would provide insights into the importance of a habitus that tends towards performative expression across various cultural fields.

**10.5 Research Summary**

The prominence of fashion bloggers in the engagement of fashion consumers and producers alike reflect a new trajectory to dominance within the field of fashion expedited by digital communication, causing a disruption in traditional media hierarchies. Using a Bourdieuan framework, this study has thus identified two distinct pathways to positions of dominance within the field of fashion journalism. Notably, individuals like Patty Huntington, who have been immersed in the traditional hierarchies of fashion over a long period of time, represent the traditional trajectory to dominance where success is contingent on the accumulation of institutionalised cultural capital. This trajectory has resulted in the cultivation of a journalistic habitus that has seen Huntington adhere to strict journalistic ethics by forfeiting paid brand endorsements. On the other hand, this study has found that the influence of fashion bloggers can be represented by the notion of digital capital. In synthesising the data collected in this research, digital capital is defined as a form of embodied cultural capital that reflects influence accrued online through the use of performative expression, facilitated by hypertextual content to engage multiple audiences. The inclusion of performativity in this definition highlights the entrenchment of metamodernism in the cultural practice of fashion blogging, where modern authenticity and postmodern artifice are simultaneously negotiated by the superstar fashion blogger. That is, it is possible for an individual to mediate between the tensions of authentic self-expression and exaggerated self-promotion in the interest of economic compensation, without encountering a conflict of interest in the fluid ethical environment of the Internet. Indeed, the fact that Susanna Lau, Bryan Yambao and
Nicole Warne have maintained a loyal following despite capitalising on economic opportunities shows that cultural capital and economic capital do not have to be viewed in opposition as the literature suggests. In the digital sphere, it is clear that commercial pursuits carefully tempered with genuine interest and embodiment by a blogger does not deter readers from supporting a blog. Another metamodern sensibility known as the quirky was also explored in the practice of fashion blogging, where the prevalence of sincere revelation through ironic utterances on blogs was noted. While the presence of the quirky accentuated a blog’s uniqueness, such expression was not crucial to the success of the superstar fashion blogger. Overall, this study has found that performative expression on the Internet can lead to the acquisition of digital capital, which can subsequently lead to the acquisition of other operative forms of capital such as social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital. This study also confirms that fashion blogging should indeed be regarded as a metamodern practice. Ultimately, the definition of a digital capital that reflects metamodern sensibilities outlined in this thesis emphasises its increasing relevance in this digital age, and should be considered in the engagement of digital audiences.
Bibliography


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Appendices List

Appendix A: List of Sampled Blogs for Content Analysis

2013 Content Analysis

StyleBubble.co.uk


Lau S. (2013, December 11). This is Me... Bidding Farewell to N7. Style Bubble. Retrieved from http://www.stylebubble.co.uk/style_bubble/2013/12/this-is-me-bidding-farewell-to-n7.html


Bryanboy.com


http://www.bryanboy.com/bryanboy_le_superstar_fab/2013/12/fly-like-champion.html

**GaryPepperGirl.com**


**Frockwriter.com**


**2014 Content Analysis**

*StyleBubble.co.uk*


*Bryanboy.com*


*GaryPepperGirl.com*


Frockwriter.com


2015 Content Analysis

StyleBubble.co.uk


*Bryanboy.com*


**GaryPepperGirl.com**


**Frockwriter.com**

## Appendix B: Content Analysis Coding Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Details:</th>
<th>Term Definitions</th>
<th>Coding Column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Article date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Rater Initials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Article Title</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Article URL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Article Section/Tags (bloggers tags)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Number of articles posted on this day at this website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Brand(s) feature on ad banners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1. Nature of post:

1. **Advertorial** [Sponsored content]
   - Advertorials include posts with the Tag “sponsored content”, “advertorial” or other indications throughout that the product, event or the trip featured was sponsored as required by law in the UK and the US

2. **Personal Opinion/Anecdote**
   - Opinion piece on a social cause or their everyday life that is not related to fashion.

3. **Fashion News** [New fashion information]
   - Post contains information on new collections that are about to launch or have just launched. This may include posts of new collections taken for designer’s show rooms. Often this includes posts where the blogger is not physically present at the time the images was taken and images may have been provided by a PR company or another fashion publication that the blogger is affiliated with. This may also include news pertaining to other personalities in the fashion world, including fashion editors or celebrities. Note that this category excludes posts derived from events that the blogger attends in person.

4. **Feature**
   - This includes exclusive interviews between bloggers and the individual featured in the post. This also includes posts where the blogger did not conduct the interview, but demonstrates that some research was undertaken to provide an in-depth commentary.

X
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 = Event coverage</th>
<th>This includes coverage or live-blogging from a Fashion Week, fashion show or product launch. This should include first-hand critique of the clothing or products and should include photographs taken by the blogger or of the blogger that the event.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 = Outfit showcase</td>
<td>This includes outfits of the day and includes images featuring the blogger as the focal point posing in their outfit of the day, or receiving a style service (i.e., hairdo, or manicure). Often this includes information on the brands of the items worn, as well as hyperlinks to where these might be purchased. It is assumed that the outfit of the day has been gifted to the blogger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 = Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. Is there content included that features things other than

| 0 = No | |
| 1 = Yes - Travel/Interesting locations | - Involves the blogger revealing their location and featuring landmarks or attractions of the locale, in the text and/or images. |
| 2 = Yes - Design/Art/Illustration | - Includes mentions or images that feature artworks or artists that do not directly pertain to fashion. This may include art exhibitions, sculptures, installations, street graffiti, or museum events. |
| 3 = Yes - Music | - This may include mentions or features pertaining to music festivals, concerts, or musicians. |
| 4 = Yes - Food | Includes mentions or images of chefs, food, restaurants, cafes, or other dining venues. |
| 5 = Yes - Other (please specify) | |

### 3. Is there mention of other key players in the industry in

| 0 = No | |
| 1 = Yes - Designers/Fashion labels | - This includes fashion designers or key people representing fashion labels (e.g., CEO of Burberry) |
| 2 = Yes - Models | - Refers to fashion models |
| 3 = Yes - Photographers | - Refers to professional photographer. |
| 4+ Yes - Other bloggers | Yes, the blog post mentions or features |
| 5 = Yes - Publicists/PR people | - Refers to PR and marketing companies as an entity or the individuals working in them |
| 6 = Yes - Magazine editors/journalists | - Refers to editors and journalists working with traditional media including print, television, and radio |
| 7 = Yes - Other (please specify) | |
4. If yes in 3., how are these key players portrayed?

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1= Positively</td>
<td>- Refers individuals or organisations being described or mentioned favourably. This may include thanks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = Neutral</td>
<td>- Refers to individuals or organisations being mentioned but in a perfunctory manner without positive or negative nuances.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = Negatively</td>
<td>- Refers to individuals or organisations who are described in a negative way or portrayed in unfavourable light. This may include complaints.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key words or phrases that reflect positivity, neutrality and/or negativity:

5. Is there mention of non-industry persons?

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 = No</td>
<td>- The instance where all people featured or mentioned in the post are part of the fashion industry. This includes designers, editors, journalists, stylists, photographers, models, buyers, and PR.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1= Yes - Romantic partner</td>
<td>- This refers to any mention of the blogger's boyfriend/girlfriend or spouse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2= Yes - Family</td>
<td>- Refers to any mention of people that the blogger is related to.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3= Yes - Friend(s)/ Social group</td>
<td>- Refers to social gatherings that do not involve any fashion events, or people involved in the fashion industry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = Yes - Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Are there other people attributed to in the creation of

