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Academic Year 2016

Meister: The Mobile Application to Induce Social Communication and Establish Reciprocal Relationship between Fashion Designer and Customer as The New Nurturing Strategy

Keio University Graduate School of Media Design

Xiaohang Hu
A Master’s Thesis
submitted to Keio University Graduate School of Media Design
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER of Media Design

Xiaohang Hu

Thesis Committee:
Professor Naohito Okude (Supervisor)
Professor Keiko Okawa (Co-supervisor)
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Abstract of Master’s Thesis of Academic Year 2016

Meister: The Mobile Application to Induce Social Communication and Establish Reciprocal Relationship between Fashion Designer and Customer as The New Nurturing Strategy

Category: Design

Summary

This study claims that emerging fashion designers should communicate with customers within a community and encounter the customers in physical environment to building relationship to achieve early career development. The author designed the smartphone application Meister which enables designers to promote themselves and attract customers during their inspiration-collecting process of the making of garments. The birth of this concept is under the societal and technological changes of the apparel industry which is evolving in a more social and devoted direction. Thus, considering the concept as a new strategy for emerging fashion designers to get into the business, the practical appliance could greatly improve designer’s career path and further provide an innovative experience for consumers as well.

Keywords:
Apparel Industry, Emerging Fashion Designer, Social Commerce, Relationship Marketing, Service Design

Keio University Graduate School of Media Design

Xiaohang Hu
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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ii

1 Introduction 1
  1.1 The Apparel Industry in Disruptive Innovation 1
  1.2 Fashion Designer as An Occupation in Evolution 2
  1.3 Concept Design 4
    - The Meister application 4
    - Literature background 4
    - Value proposing of the concept 5
  1.4 Thesis Structure 5

2 Literature Review 7
  2.1 Social Commerce 8
    - Adopting social commerce to improve individual merchants’ economic performance 8
    - Social commerce as a business model based on relationship marketing 9
    - Utilising consumer commitment to fashion for eWOM engagement 10
  2.2 Fashion Branding 11
    - Cultivating brand loyalty by building brand authenticity 12
    - Cultivating brand loyalty by strengthening emotional attachment 13
  2.3 Human Capital 15
    - Social emotional bonding and buyer-seller relationship 15
    - The contribution of social capital to the community 16
    - Emotional capital and human capital 17
  2.4 Conclusion 18
  Notes 19

3 Design 20
  3.1 Design Objectives 20
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

The common framework ........................................... 21
3.2 Ethnography ...................................................... 23
   Fieldwork #1 .................................................. 23
   Fieldwork #2 .................................................. 30
3.3 Concept Design .................................................. 36
   Target persona ................................................ 36
   Concept scheme .............................................. 37
   Concept sketching .......................................... 38
   Use case ....................................................... 39
   Making story ............................................... 40
   Key path scenario .......................................... 40
   Experience map ............................................. 42
3.4 Prototype ....................................................... 44
   Notes .......................................................... 44

4 Evaluation ....................................................... 47
  4.1 Evaluation Workflow .......................................... 47
  4.2 User Test #1 .................................................. 48
     Testing ..................................................... 48
     Result ..................................................... 49
     Revision ................................................... 50
  4.3 User Test #2 .................................................. 51
     Testing ..................................................... 51
     Result ..................................................... 52
     Revision ................................................... 52
  4.4 Revised Prototype ........................................... 53

5 Discussion ........................................................ 55
  5.1 Conclusion .................................................... 55
  5.2 Limitations ................................................... 56
  5.3 Future Work .................................................. 56
     Elements of the concept design ......................... 56
     Concept design within the ecosystem ................. 57
     Seamless user experience between *Meister* and *Monolog* .... 57
   Notes ........................................................ 57

References .......................................................... 58
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A  Fieldwork Thick Description</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork #1 Thick description</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork #2 Thick description</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Figures