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 = No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = Yes - Photographer</td>
<td>Refers to the person who took the image featured, who is not the blogger. This may be when the blogger is in front of the camera and has asked someone to take the image of her. This may also be when the blogger features images that were sent to her and she attributes them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = Yes - Make-up artist</td>
<td>Refers to the individual who made-up the person(s) featured in the post. Any mention of a make-up artist, amateur or otherwise, also falls into this category.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = Yes - Hair Stylist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 = Yes - Fashion Stylist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = Yes - Model</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 = Yes - Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 7. Hyperlinks in the text of the article:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>There are no hyperlinks in the text of this blog. Stable links to images and videos do not count as hyperlinks and will be classified under this category if there are no other links in the post.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes - Links to other blogs</td>
<td>This includes all types of blogs that are in and out of the fashion industry. A blog may be any platform that includes a unique domain that is fronted by an individual. This may include blogs with up to a maximum of 3 writers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes - Links to previous posts within the same blog</td>
<td>This refers to text hyperlinks to other posts within the same blog that is being coded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes - Links to mainstream news site non-fashion</td>
<td>Refers to links to non-fashion mainstream news sites such as Reuters, the New York Times, CNN, BBC etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes - Links to mainstream fashion media websites</td>
<td>This refers to digital platforms of magazines, or websites that present themselves as magazines and have an editor or editors, with various contributors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes - Links to designer’s websites</td>
<td>This refers to the official websites of fashion designers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes - Links to online e-retail sites for purchases</td>
<td>This refers to links that lead to the point of purchase of the product featured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes - Other (please specify)</td>
<td>- Refers to social media platform(s) that this particular post was disseminated on by the blogger, if at all. This requires concurrent monitoring of the platforms listed below or the ones that the blogger link to on their blogs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8. Was the post shared on other social media sites?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes - Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes - Instagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes - Twitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes - Youtube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes - Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further notes (if any):</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 9. Is there a correlation between advertisers and the designer featured in the post?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further details:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 10. Apart from text are there other types of communication featured in the post?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 = No</th>
<th>1 = Yes - Images</th>
<th>2 = Yes - Videos</th>
<th>3 = Yes - Graphics</th>
<th>4 = Yes - Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Further description of images and/or videos:**
E.g. Videos may be instructional or conversational, and images may feature styling choices or event coverage. Images may be ‘outfit of the day’ features. Also, whether or not the images or videos feature the author should be considered.

### 11. a. Is the author physically present at the event or location covered in the post, either behind or in front of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 = No, the images were taken from a secondary source</th>
<th>1 = Yes, the blogger is posing in front of the camera</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = Yes, the blogger is behind the camera</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**b. If no, where was the image from? [Artifice]**

| 1 = Designer’s catalogue | 2 = Magazine’s online gallery | 3 = Other |

### 13. Is there evidence of interaction with readers on the blog?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 = No</th>
<th>1 = Yes - Giveaways</th>
<th>2 = Yes - Responding to readers in the comments section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 = Yes - Call to attend events attended by the blogger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 = Yes - Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Did the blogger respond to comments at the bottom of the post.**
### 14. Are there any indicators of irony present in the post?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 = No</th>
<th>1 = Yes - hyperbole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Refers to language used to exaggerate or overstate reality (e.g. &quot;They first released these boots (for women) centuries ago but when I saw them on the men’s section for the first time during New York Fashion Week, I knew I had to get them.&quot;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 = Yes - Understatement</th>
<th>3 = Yes - Rhetorical question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Refers to language used to understate reality (e.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Refers to questions that do not need a response (e.g. &quot;Fashion isn’t the centre of our universe?&quot;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 = Yes - Sarcasm</th>
<th>5 = Yes - Jocularity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Refers to the use of language to convey intent that is directly counterfactual to what is being described or remarked upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Refers to the use of language to convey meaning that is different, but not counterfactual, from what was said. (e.g. &quot;I’m so gay, I poop glitter.&quot;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If yes, please provide key phrases that reflect the type of irony expressed.

### 15. Does the tone of the post demonstrate the style of New Sincerity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 = Yes</th>
<th>2 = No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the author demonstrate a self-awareness through irony?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Refers to the Rombes notion of evoking a sincere emotional response while at the same time creating the possibility for the audience to see through the very mechanisms that elicit response

e.g. "Hi I drew you! Please blog about me!" unfortunately peppers quite a few emails in my inbox. Poor them. They absolutely took no joy in knocking out their illustration of me because their sole purpose was to flatter my shallow vanity, stroke my ego and thus get a blog post about their work out of me.)

### 16. Further notes:
Appendix C: Example of an Interview Transcript

Interview with Daniel Kjellsson of Sydney Stockholm.

[Notes] We meet, say hello and he launches into how Sydney Stockholm started right away without me asking the first question. He talked about how he worked in fashion journalism, (Fashion editor at GQ and Elle in Sweden), but then they saw the rise of bloggers in Scandinavia and decided to move to Australia as it was an untapped market.

DK: The fashion blogging phenomenon in Scandinavia is at least 6 years old, so that’s about 7 years ago I was working... it’s basically the Swedish equivalent of Fairfax. So the big family-owned company, very sort of, traditional, conservative, not very interested in change. And I saw from the inside of such a company, how hurt we were by bloggers in general, and fashion bloggers specifically. Because the kind of personalised journalism that the fashion bloggers were creating appealed to a lot of people obviously, cos there was a personal touch to it, it was more like a friend showing me sweater rather than some anonymous fashion magazine. And so they stole, or not stole, but they took a lot of advertisers and audiences from official magazines. When I saw that happen in Scandinavia so many years ago, I pretty quickly realised that this is not just something going around, it is something that will actually change. So that’s why I’m here.

DM: So Australia was an untapped market?

DK: Well, yeah. Australia was an untapped market. It had the English language. Being Swede, we learn English from like, the age of 6 so... pretty alright with that. But most... it was extraordinary to us because in Australia, from an outsider’s perspective, we’re were working with the big international advertisers like Mercedes or Audi or Nike or whatever, that would go digital in any market a couple of years ago, [but] they would still go traditional in Australia. And when we saw that, we were like, what is happening down there? Why is no one doing anything? And I still don’t exactly know why Australia was so many years behind. We’re catching up fast now but a couple of years ago, it was really traditional still here. I suspect that the big media families here had no interest in changing the media industry. That’s why it didn’t happen. Because even if Nike, for example, would like to go digital, obviously there’s Facebook, you could go, but apart from that, the media wasn’t really, I mean, when they approached traditional media, I can just assume that those guys wanted advertisers to go in print, on TV or on radio, on all the traditional channels and I guess that’s why it took a little... it took some more time.
DM: Yeah, even with magazines. You can see they took a while to get a web presence.

DK: Well, they still haven’t got it. They were rubbish 5 years ago and pretty much is still rubbish. And I mean, even if some part of it’s good, they’ve got no chance of... the revenue coming from online, I’m guessing but I would say that it can’t even support 10 percent of the organisation they’ve got so, it’s going to be pretty nasty around here.

DM: So is there much competition between bloggers and magazines?

DK: No, not really.

DM: Yeah, because they seem to be really well-accepted into the fashion industry.

DK: Yeah, I mean many years ago, I remember like 6 or 7 years ago, when we, that was in Scandinavia or Copenhagen actually and Denmark, that was basically the first time a fashion blogger was seated front row next to a fashion editor. And then it was like ‘Ahh, the traditional editors did not want the fashion bloggers front row blah blah blah’, but now it’s very much standard. And a lot of the editors are bloggers as well, and a lot of the bloggers are on the covers of the magazines, it’s very much the same industry now, yeah.

DM: And you mentioned on your blog that you can’t really relate to a magazine but you can relate to a blogger. Can you tell me more about that?

DK: It’s not like this. My company Sydney Stockholm is a digital publisher founded completely on the belief that people will never again consume media from a brand perspective. Saying that, I don’t trust CNN because it’s CNN, I don’t care about... CNN says nothing to me, but Anderson Cooper may be someone I can relate to and like, and that’s why I will consume his show. Or Piers Morgan, or whoever’s the personality that I can relate to. I can’t relate to Vogue. Vogue means nothing, I can’t have a beer with Vogue, but I’d love to have a drink with Anna Wintour. Or a columnist or a photographer; someone that I can relate to as a person, not as a media brand. That’s what I mean, it doesn’t have to be a blogger per se, they’re often considered bloggers now, but it’s more personalities. Could be Youtube stars, could be whatever. But it’s a person communicating to a lot of other people, rather than an anonymous media brand communicating as an entity basically. That’s dead.