3.1 Stakerholder of *Mujin* ecosystem .......................... 21
3.2 Service blueprint of *Mujin* ................................. 22
3.3 Fieldwork #1 Fieldwork scenes ............................... 23
3.4 Fieldwork #1 Fieldwork master profile ...................... 24
3.5 Fieldwork #1 Flow model analysis ........................... 25
3.6 Fieldwork #1 Sequence model ................................. 26
3.7 Fieldwork #1 Artefact model analysis ........................ 27
3.8 Fieldwork #1 Physical model 2F ............................... 28
3.9 Fieldwork #1 Physical model 1F ............................... 28
3.10 Fieldwork #1 Cultural model analysis ....................... 29
3.11 Fieldwork #1 Mental model ................................. 29
3.12 Fieldwork #2 Fieldwork master1 ............................. 31
3.13 Fieldwork #2 Flow model ................................. 32
3.14 Fieldwork #2 Sequence model ............................... 32
3.15 Fieldwork #2 Artefact model ............................... 33
3.16 Fieldwork #2 Physical model .............................. 34
3.17 Fieldwork #2 Cultural model ............................... 34
3.18 Fieldwork #2 Mental model ................................. 35
3.19 Target persona .............................................. 36
3.20 Concept scheme ............................................. 37
3.21 Concept sketching of *Meister* .............................. 38
3.22 Use case ..................................................... 39
3.23 Key path scenario: Collecting & sharing inspirations .... 41
3.24 Key path scenario: Events .................................. 41
3.25 Key path scenario: Showcase & Checking out sales ....... 42
3.26 *Meister* Experience map .................................. 43
3.27 *Meister* user interface: Moodboard ....................... 44
3.28 *Meister* user interface: Event ............................ 45
3.29 *Meister* user interface: Message & Chat ................. 45
### LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.30</td>
<td><em>Meister</em> user interface: Association of inspirations with music</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Evaluation process</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Scene of User test #1</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Result of Test #1</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Scene of user test #2</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Result of Test #2</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Revised main screens</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Revised main screens</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1
Introduction

This study aims at designing an exclusive application Meister for emerging designers to not only sell their works but further, to establish the customer community that would continuously support the them. Designers promote themselves by involving consumers in the making process of new collections of garments, maintaining both online and offline participation to the communication with consumers. Detailed economic performance and other tutorial information are sent back to designers on the application as well. This application can be considered as a new nurturing strategy for the next generation of famous designers, and even as the new landscape of new shopping experience for apparel.

1.1 The Apparel Industry in Disruptive Innovation

‘Innovator’s dilemma’ has become a term for a lot of entrepreneurs and managers (Christensen 2000). Due to the mismatching market demand and technological offerings, it has been common that the products in the market show no perceivable value for consumers, leading to the disruptive technologies pursued by companies’ resource allocation. However, even though that resource allocation is set to tackle each innovation problem, the mismatch between the market and the technology still exists. It has become service designer’s responsibility to create the platform with quick shifting on its feature, function and styling changes.

As a practical case, the apparel industry is undertaking significant changes in various ways due to technological influence (Petruzziello 2199). More capitals of the industry are shifting to digital which can be mainly observed from the
sales on e-commerce. By 2020, the market size of e-commerce under fashion industry will reach 14% in Japan (6% increase since 2013), 18% in UK and 21% in both China (13% increase since 2013) and Germany (8% increase since 2013) (Ministry of Economy and Industry 2199). Besides, there has been a climbing tendency that people access retail websites via mobile phone rather than computers (School 2199). Consequently, the business is evolving into social commerce that turns both online and physical stores into hubs that connect individual consumers. Fashion houses and retailers have been relying on social media not only to communicate with customers but also to reduce marketing cost (Bourne 2199). Besides, sustainability will be the one common goals of the industry.

The consumerism has altered since early 2000, developing into the appeal of diversity and self-expressing style. Regardless of the fact that consumer’s preferences have become difficult to lead, apparel companies launch more small brands as it is thought to be the strategy to satisfy consumer, resulting in a market with excessive number of brand (Fukuda 2015). Besides, the growth of fast fashion brands which are gaining the popularity among consumers, has decreased the price-earnings ratio of small brands. In order to deal with this situation, segment focus strategy is applied to the target at specific consumers who have particular preference on fashion, who tend to purchase garments based on own styles. Emerging designers can put most of their attention on these consumers matching with their design approaches.

1.2 Fashion Designer as An Occupation in Evolution

As an occupation, fashion designer has been in the long-term change since the late eighteenth century. The very first group of fashion designers in the world started to serve directly and merely to their particular customers, the French royal family members who wore and showed off their hute coutre to the aristocracy and the latter imitated the royal style. At that time, fashion designers were known for couture, which means the art of dressmaking. (Burns and Bryant 2007) They were able to approach to the royal family as their customer, and to maintain mutual beneficial relationship. Sponsored by the royal family, some couturiers in
France in mid-nineteenth century even established their own salons with employees of seamstress and tailors. Since the invention of sewing machine in 1846 and the Industrial Revolution in the late nineteenth century, fashion has gradually spread the grown middle class, and then to the entire society. The more recent globalisation and internalisation have shaped the modern manufacturing in the apparel industry, and fashion has been enjoyed by people of all classes nowadays. On the contrary, along with this development in the apparel industry, the majority of fashion designers no longer work closely with their customers (private tailoring still exists, but it does not represent an overall picture of the apparel industry). Instead, they work for apparel companies whereas their end customers hardly have a chance to communicate with them.

However, the nurturing strategies haven’t kept up along with the updates in the fashion industry. Fashion major graduates are usually confronted with a stipulated career path which requires several years’ experience in an apparel company before launching their own brands or attending fashion contests (Sangakusho 2010). The work experience may help on the future solo work, but it does not provide the solution of approaching to customers. During the recent years, Japanese apparel companies are confronted with sluggish performance in the domestic market (Minami 2199). This has led the result that a quarter of new graduates from Bunka Fashion College, the most reputable fashion school in Japan, work in sales position (College 2199). For ambitious emerging designers they do not have a channel to get close to the consumers who can appreciate their talent and support their career. Geographic issue is the factor that has influence on emerging designer for their debut in the industry, as all of the top twelve world’s most reputable fashion contests are West-centred (eight in Europe, two in the U.S., and two in Australia) (Kearney 2014). This has led to the unfairness in the fashion world where the criteria are set by the West. Local emerging designers then have more difficulties in obtaining a global fame.

Although there has been some platforms that aims at promoting emerging designers during the recent years, they mainly rely on unitary business models of e-commerce discovery or cross-funding (Joannou 2199). Key strategies can be summarised as assortment building, consumer education/destination positioning and financial benefit. But these platforms haven’t brought up with the key solution to build a curated marketplace and devoting experience for consumers. By applying a social retail model that involves both designers and consumers, the
business can be improved in efficiency and risk managing. Further, the transition to social commerce in the fashion industry would widen the diversity of the business and understand consumer’s needs in demand-driven batches (Kansara 2199).

1.3 Concept Design

The statement of this paper is that emerging designers should communicate with customers within a community and encounter with customers in physical environment for building relationship. This is explained within the following subsections below.

The *Meister* application

Based on the statement, the researcher proposes a smartphone application that socially connects emerging designers with consumers, enabling designers not only sell their works by taking pre-orders, but also to socially connect with their customers to develop a mutual beneficiary relationship. It is crucial for emerging designers to directly appeal to their customers in their early career so that they are able to accumulate both experience on customer relationship and economic income, which provide great support for the nurture as a fashion designer.

Literature background

The proposal is closely associated with the academic world. First, this concept introduces social commerce as a general domain with a specific focus on relationship marketing. Different from traditional marketing strategy, relationship marketing has the advantages on building strong customer loyalty and increasing economic sales. Also, depending on the relationship quality, consumer’s trust and commitment are expected to gain throughout the social interaction with emerging designers. Though social commerce has been adopted to the fashion industry already, it still lacks application to particularly nurture emerging designers or brands.
Secondly, the concept tries to integrate a popular topic, which is fashion branding. In order to help emerging designers establish a clear image of their brands or even own names, the discussion on this domain focuses on cultivating brand loyalty by building brand authenticity and strengthening consumer’s emotional attachment.

Thirdly, often in the debate in sociology, the researcher tries to apply the theory on human capital to interpret emerging designer’s role and characteristics in exposing to consumers. This has been rarely brought up outside its original academic background, but being gradually mentioned in various areas related human power and social interaction. The perspectives from social emotional bonding and from social capital have been adopted to understand related issues.