DM: Okay so, usually magazine editors work their way up a hierarchy, they may start from journalist and then senior editor, but bloggers are ending up in the front row often without that formal knowledge and media training. How important do you think that is for...?
DK: Not at all. That’s basically thinking about the industry... That’s thinking about the old industry. It doesn’t... it is irrelevant cos it’s not I mean, you know...

DM: So the old structures are not relevant?

DK: It’s just, I mean... They’re a structure created for another reality. It’s like when I visit a lot of journalism schools today, immediately within 10 minutes in a classroom today, I realise that ‘hold on a second, you guys are teaching these individuals to act within a media industry that just no longer exists’. And that’s a pretty fucked up problem, do you know what I mean? Because these students will graduate and they will face something that they know nothing about. And that’s the same like... well not... they haven’t worked their way up. Kirstie Clements is a senior advisor to my company, and she was 25 years at Vogue. Like working from the reception to the editor... but that’s an old... I did that as well. But that’s irrelevant, I mean now if you can relate to a lot of people; if you can get a lot of people’s attention, who cares where you came from or where you’re going, but for them, that moment you’re influential. So no. But then, I mean there’s bits and pieces, obviously you need to have respect, you need to treat other people good, I mean that’s just human nature. I mean if you’re a bad person, you’ll be a bad person in whatever environment you’re in. Obviously there’s rule to this game, but it’s got nothing to do with what you’ve done before, so no.

DM: There are so many fashion bloggers out there. What do you think makes a fashion blogger better than another? Like what makes them...

DK: It’s really, you know, a lot of people look at the fashion industry as something as ‘Oh, I’d Love to do that, hang around, eat strawberries and go to fashion shows’, but it is extremely hard work. I mean, they’re basically working 24/7, waking up in the middle of the night Instagramming to get an Instagram for the US audience. It’s around the clock and it’s really a lot but you can’t ever... it’s hard, hard, hard work. And then there’s... there’s the fundamentals you can learn and then there’s something that’s harder in terms of do you have the eye for a good photo? Like for example, can you see a good image? In some ways you can learn that as well, but if you’re a good photographer, it makes the blog a nicer thing to consume. If there is beautiful imagery, and anyone taking I mean... if you can’t go anywhere without taking beautiful imagery, it sort of sets the tone of your life, and that’s pretty much like, you know... you have to deal with that as well. You have to document everything you do all the time, every day. To me that’s extremely... I’ve got tremendous respect for the big fashion bloggers cos they work their arses off and they completely tune their lives to fit in to the blog. It’s not just a blogger happen to documenting their life. It’s like I’ve been to restaurants with bloggers saying “I would love that thing on the menu, but I can’t cos this would
look better on Instagram”. I mean, it’s ridiculous and I laugh about it but it says something about how the bloggers try to live for the blog.

DM: So would you say it’s like a performance of a lifestyle?

DK: Yeah, basically, I mean it sounds horrendous, but yeah, somewhat. And then there’s the... if we talk about fashion blogging, I mean obviously if you’re a tech blogger you have other abilities like you can see software blah blah blah, you’ve got those abilities. If you’re a fashion blogger, I’m not gonna lie, it will help if there’s, I mean there’s certain clothing or certain brands that makes pieces for certain bodies. So if you’ve got like this big... if H&M were like to just do one silhouette and you’re sort of either born into that silhouette or you work out to be in that silhouette, cos I know that’s the harsh, harsh, harsh, shallow, ridiculous reality but that’s the way it is. If you’re portrayed on your blog looking very good in a certain designer, obviously that designer would be more intrigued to be visible on your blog because you make his or her clothing look better. It basically like to have dolls in the store windows, it needs to look good because it’s what attracts people to go in and buy. And fashion blogging in some sense is like that as well. There’s certain kind of, you know, I mean there’s brands for any kind of individual, like men, women blah blah blah... and some guys look like shit in red, so if there’s a designer doing only red pieces, they’re not gonna collaborate very well, you know what I mean. It’s certain you know, I mean it’s sort of your aesthetic and personal style as well. I mean, there’s like the skater brands, that wouldn’t ever work with some of our high fashion bloggers, you know. It’s sort of aligning your style and finding the brands you relate to, and the pieces and style that you like to wear. Because I think that’s really hard to... to try to wear everything is impossible. And I think it is also very dangerous to try to align your personal preference to the industry -- it needs to be the other way around. I said at a talk I had a couple of months ago, I’ve never met a successful fashion blogger that set out to be just that... it needs to be... I mean you can be a bit cynical and create great stuff and blah blah blah, but for example if you’re a skater girl and you love to skate or surf, if you’re like from now on I’m gonna be a high fashion blogger and only wear only stilettos and dresses, I mean, considering it’s hard work every day for years and years and years, I don’t think it’s gonna go, you know, you need to be closer to yourself, cos otherwise you’re never going to endure those years and all that hard work.

DM: So the notion of authenticity is important?

DK: I think so yeah, I think you can fake a lot these days with like Instagram photos looking beautiful everywhere. But I think if you follow a blog, you can immediately tell. And that goes for if this blogpost is paid for by someone, or it is actually content as well. You can basically always tell.
DM: Are bloggers required to disclose? Because they are in the US and the UK.

DK: Legally in Australia, no. But that’s just something, like, international law is as always slow, so it’s just a matter of time though. We always, when we do campaigns on FELLT, or on SERVVED the food network we have, we always uhm... we have an ad space and we have the editorial space, but for us it’s really all the same because we use the ad space to push content and we use editorial space to write about our advertisers like advertorials. So when you’ve got that kind of blurry line, the transparency is even more important. So we always say, and it’s really not, like if you look at again, at the new world with traditional eyes, it’s like ‘how the hell are those guys gonna pull that off’. When it’s really the easiest thing in the world. It’s like ‘Hey, here’s a blog post. We just scored an awesome deal with Nokia, we’re gonna try this at fashion week and do this awesome thing with this cool new phone. If you want, tag along. If you don’t, don’t visit the blog for a while’. [Laughs] It’s very easy to be open.

DM: Was it difficult to get the industry interested in the FELLT bloggers or were they already... did they already have a profile?

DK: No, I mean. We pitch them daily to advertisers and to partners, but it’s not hard, no. I mean it’s not down to the fact that it’s bloggers, it’s not down to the fact that it’s digital, even. It’s about attention. Like if we were a travelling circus with 5 million visitors each week, we’d have a pretty good time too, so it’s really just about the attention, we’ve got people’s eyeballs looking at us and that makes us interesting.

DM: Yeah, the numbers.

DK: Or the reach, yeah. That’s what commercialism is about; the fact that you are something beautiful, funny, good-looking (basically the same thing as beautiful) [laughs] and knowledgeable. Whatever ability you’ve got, great writer, whatever, that attracts people. That attraction is what makes it commercially viable.

DM: So do you think the style and tone of writing is important as well? Like in addition to...

DK: Definitely, yeah. I mean photos are really important as well, obviously. But definitely, I mean, if I see an amazing photo-blog, and the people can’t write, I may be a nerd, but I’m a bit turned off about that because you know, we all use, I have a couple of hours a day where I consume media and I want the best possible experience. So I think it’s definitely a balance, yeah. And apart from the fact that the text needs, in my mind, needs to be accurate and stuff like that. I mean, again, I’m not a native
English speaker, and I hate that sometimes cos I say the most horrendous things sometimes, I mean in terms of grammar, I just completely screw up sometimes, but I don’t pretend to be a native speaker either so that’s pretty okay. But if I would be a writer on an official blog about grammar, then I better shape up. But I think the most important thing about text is actually cos that’s… obviously you can communicate a lot with your… again if it’s fashion, with what you’re wearing, how you’re wearing, how’s your photos you’re in, in what environment, what brands et cetera, and if you’re doing something else, it’s something else. But it’s through the text you can really have your personality coming through. Like if you’ve read my blog, I think that’s, I mean it’s a boring blog about boring topics, cos it’s media nerd read, but I don’t mind swearing and I don’t mind saying weird stuff cos that’s who I am. And I think that is extremely important. And if I read, like when I read Margaret Zhang’s blog, for example, I think she’s perfect. I mean, if you read that, you do know her. You don’t think that’s how she is. And that’s what I really like is she allows her personality to flow through the lines of the text.