Value proposing of the concept

The concept of *Meister* has certain value proposing to its user, namely emerging fashion designer. Value proposing and value co-creation of the concept design are to be presented in detail in Chapter 3. The evaluation in Chapter 4 will cover this as well. Nevertheless, it is worth addressing the value proposing of the concept here briefly:

- Inspiration sharing function position & text hint
- Default view of Moodboard section is intense
- Single moodboard seems to be static picture rather than interactive unit
- Feature of importing existing content from cloud services

1.4 Thesis Structure

There are four more chapters in addition to this introduction. Chapter 2 reviews recent articles from academic journals on related domains including social commerce, fashion branding and human capital. Chapter 3 reproduces the design
process of the *Meister* application from the very early stage of ethnography to prototyping. Chapter 4 evaluates the concept by testing the prototype application with participants selected on the basis of target persona which is created in Chapter 3. Two tests have been conducted and after each test a revised prototype is made according to the results and feedbacks from the participant. Chapter 5 summarises the concept and evaluation, and indicates the limitation of the research. Potential direction and suggestions are addressed for future research.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter deals with the literature of related academic domains, which are social commerce, fashion branding and human capital. The review on these domains serves as an explanatory role to the theoretical frameworks that testify the rationale of my concept design.

The purpose of discussing social commerce is to validate my concept design which can be considered as an application of variated electronic commerce (e-commerce). I argue that emerging fashion designers could also apply social commerce for their career through relationship marketing.

The review on fashion branding discovers the concept of brand authenticity, brand loyalty and emotional attachment from the perspective of the fashion industry and provides the support to the concept design in a managerial way.

The discussion on human capital tries to interpret the concept design of this paper in a sociological way. Two aspects under human capital, emotional capital and social capital are to be discussed. The investigation of human capital provides a distinguishable point of view for the understanding the concept design and enables an innovative angle to adopt employee’s human capital, which is emerging fashion designer in this study, can be applied for and contributed to the workplace.
2.1 Social Commerce

Social commerce was initially introduced and described as a subset of electronic commerce (e-commerce) with online shopping tools including pick lists, user ratings and other user generated content (Barnes 2014). As a result of the evolution of the continuous surge in smartphones utilisation rate and of the maturation of social media, social commerce can assist the online transactions of products and service, and serve as the collaborative tool of social interaction between consumers and service providers and of delivering trustworthiness from service provider. Hence, in other words, social commerce can be simply understood as e-commerce that uses social media as a carrier that enabled individual social interaction (Hajli and Wang 2015).

Adopting social commerce to improve individual merchants’ economic performance

As the social media network spreads, social commerce has become the significant factor of online business strategy, especially in the cases with a direct approach to consumers. Naturally social commerce can be understood as the unification of social shopping and social networking for its relationship with Internet-based social media and accomplishment of market operation among communities and online marketplace (Stephen and Toubia 2010).

Despite of its origin from e-commerce, social commerce differs from e-commerce in the replacement of firms and manufacturers with individual product/service providers who are internally connected in the form of personalised marketplace, generating revenues based on individual performance (Stephen and Toubia 2010). The internal identity of social commerce also enables it to operate like virtual bricks-and-mortar shopping centre but with a social accessibility to the target consumers, generating more user stickiness.

Base on the data set retrieved from a company running on social commerce in the U.S. and several major European countries (France, Germany and the UK), detailed analysis has been proceeded (Stephen and Toubia 2010). The marketplace that the company operates allows individual merchant to charge com-
mission fee over third party vendors (e.g. Amazon) by each successful purchase that consumers made via the listing provided by the merchant in this marketplace. Marketplace-level and shop-level analysis indicate that social commerce positively affect the economic performance of individual merchants by letting consumers browse individual merchant’s shop within an environment of virtual shopping arcade, with reciprocal interactions and improved accessibility empowered by social network.

Social commerce as a business model based on relationship marketing

The study on relationship marketing theory has become the key to understand the mechanism of social commerce. Along with consumers’ heavy adoption of social media, social commerce has revealed consumer behaviour change within an interactive social environment which differentiates itself from existing e-commerce. Consumers have become content generators of social commerce constructs, such as rating, review and word-of-mouth, expressing the desire of further engaging with the product/service through online community (Hajli 2014). On the other hand, product/service providers can take advantage of this social behaviour change and follow the new path which leads to a result of strong customer loyalty and increased economic sales.

Relationship quality and social support are two important aspects of relationship marketing theory (Hajli 2014). With a focus on three facets of trust, commitment and relationship satisfaction, relationship quality is one of the determinants of customer loyalty towards product/service. Trust is crucial for product/service providers in social commerce to acquire consumers’ purchase intention based on credibility and benevolence. Product/service providers also ensure consumers’ commitment which indicates that how the relationship develops in long term. Besides, consumers evaluate the product/service by their general satisfaction, invoking product/service providers’ great investment which increase purchase intention and customer retention.

Social support describes the perceived care on resources, such as information and knowledge, from other members within the same community, which
is the main reason that one joins online community (Hajli 2014). Hence, the interaction within the community not only positively influences individual’s commitment to the community but also contributes to the decision-making process of purchase.

To understand the influences of relationship quality and social support on consumers’ intention to social commerce, a pilot study with a sample of 68 respondents was conducted to assist researchers to test the questionnaire and the overall quality of survey (Hajli 2014). The final constructs of the survey model consist of six components in total, with three (trust, commitment and satisfaction) for relationship quality, two (emotional and informational support) for social support and one for social commerce intention. A seven-point from 1 'strongly disagree' to 7 'strongly agree’ was adopted. For the present study, the e-questionnaire targeting on Facebook users in the UK was launched and a useable sample of 200 respondents was collected, with the range of ages from 18 to 50 and twelve per cent more in female than male in gender distribution. The data set was analysed in both structural equation modelling (SEM) and partial least square (PLS) method, assuring construct validation and the ability to examine the latent variables under conditions of non-normality. The results indicate that the perception of social support in a SNS is positively associated with both user’s social commerce intention and that relationship quality positively affect user’s social commerce intention.

Utilising consumer commitment to fashion for eWOM engagement

Word-of-mouth (WOM) has been comprehensively discussed during its diffusion since the the 1950s for its initial nature of active communication comparing with the promotional way by media (Barnes 2014). It plays a dramatic role in the reduction of risk and search time, product know-how, belonging to community and remuneration. By the development of social media, businesses are confronted with more powerful ways of socially connecting consumers in a wider scope by so-called electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) which has become one of the keys to commercial success with a more effective influence than existing WOM.
However, despite of sufficient research conducted on the impact of social media, consumer motivations to the engagement with brand-related content (e.g. eMOW) on social media and the reactions of brands to consumers remain untouched, particularly the realm of fashion. Being considered to inherent the characteristic of high involvement, fashion is a symbol that constantly reflects one’s socially perceived identity and thus occupies a considerably part of discussion on social media (Wolny and Mueller 2013). Due to continual trends of new fashion, one would constantly express personal fashion style, share style-related information and knowledge his community, and receive feedbacks and interaction from the peers. Two factors are to be measured to understand the specific relation between eMOW and consumer motivations here. First, fashion involvement interprets one’s general attitude towards a product or the time length of involvement with it. Second, brand commitment describes one’s positive feelings of attachment to a brand.

An Internet-based questionnaire has been launched via multiple channels that involve the most online engagement between consumers and fashion brands, after a pretest of research instrument by debriefing method with seven respondents (Wolny and Mueller 2013). The sample included nearly two thirds of female and a majority of age group from twenties to thirties, which has been considered common in fashion-related surveys. The sample was divided into two general characteristics, fashion involvement and brand commitment, to explain the roles of which in influencing eWOM engagement. The results indicate that: (1) consumers with high fashion involvement tend to have stronger contribution to fashion brand related eWOM; (2) consumers with high brand commitment to fashion brands tend to involve with those brands related eWOM. In summary, fashion involvement and brand commitment positively affect consumer engagement with related eWOM.