DM: So how important is it for bloggers to interact with their readers? Because through reading her blog, people feel like they know her.

DK: it’s a really tough one, I mean, again when we were debating this 5 years ago, it was very much about interaction and replying to every comment, and commenting on other bloggers’ blogs and all that kind of stuff. Today I’d say it’s less important, to be honest, if you’re a new blog, you can win some attention obviously because if people see your comment and your URL, they can find you there, but it’s really… if you look at any fashion blog in the country and look through the comments, it’s basically like, “That’s so nice!” and then their own URL. So it’s only marketing.

DM: They’re promoting themselves.

DK: Exactly, so it’s really useless. For my personal blog, I turned off comments two years ago because I don’t think it adds any value. But that’s cos I want to, I mean, it’s my platform. I don’t owe anyone to have any comments. It’s my platform, I decide, and if anyone wants to talk to me, I’m on Twitter. So just chat to me there if you want to, you know what I mean? So I don’t, I mean, you can say social media, it’s social blah blah blah, at least it’s less important than a couple of years ago. It definitely is, I mean if you compare, content quality, you know… if you have awesome content, you can do whatever you like, but it’s still ahh… I wouldn’t say it’s not cos obviously a lot of popular blogs have like, basically social feeds coming and interacting in the comments and the blogger is in there having a conversation and that’s amazing if you can build sort of a social hangout kind of thing within your comment section, but from my personal perspective, I don’t think it’s very valuable.
DM: Plus it would be time-consuming to read all that?

DK: Extremely, yeah yeah. Put that time into another piece of content. Again, that’s personal opinion. And I think as well, it’s very much down to what’s your particular blog. Like I know a lot of family blogs, mummy bloggers are like that. For them it is extremely important that there is a social gathering kind of feeling in the blog that the people they hang out, they chat about recipes whatever and whatnot. But for a fashion blogger again when it’s only ‘oh that’s such a nice dress’, dot and a link, it’s not very valuable.

DM: But how important is a presence on social media like on Twitter, Instagram Facebook.

DK: Very important. Extremely important. That’s half of the… if you look at Nicole Warne, half of her readership is not on her blog, it’s on the social platforms like Instagram. So that’s yeah. There’s a lot of Internet influencers today that doesn’t even have a blog. They’re just big on Instagram, or on Twitter, whatever, that’s their platform. So it’s extremely important I think. But with that said, cos we have this discussion a lot, like how do you distribute your time between like Instagram, some social network or your blog, I say if it were my career, I would never let go of the mothership, so to speak, because we’ve all seen social platforms coming and going, and that will happen in the future as well. Facebook will disappear one day and be replaced by something else, and Instagram as well. So I will always try to build my mothership so I can… like a unique domain and a unique blog that I own myself. And then definitely branch out to social networks and so forth. It’s be a mistake, I believe, to let the mothership go.

DM: That’s a very good point. What about networks with other bloggers. Because I see FELLT is a network of 5 of the top bloggers in Australia, How important is that network?

DK: For us or for anyone else? How do you mean?

DM: For the blogger, like even to have their network extend outside of FELLT, to be friends with other bloggers. How important is that?

DK: The personal network, I think is important. It makes you stronger. Again, relating to the history of fashion blogging, 6 or 7 years ago when we were a part of the birth of this phenomenon, the big Scandinavian bloggers there was basically a bunch of friends. And they grew big because they always linked around to each other and they all gained
from that. And that was extremely powerful as well. I think it is important in some way. Again, if I was a young blogger now, I won’t like go out and try to find friends, because again that’s starting at the wrong end. But definitely, get to know people in the industry. If you were a blog about frogs, I sure there are some interesting organisations you could use, and can need to be a part of. Not only cos of metrics but of knowledge, of you know getting news fast whatever, if it’s you know, I think so yeah. There’s a lot of examples of bloggers never going out as well, just sitting at home writing. That could be a success if you want to do that. But I would, again if I look at myself as a writer, I always get my best sort of input when I can to other people about something. Cos that sort of opens your mind a little, and all that kind of stuff. So I think it’s definitely... if you can choose, make it a social activity absolutely.

DM: Great, so that would include PR people and editors?

DK: Definitely, why not? Again, that’s opportunities I guess.

DM: What about advertising? Do you think there is a right balance between content and advertising on blogs?

DK: Currently, I would say definitely. I mean if you look at our blogs, that is still related we chose... cos traditionally, if you look at the traditional website, a couple of years ago, it’s like you visited this editorial website, and there was like blinking banners everywhere and we never liked that so we’d rather chose to have one massive ad space, and that is the only one we offer, so once you’ve scrolled down from that ad space, everything is editorial and you don’t ever see an ad again, and that was... we thought that was the balance cos then with the big ad space, we could offer brands to create really beautiful advertising as well, like a spread in Vogue or whatever, like a big beautiful campaign and at the same time, I think we won in 3 areas. We offer the brands to create beautiful advertising that readership can actually... like a big Gucci ad can be beautiful and it can be appreciated, we offer the readership to know that there’s only one ad, so yes it’s big, but if you do one scroll it’s gone and there’s no more ads on the page. Everything is editorial. That’s pretty cool.

DM: So there’s no other ad competing for attention as well.

DK: Yeah, exactly. Nothing, nothing at all. Exactly, the commercial environment is more lucrative to that person, because as you say, they do not have to compete... about the attention. So it’s pretty... yeah, we’re pretty satisfied with that. In general, I don’t think advertising is a problem on blogs. I think affiliate ad linking is worse. Like I don’t know if you know about Reward Style and all that. If you’re a reader and you click on a link on a blog, I think you deserve to know if that’s a paid link or not. And I don’t think
that’s very well executed today. Again, if you talk about legislation and similar, I think that’s another thing that’s gonna happen fairly soon in terms of, you know, publishers online, there’s a need to disclose that if I click a blog, click this link, have you been paid to link that or not? That bigger, cos advertising... one thing I don’t like about advertising is that if you visit a blog, at least you know, okay that’s an ad and this is not, and again that’s what... clarity and transparency. That’s a battle, yeah we have a big ass ad, but at least you know what’s paid for or not. I’ve got a bigger problem when you don’t know.

DM: Yeah, like when it’s in the text and it’s a hyperlink looks like it’s...

DK: Yeah, and you never know what’s like... does she really like this bag or is it just, you know... that’s when I think the editorial environment loses value as well.

DM: Does it cost a lot to sustain a blog that people...

DK: No, nothing. No you can do it completely for free. Doesn’t cost anything. That’s the big disruption in the business cos all of a sudden we have like Fairfax with hundreds of millions in overheads, but you can start a blog completely free in two seconds. And reach a bigger audience. That’s why the traditional media model isn’t sustainable, cos they’ve got too much cost.

DM: Back to the bloggers. How do they decide their appearances. Is it Sydney Stockholm that tells them...

DK: Do you mean like blog design or their own personal appearance?

DM: Like when then go to an event. Do they choose to go that event or like an advertiser...

DK: Oh no, everything that happens, again with the ad space and the editorial environment, all the blogs connected to Sydney Stockholm, both and fashion at the moment, are completely independent publishers. I have no say whatsoever, about what goes on in the editorial space. I can’t ever tell someone to write something or do anything, I mean, even if I were to try, they would tell me to bugger off. No, no, that’s been extremely important to us. They’re completely independent. I can’t ever say anything on what that should do or think or anything like that, no. I think that’s another thing, like if we ever tried to do that, we’re not interested in that, but even if we were, if we again... I think that kind of attitude would flow through in the content. I think the readership would lose interest in the long run anyway. It needs to be
authentic, it needs to be... if someone hates something, loves something or don’t care about something, that’s needs to flow through authentically.

DM: Yeah, cos one of the criticisms of blogs is that they only ever write positive things, for fashion blogs, so I guess the fact that their attending the event, it means that they’re interested in the...

DK: Oh absolutely. With that said, we can definitely have campaigns where we’re like, trying to make fun or something for real life, but I mean I can’t think of anything now but... we can definitely have a big ad campaign. And in that ad campaign, we have like... the deal is we have advertising for two months, and we create an event for you. We have like a jewellery night in some night club and we meet the readers and blah blah blah. And in that sense the ad deal could be an ad and an event, definitely. That has happened. Not that example, but that kind of advertising package is definitely happening. But with that said, we don’t like... if you see some blogger at some event, that’s not because someone told her to go. [Laughs]

DM: Do you think blogging can have the same impact on other industries? I mean, you already have SERVVED.

DK: Yeah, it’s already happening.

DM: Like across the board?

DK: Definitely. There’s not a single industry that won’t be affected.

DM: Is there any industry that hasn’t caught on yet?

DK: Most... I mean, food is coming now. Travel is very big already. Tech is extremely big. Yeah well, I don’t know. I think like, if anyone’s got an... ‘obsession’ is a tough word... like a strong interest in something, I’m sure him or her could easily find a big blog on that topic.

DM: Are there any disadvantages that you can think of for being a blogger?

DK: Well, it’s a lot of hard, tough work. It can still be the fact that you’ll meet, I wouldn’t say disrespect but I mean if traditional journalists would value a reporter or a blogger, they would still think less of the blogger. In general, I think its... it feels like we’re taking about the Stone Age but it actually still can happen. But I don’t think it’s like... cos if you had a blog... cos people will always like if you introduced yourself like “hi, I’m from thisblog.com”, people will always visit that, and if that looks professional
and if you are a professional, you’ll get respect yourself. But I know it’s hard work for no pay, I mean, for the vast mass, yeah.

DM: How long do you think it takes for...

DK: There’s no timeline. There’s been blogs that’ve been big after a couple of weeks, and there’s blogs that’s been around for 20 years and still have no audience. [Laughs]. So it’s, again down to the content. Completely.

DM: Completely down to the content. Content is king?

DK: Mmm.

DM: And where do you think it’s headed, digital publishing. Do you think it’s peaked? Have we seen what it can do or you think it can do more?

DK: No, there’s so much more. It’s still very early on. I mean something we’ve got to remember is the personalised bloggers you miss is definitely there where it’s heading, but what we gotta remember is I often make fun of the traditional publishers like Fairfax as the news, and so forth. But we gotta remember is that when those buildings collapse, and not in a physical sense, but when the structure collapse, there’s a lot of extremely talented people heading this way. Cos yes, the organisations they work within, currently work within, are old and not every sustainable in a digital economy. But they are extremely talented. Again, when Anderson Cooper moves from CNN to YouTube, that’s an extremely talented guy, going to a new platform. So if you’re a big fashion blogger today, your competition isn’t primarily the other girl around the corner doing another fashion blog, but maybe the current editor of Vogue. Cos she will be a fashion blogger soon.

DM: Yeah, cos I saw Patty Huntington just joined FELLT and she is a really well-respected fashion journalist.

DK: Exactly. Yeah, exactly so you are competing with, I mean, who you today consider blogger, will in a couple of years be considered traditional media.

DM: That’s a good point. And that would scare a lot of people.

DK: Yeah, exactly.

DM: What about legitimacy? Do you think bloggers go through a process of legitimacy in the industry?
DK: Definitely. Definitely.

DM: Like from the other people in the industry.

DK: Absolutely, I mean, just to introduce yourself as a blogger doesn’t say anything. It’s like saying ‘I have a Facebook account’. I’m like, alright, that’s great for you. But again, as in any industry, when in any times, you always need to prove yourself. I mean so if you’ve written 10 amazing blog posts, that makes you legit I think. But obviously, yeah, you need to prove yourself. It’s like when I meet people, sort of presenting themselves with an idea, like ‘hey, I’ve been thinking about staring a blog’, I’ll be like ‘yeah, well, that doesn’t mean anything’. I’ve been thinking about starting an airline, doesn’t make me Richard Branson. Again, it’s down to what you actually do.

DM: So who do you think in the industry is important to get that validation from, if you’re a blogger?

DK: There is no validation apart from your own platform. That’s the validation. There’s no one that’s going to stamp you and say ‘no, you’re okay’. It’s nothing like that. It’s like, when you create your own platform that’s like, again, the mothership.

DM: So it has a lot to do with the individual. Like the designers and all that.

DK: Everything… like there’s… it’s not that much of the blog design. Again if you visit Homepage X, and that looks like crap, it’s crap content, you’re not going to respect anyone working there. And if you visit something that looks great, I’m not just talking about looks great in terms of awesome design. More like, looks legit, looks serious, yeah, attractive in anyway, you’re going to respect those. I mean, that’s exactly what’s happening. And then if you’re out in the field, if you’re doing a review of a fashion show or if, you’re reviewing a gadget or whatever sort of thing you cover on your blog, if you do that in a professional sense, if you’re good, you will immediately get respect.

DM: How much influence does PR companies have, because you know, all the pages in the magazines, they’re all from press releases.

DK: [Sighs] I don’t consider PR to be very influential. They’re everywhere. They’re like pest. And because it’s everywhere, it’s like you know, there’s more PR in this… than inhabitants… in some cities I feel. So obviously they are everywhere and they get bits and pieces here and there. But they don’t create influence. They try to tap into it. But they rarely create it. I mean if we took [muffled word] up here, in general yes obviously
there’s like lobbyists in politics and blah blah blah, and you can debate whether... how influential that is, but I mean in terms of like blogging, and on a level like this, it’s like yes, someone can stick a bag to someone and get a bit more attention for that bag, but it’s really on a low level.

DM: It still very much depends on the blogger’s own taste and whether or not they...

DK: Yeah, of course. And I mean it’s really, it’s an ecosystem as well. I mean, if you have a decent sized blog, you can go around having free lunch with PRs daily, and get new clothing daily. But the fact that you only post things that you’re given will make your content less attractive and you lose your readership, and you won’t be able to go back to the free lunches. I mean that’s really... if you don’t have the integrity, you’re really going to lose anyway. So it’s again, that’s why I don’t get that excited at all or angry, when people screw up for being dishonest on bloga, cos it sort of a natural selection. If you’re not honest to people, they will find out some way and they won’t visit your blog. That’s an awesome thing with digital publishing, it’s like, people make a daily choice to consume you. With that said, they can also make the choice to stop.

DM: Yeah, because the audience is smarter than...

DK: Yeah, yeah, very much. It’s extremely smart. That’s why I’d rather say “hey, now we’re doing this campaign that was paid for, if you want get to it”, I mean, we try to make it interesting.

DM: Yeah I think that’s all the questions I have for today.

DK: Cool.

DM: I just need to get you to sign this.

DK: Yup.
Appendix D: List of Ironic Statements

2013 Content Analysis – Ironic Statements

StyleBubble.co.uk

November 21: Hyperbole - "I've been packing like a mad woman but the apartment still looks like I haven't made an actual dent into the mounds of stuff I've accumulated over the past five years."

November 22: Rhetorical question/ Jocularity - "After the store had opened to the public, a curious gaggle of Chinese customers came in pondering whether to buy a croc-clad toy motor car. How the other half live, eh?"

November 25: Jocularity- Tokyo's sprawl of designer showrooms or "exhibitions" as they call them is the beast that keeps on giving.

November 25: Hyperbole- They've become pure product gold.

November 26: Understatement - When it comes to website design and digital strategy though, admittedly the established set of London designers do *she says in small voice* lag slightly behind say, their American counterparts.

November 28: Jocularity - Lately though, he's been spending more time in London and is considering a move to the big smoke, whilst retaining a production base in Japan.

November 28: Jocularity – As some of you might have read, I've been bleating on about the return of logomania both here and for other publications and linked onto this current wave of positively branding oneself is the general popularity of visual motifs.

December 1: Understatement – The other day at a Motilo cocktail, which I hosted along with Lulu Kennedy and Leigh Lezark, someone did poke fun at the fact that I was one of the few people in the world that would look at a giant swathe of tulle (in that particular case, it was the Molly Goddard x ASOS dress) and defend its wearability because it's a "useful layering piece."
December 3: Jocularity – I was curiously nominated in a big pot of slebs for the British Style Award (aka the Alexa Chung award as she has notoriously won it for the last three years)

December 3: Hyperbole- I'll be helping Fendi lose its Twitter talk virginity as next week on Monday. Jocularity - She - yes, it has a sex - will have pride of place next to the other creatures and when I'm feeling particularly loopy and deranged, I'll have a make-believe tea party with my mad hybrid Seletti plates.
December 4: Jocularity - Check out this video "Exotic Pictures" featuring real Harajuku girls, a lot of Elastoplast pink vinyl and Soho at its smutty finest.

December 5: Hyperbole- "Sadly, if these bags are any indication of Jacques Fath's future direction, then to say Fath would be turning in his grave, may not be an understatement". Rhetorical question - "there's a well cheesy ticker tape headline quote by Lady Gaga on the top but more to the point, is Charles Frederick Worth (ahem) worth reviving?"

December 9: Understatement – I am beginning to sound like that boring and annoying person who ALWAYS talks about houses/married life/babies/delete as appropriate, but I haven't abandoned my vocational priorities altogether.

December 11: Sarcasm – I still have not got a toilet but I do have lovely new cushions by Swash. I know my priorities.

December 13: Hyperbole – Apologies as I'm still not so useful or functional as a fashion blogger right now because my iMac keyboard is literally rejecting my coarsened non-creative, hands caked in paint, plaster and sawdust. Jocularity – Talk to me in a few days time when I've had more time to think about the fact that there are potentially bloggers, young journalists and interns who don't know who New Kids on the Block are.

December 17: Hyperbole – I have become a perpendicular fiend lately. The spirit leveller is my new best friend and I am constantly cursing the wonky walls of my newfound house for not co-operating with this 90 degree angled fixation.

December 18: Jocularity - Pelham Street is now effectively now a one-stop drop for “contemporary” go-to labels (still need to work on finding a better word to describe this supposedly “accessible” raft of fashion).

December 19: Hyperbole – But I’m certainly more inclined to go misty-eyed at the abundance of gold, silver, red and midnight blue and the indulgence in huge swathes of fabric and weight of embellishment that this S/S 14 collection entitled “Forget me Not” possesses.

December 20: Hyperbole - On Saturday, when I did the big move over from old house to new, I could sense the dagger-esque glances of exasperation from the woman, who I had hired to move my stuff.

**Bryanboy.com**

November 29: Hyperbole – They've just released their Resort 2014 ad campaign video and boy oh boy, the tropical prints are screaming to be worn...

December 1: Hyperbole – I’m finally back at my shoebox of an apartment in New York.
December 3: Hyperbole – Because it’s a conference and not fashion month (when everyone looks like a Christmas tree), I ditched the usual accessories and went for this gold flower pin...

December 12: Sarcasm – I don’t speak German but I can if you like.

December 19: Jocularity – It’s no secret that I sweat like a whore in church and it’s not a good lewk [sic].

*GaryPepperGirl.com*

November 25: Hyperbole – Now all I need is to pack this Australian heat with me so I’m not so torn about leaving again...

November 26: Rhetorical Question – ...distinctly recall her whispering to me “Is this real life?” as we exited the Louis Vuitton building as quickly as we had arrived. And to be honest I’m still not quite sure, Zanita.

December 15: Jocularity – Blue, green, yellow, blue, green, yellow, #selfie, blue, green, yellow.

*Frockwriter.com*

November 20: Hyperbole - Tarantino kowtowed to Chinese censors and modified some of his film's content. / Sarcasm - ...hilariously, they consider Lady Gaga, Katy Perry, Beyonce and The Back Street Boys to be political subversives.

November 24: Sarcasm - ...how to stay "naturally" thin... by not eating

November 27: Understatement –Another day, another pretty girl who caught the eye of the model industry but doesn’t quite fit the “norm”.

November 29: Jocularity - That take hipsters haters.

December 1: Jocularity – Australian designers are dropping like flies.

December 9: Understatement – Le Castiglione might want to update its FB page.-- Jocularity: Gurung retweeted the snark, adding, "LOL omg i miss that burger". Which may well have earned Gurung and Kim a little je ne sais quoi in their Casti sauce on the occasion of their next pilgrimage to Le Castiglione.

December 16: Sarcasm – 'because covering up the evidence and shooting the messenger is always better than dealing with criticism, right?"
2014 Content Analysis – Ironic Statements

*Stylebubble.co.uk*

April 1: Understatement — "...When you treat fashion as though they’re future collectibles, you buy less mistakes.” I certainly need no encouragement in that department.

April 1: Jocularity – I have Harrods to thank for their early Easter treat as they have invited Fabergé, famous for the most famous non-edible eggs in the world.../ Rhetorical question— One artisan jewel makers extenive liscencing deals "Fabergé hair spray anyone?" Understatement – I now know what it’s like to have £25,000 or a mortgage deposit on a single finger.

April 3: Hyperbole – But it was the brute force declaration of minimalism by the fashion press and the way women would buy up total looks as an subscribed formula to chic, that made me a little uneasy. / Jocularity – I wrote about the slubby softness of her SS13 collection which suggested that beneath that Céline polish, there was an endearing sloth of a woman.

April 7: Hyperbole – It then steamrollered into a collection.

April 8: Jocularity – There was talk of Zoroastrianism, shadows chasing light in the sequence of ensembles and science of life. None of that really matters though when in Kym’s own words, it was about “keeping it cool.” / Hyperbole – It’s almost pretty-pretty to the point of sugar overdose.

April 10: Jocularity – A hardcore fanbase at that. They’ll wander in, waft around in the shimmering shadows of reflected rainbow colours and revel in embellished symbolic loveliness and walk out basked in an afterglow of happiness.

April 12: Jocularity – The office stationary cupboard is raided as paper clips get turned into a luminous blue print and post-its are scribbled and doodled all over. (Note this is jocular as it is not literal. Susie is referring to the use of office stationary as prints on the garment.) [Also Jocular] And by “you”, I mean a generation of people between the ages of 14 (retrogaing the 80s and 90s starts young these days) and 40 (the ones that remember these films from the first time round).

April 14: Jocularity – Glitter legend has it that there’s a factory somewhere in the depths of home counties where designer shoes and bags routinely get sprayed and applied with glitter and sparkle with deft skill and supposedly specialist machinery. I’ve yet to track it down exactly but when I do, I will demonstrate my devotion to all things glitter with a naff Powerpoint presentation tracking the various instances where I’ve been glitter-bombed...

April 14: Jocularity – I did fully intend to sensibly stock up on will-wear-all-the-bloody-
time line II pieces given that they’re somewhat harder to find in the UK (Lee is looking into ways of expanding the wholesale business of line II abroad) but neon lines got the better of me and I opted for a criss-cross grid wrapover skirt, that looks a little like a deranged printer cartridge colour test.

April 16: Rhetorical quesiton – Aren’t all fashion bloggers chancers in this weird and wonderful grey area that sprung up in the early millennium? / Jocularity –...the show in Sydney had a whiff of “industry” about it as it was styled by Aussie creative director supremo Mark Vassallo and had editors and international press in attendance.

April 17: Sarcasm – Spring slash summer is well on its way here in Tokyo (I *gasp* wiped a bead of perspiration today off my forehead).

April 21: Rhetorical question – Yes, I’m writing a book. Has it been formally announced? I don’t think so... does it require a formal announcement? Probably not. And for good reason too seeing as I haven’t quite formulated the right words (or media blurb) to describe this thing that I’m penning.

April 23: Rhetorical question – Who whudda thunk (yes, it’s a whudda thunk moment...) then that over a decade later, my own mug would be in a display at the Fashion Museum. [Jocularity] Kane avoids design cliches, busts up conventional style genres and goes so outside of the box, that you end up at an entirely new place you never thought would work. But it does. It always bloody does.

April 24: [Sarcasm] Go slightly out of line – be it through your choice of slightly voluminous trousers, your shade of lipstick or worse yet, your natural body type (yes, I have puffy cheeks – AND WHAT?) – and you put it out there and you can be sure to face a negative barrage of feedback.

April 26: Hyperbole – I chose to set my withered self up at Designer Jumble, a pop-up initiative set up by former editor-in-chief of Vogue.com Abigail Chisman.

April 28: Jocularity – Whenever anybody has asked me about the fashion scene in Hong Kong and to name check a few of my favourite designers, I’m afraid I’ve had to draw an embarrassing blank. Patriotic failure.

April 29: Jocularity – I’m putting my blasted metal-allergy prone skin issues aside for the moment. A rash can be cured but the I can’t ignore the itch for an adorned ear.

April 30: Jocularity – On the other side is a whole wall of “Specimens”. No excavated bones or rocks, but instead groupings of Prada’s shoes and handbags, which over the years have been mini-hits in their own right, selling out or causing wait lists.

Bryanboy.com

April 20: Jocularity –It was love at first sight.
April 23: Jocularity – I’ve been stockpiling a rather disturbing amount of white items in my closet over the past few months.

April 29: Hyperbole – This gorgeous ivory laser-cut leather “Daphne” clutch by Jason Wu is the most perfect thing ever.

GaryPepperGirl.com

April 17: Jocularity – How she always finds the perfect balance between polished yet playful will always have my wallet and wardrobe crying (with happiness, of course).

Frockwriter.com

April 7: Understatement – [Understatement] It’s not a bad result for two entirely self-taught fashion designers, who nevertheless both boast design backgrounds.

2015 Content Analysis – Ironic Statements

StyleBubble.co.uk

April 2: Rhetorical Question – Is it a risk? Sure, but I guess that’s part of the deal when you take trips out on wide open unknown roads.

April 2: Jocularity – The result? Something old, something new, something borrowed and something that’s most certainly very blue that is surprisingly easy to achieve if you have the right fabric foundations. That’s my very un-swagger-like swagger.

April 3: Sarcasm – Paris isn’t for having fun in; it’s for shows, appointments and meetings. I doubt flâneur-ing counts when you’re meandering from word to word, stumped by an iMac keyboard.

April 7: When worn in the e-commerce images by a counterpart male and female model, the visual effect is that of a blank-staring army. Is the true incarnation of the word “Agender” really about being so black and white? I’m not so sure.

April 8: Jocularity – I’m going to sound like a cheesy Chinese sage but leaves can blow in different directions and people’s paths do take different turns to get to their ultimate destination even if the journey ends up being a longer one. Wow, remind me never to try and generate Insta-Inspo quotes.

April 9: Understatement – Yesterday when I landed into Moscow, I had a minor (ok, major) scare where I was sitting in customs in the airport wondering whether I’d be allowed into the country because I thought I had lost my passport. / Jocularity – So far, so very dramatic and Russian...

April 10: Hyperbole – This has got to be the biggest super no brainer of collaborations
I’ve done in recent times. / Jocularity – Iphon is a poetic storied print that is now part of Liberty’s iconography and now in a move that got my heart racing, the print has been patched up in bright hues...

April 13: Jocularity – But as spring had arrived in Moscow (I’d like to say it was brought on by my appearance... )

April 13: Jocularity – As someone averse to looking like I’ve fallen out of the doorway of an Asian restaurant, wearing J.Kim is one surefire way of testing its nuanced ethnic credentials.

April 14: Jocularity – Thankfully, even my crappy back lawn can be somewhat elevated by LES’ matching retro floral printed leggings and body with her core tulle dress worn over it.

April 16: Jocularity – With a look book shot in a British caravan park “up North” and a teenage girl stomping around in crisp satin ensembles in a violent palette of black, red and white (like Arsenal footie kits made feminine)

April 17: Rhetorical question – May I run around in black and white with perfect lighting hitting the angles on my face – all the time please? / Jocularity – The physical souvenirs of my day of flânerie in London are precious – like the print of my portrait by Liz Collins (would hanging it up be odd?) – what’s even better is the impetus to see more in London and beyond.

April 20: Jocularity – Bayswater bags in NVT (to abbreviate Mulbz style...) are constantly kept in stock because of their popularity.

April 22: Jocularity – With regards to the hat though, I’m not personally averse to having my head swarming in a cloud of hyper coloured butterflies.

April 24: Sarcasm –Or subtly work the print in with panelled denim – a new addition for A/W 15-6, as are the stripy fur coats to go with the more “simple” brightly striped design to add to the HoH print stable. [Note, the furcoat did not look simple]

April 26: Hyperbole –John Galliano *gasp* closed the festival with a conversation about couture with Alexandra Shulman... I use the action-in-asterisk *gasp* because that’s exactly what happened in the auditorium when Galliano got up, handled the finale wedding dress from his debut Artisinal collection for Maison Margiela.

Bryanboy.com

April 1: Hyperbole – I’ve NEVER had so much fun in my entire life. / Jocularity – I’ve always been an EDM fanatic since day one so going to Ultra is like the equivalent of going to Mecca. Or the Vatican! You’ve got to do the whole three days at some point in your life. / Rhetorical question – Second, how is it possible to feel lonely when, in spite
of being solo, you’ve got a sea of humanity around you? Everyone’s happy, smiling and dancing? Talk about good vibes all around.

April 9: Hyperbole – Chitose is the toast of the town. She’s everywhere!

April 24: Hyperbole – I tried many of the coats and the sweaters — his knits are to die for!

April 25: Jocularity – It’s basically autumn with sunshine and the trees and the flowers are blooming instead of, well, “fall-ing” (is that a verb?). Hah! / Jocularity – I don’t know how I managed to wear short shorts but y’all know me... if there’s sunshine and a car, I’ll do anything as long as I see fit.

April 29: Jocularity – My main man, Marc Jacobs, has been killing it (and mind you, killing my finances) lately.

GaryPepperGirl.com

April 5: Hyperbole – My travels first began for the fashion month season, which since then has been perhaps my craziest travel schedule to date, jumping from New York to Sydney, Paris, Sydney again, Paris again, Switzerland, the Maldives, Sydney, Japan and Sydney again in the space of a few weeks.

April 6: Sarcasm – Not being able to bend your elbows and waddling through shows is so chic.

April 26: Jocularity – Photographer: My fiance (insert hearts in eyes emoji face here)

Frockwriter.com

April 22: Rhetorical Question – Will recognition from arguably the world's most high profile fashion magazine make a difference to the typically less than pro-active Australians? Watch this space.
Appendix E: List of Quirky Statements

2013 Content Analysis – Quirky Statements

Stylebubble.co.uk

November 22: After the store had opened to the public, a curious gaggle of Chinese customers came in pondering whether to buy a croc-clad toy motor car. How the other half live, eh?

November 29: They're eye-catchers that make an item of clothing stick in your head easily even if you've only looked at lookbook or catwalk images - any number of Givenchy's prints for example or Prada's S/S 14 mural faces, which I've practically nicknamed every one of.

December 1: Turns out the colour became a bit of a London fad in the 1850s-60s, as witnessed by the journal All the Year Round as mauve took over hair ribbons and crinolines, "all flying countryward, like so many migrating birds of purple paradise." That to me is surely reason enough to keep on "mauve-ing." Sorry. Couldn't help myself.

December 3: No sentimental mush here, just the plain honest truth... These honourees gave weight and gravitas to an event that has in the past felt like an excuse just to have a boozy X'Mas party for the fash crowd.

December 4: You're going to have to endure some sentimental mush as I'm deep in the process of packing up six years worth of belongings (plus the remnants from my flat before this current one, where Style Bubble first began) and inadvertently stumble upon things that send me on mad Google Image searches.

December 5: What struck me about this sad looking Powerpoint-esque presentation was the fact that we had to have history and facts drummed in - Fath was a very important designer, therefore we MUST respect and take notice of these handbags that are the latest fruits of revival after a lot of chopping and changing in designers and ownership. / These two words immediately come to mind when I think about the fashion powers that be, who play a game I like to call "Mad for Maisons" - that is plucking a moribund fashion house from relative obscurity, buying the rights to the name, chucking loads of money at it and resurrecting it all in the name of "legacy".

December 9: I may be running around between flat and new house with bits of polyfilla and chipped off tile adhesive stuck to my hair and yes, I am beginning to sound like that boring and annoying person who ALWAYS talks about houses/married life/babies/delete as appropriate, but I haven’t abandoned my vocational priorities altogether.
December 10: Rome wasn't built in a day (yup, I'm pulling out all the Rome-related sayings just for this occasion)

December 13: It’s been ingrained in me for as long as I can remember to pole position myself into defensive mode whenever I do anything that has a hint of the mercenary about it.... As for my style, which supposedly is meant to undergo some sort of decades-related shift because all the “wimen’s” magazines say that that is the case, I have this picture, shot by Piczo for a small feature in i-D Magazine about being a collector of clothes, that will always serve to remind me how impossible it would be to live without all the clothes that would be considered overly brash and brazen on the eye to most.

December 16: It’s the sort of place that you’d imagine a hundred years back, it might have been a tailor’s workshop, a la Uncle Edmund in The Paradise (yup, I’m the sucker, who watched the entire second series even though it was clunky and indigestible).

December 18: I love how they dance around the borders of tackiness – it’s like they’re competing with Crimbo-obsessed people in this documentary King of Christmas Lights.

December 20: It struck me that I’ve got a peculiarly obsessive attachment to these bits of paper. They might be rudimentary thank you notes on headed paper (probably NOT hand signed by Mr van Noten or Mr Gaytten but still, it’s the thought that counts) but I’ve kept them all the same.

_Bryanboy.com_

December 3: I wanted to go to the bathroom so bad to do number one. However, because the event is being filmed, taped and livestreamed, I didn’t want to stand up and be taped walking out of the room so I held it together.

December 8: I know I wear a lot of womenswear pieces but there are times when I wear full, head-to-toe menswear lewks [sic].

_GaryPepperGirl.com_

December 11: After rolling his eyes, he informed me that I’m more likely to die from a coconut falling on my head than a shark, a statistic I find hard to believe but a quick google search quickly confirmed. I’m quite concerned I have any sort of reason to be afraid of coconuts, but it’s more concerning I just typed a sentence I never thought I would ever have to type.

December 15: Blue, green, yellow, blue, green, yellow, #selfie, blue, green, yellow.

_Frockwriter.com_

-NA-
2014 Content Analysis – Quirky Statements

*StyleBubble.co.uk*

April 1: I have Harrods to thank for their early Easter treat as they have invited Fabergé, famous for the most famous non-edible eggs in the world..." On wearing a Faberge ring: "I now know what it’s like to have £25,000 or a mortgage deposite on a single finger.

On Harrods animated selfie booth which Susie was impressed by "For those that aren’t interested in the declaration of self, further inside Harrods, in the super fine-fine jewellery section, you get to see an original Fabergé egg in the flesh."

April 3: Susie talks about how she found Celine too expensive, "And so I’ve never bought the clothes, save for a few pieces heavily discounted on Yoox." However, goes on to say the shoes that she purchased in the store that day is her first full-priced purchase.

April 7: It’s hard to ignore the thinking and methodology behind K2TOG. It makes for feel-good story telling and weights well on the fashion conscience.

April 8: The “Oh, Brit blogger at MBFWA” novelty has well and truly worn off. I hang around asking for long black coffees, can tell if I’m in Redfern or Eveleigh and more to the point, know the lay of the land when it comes to Australian designers.

April 10: They’ll wander in, waft around in the shimmering shadows of reflected rainbow colours and revel in embellished symbolic loveliness and walk out basked in an afterglow of happiness. And they’ll head over to the nearest rail (or e-commerce site) where RWB is stocked and buy into a duo who don’t just settle for pure product.

April 14: The vague yet evocative chunk of text above accompanying this particular footwear collaboration is dreamer stuff.

April 16: I know a fair bit about making it up as I go along. Aren’t all fashion bloggers chancers in this weird and wonderful grey area that sprung up in the early millennium? They did a show in Melbourne back in 2012, which was really a big holler-out to their diehard home crowd fans whereas the show in Sydney had a whiff of “industry” about it as it was styled by Aussie creative director supremo Mark Vassallo and had editors and international press in attendance.

April 17: The clothes may not have been weather appropriate when they were shot but you can almost smell good weather now.

April 21: Yes, I’m writing a book. Has it been formally announced? I don’t think so... does it require a formal announcement? Probably not. And for good reason too seeing as I haven’t quite formulated the right words (or media blurb) to describe this thing that I’m penning.
April 23: As an interloping bloody blogger (as some would like to see us) and moreover as someone with an unconventional induction into the industry... me choosing this dress, is also representative of a changing media landscape in fashion.

April: 29: I’m putting my blasted metal-allergy prone skin issues aside for the moment. A rash can be cured but the I can’t ignore the itch for an adorned ear.

April 30: I, on the other hand, have only fan-girled her from afar at the British Fashion Awards last year and have never really plucked up the courage to leg it backstage after her Prada/Miu Miu shows, and so she remains one of the few designers that I’ve never really had any physical/speaking contact with.
Shallow me is looking for an excuse to buy anything just to nab a Prada x Harrods Pradasphere illustrated shopping bag. That’s the power of Prada.

Bryanboy.com

April 23: Yes, I know the white memo arrived late in my inbox, in any case, I’m loving this ‘new’ look on me.

GaryPepperGirl.com
-NA-

Frockwriter.com
-NA-

2015 Content Analysis – Quirky Expression

StyleBubble.co.uk

April 2: When I was tasked to customise the new Coach Swagger bag as part of their #WhatsYourSwagger campaign, I did have to think long and hard. I’m sadly not a person who is naturally imbued with “swagger”. In fact, I had to Urban Dictionary search the word just to clarify its meaning.

April 3: Paris isn’t for having fun in; it’s for shows, appointments and meetings. I doubt flâneur-ing counts when you’re meandering from word to word, stumped by an iMac keyboard.

April 8: I’m going to sound like a cheesy Chinese sage but leaves can blow in different directions and people’s paths do take different turns to get to their ultimate destination even if the journey ends up being a longer one. Wow, remind me never to try and generate Insta-Inspo quotes.

April 10: And bag shapes that are either a) roomy and functional enough to put all my gibbons in or b) small enough to layer up in multiples because of my natural bag lady inclination.
April 14: Thankfully, even my crappy back lawn can be somewhat elevated by LES’ matching retro floral printed leggings and body with her core tulle dress worn over it.

April 16: With a look book shot in a British caravan park “up North” and a teenage girl stomping around in crisp satin ensembles in a violent palette of black, red and white (like Arsenal footie kits made feminine),

April 17: May I run around in black and white with perfect lighting hitting the angles on my face – all the time please? AND The physical souvenirs of my day of flânerie in London are precious – like the print of my portrait by Liz Collins (would hanging it up be odd?) – what’s even better is the impetus to see more in London and beyond.

April 20: Bayswater bags in NVT (to abbreviate Mulbz style...) are constantly kept in stock because of their popularity.

April 22: With regards to the hat though, I’m not personally averse to having my head swarming in a cloud of hyper coloured butterflies.

April 24: Shame on me to allow estate agents’ schtick to affect my judgement.

April 26: Vaguely nicer interiors. More phone charging stations. More make-up opportunities and thus presence of brands at what is obviously a commercially lucrative event for Condé Nast.

Bryanboy.com

April 1: While Julia Roberts’ character went to Bali, Indonesia for an “eat, pray, love” moment to find herself, I thought I’d do a little “eat, sleep, rave, repeat” moment in Miami to clear my mind.

April 25: I don’t know how I managed to wear short shorts but y’all know me... if there’s sunshine and a car, I’ll do anything as long as I see fit.

April 29: My main man, Marc Jacobs, has been killing it (and mind you, killing my finances) lately.

GaryPepperGirl.com

April 6: This was basically me trying to find whatever was the thickest and warmest outfit I possessed within my suitcase...Not being able to bend your elbows and waddling through shows is so chic.

April 28: I guess you can’t really put a price on your health. It’s all about being sun smart in style, no matter the cost. End preach.