2.2 Fashion Branding

Since the first introduction in early 1900s, the concept of brand loyalty has been in debate by researchers from different academic fields (Choi et al. 2015). The concept has been considered as the outcome of brand commitment and brand attachment, and it is the reflection of consumers’ brand commitment to retain
a long-term relationship with the brand (So et al. 2013). Hence, it is relevant to understand how consumers’ loyalty can be cultivated so that emerging fashion designers could win consumers’ support for their early career.

Cultivating brand loyalty by building brand authenticity

As the key component of holistic approach, brand authenticity is particularly perceivable during consumers’ purchasing decision-making of fashion commodity and it has been considered as the most important consumer trend (Choi et al. 2015). Product/service providers are able to establish a sustainable relationship between consumers and the brand through the process of providing perceivable brand authenticity. Distinguishable from conventional marketing approaches, holistic marketing emphasises the importance of establishing the relationship with consumers, which further connects consumers with the brand emotionally. Besides, holistic marketing aims at establishing sustainable offerings and experiences to consumers and at combining marketing with a consistent brand value.

The concept of authenticity was formed by the changes in economic offerings which are considered as the basis to improve social experience and consumption in the marketing approach (Choi et al. 2015). The concept of authenticity implies the fact of being original creator which offers the perception on sincerity and trust. Moreover, being inimitable and unique is crucial for the concept of authenticity. Brand authenticity has become one of the most important practices in the marketplace.

Despite of the various perspectives of explaining the nature of fashion brand authenticity, the recent classification tends to interpret it as indexical and iconic (Choi et al. 2015). It is more of the point to focus on the effects of brand authenticity towards consumers’ perception, namely brand attachment, brand loyalty and brand commitment.

To depict the co-relation among the notions discussed above, a qualitative research was conducted based on the context of sampling community and two sports brands, Nike and Adidas, due to younger consumers’ association of sportswear with fashion (Choi et al. 2015). The sampling community consists of the consumers with purchase history of apparel from the two brands. The data
set consists of the history of both brands, aspects of holistic marketing, product pictures from official channels. A series of cartoon with eight to ten cuts was created based on the verified data set. A questionnaire of seven-point Likert scale was initiated. For the measurement of fashion brand authenticity, brand commitment and brand loyalty, different number of items related to each parameter was derived. A data collection of 207 usable questionnaires with age range of 18 to 44 was obtained.

The result supports all the hypotheses, assuring the positive effect of brand authenticity towards brand attachment, brand commitment and brand loyalty, revealing the importance of brand authenticity in consumer-to-brand relationship (Choi et al. 2015). Besides, brand authenticity can contribute to brand differentiation as well. Consumers’ emotional attachment towards authentic brands is essential for building the long-term relationship. Hence, from the managerial perspective, it is appropriate to adopt holistic marketing approach to deliver authentic offerings which can be perceived by consumers.

Cultivating brand loyalty by strengthening emotional attachment

As more consumers are devoting themselves emotionally to brands for closeness and involvement, the emotional values enable consumers to gain a complete and unforgettable ownership experience during brand consumption (So et al. 2013). Consume-brand relationship centralises consumers’ emotional attachment, due to the distinctiveness of generating added values based on higher, sustainable level of brand loyalty. Therefore, fashion brands can apply the construction of consumer engagement in an emotional level for the branding strategy.

Consumers’ emotional attachment refers to the strength of the bond between consumers and the brand, which affects consumer behaviour and turns out to be the parameter of increasing brand profitability and lifetime value of individual consumer (So et al. 2013). The concept of emotional attachment was initially introduced by psychology’s attachment theory in the 1980s, and later the debate of the concept emphasises the formation of the attachment to others as a basic human need which is propelled by individual’s desire. In general emotional
attachment parallels with human-human relationship on the properties and behavioural effects, and it can be acquired through various objects, including gifts, collections and brands. Considered as a better predictor of consumers’ purchasing behaviour, emotional attachment consists of the constructs of brand love, brand affection and brand connection, which in total seems to support the assertion that consumers with stronger emotional attachment tend to be committed to a brand and to remain in a long-term consumer-brand relationship.

During the high-involvement decision-making process, consumers perceive functional benefits and symbolic benefits from the brand (So et al. 2013). Functional benefits refer to the intrinsic value acquired by consumers from the product that satisfies consumers’ immediate and practical needs. The brand is considered as irreplaceable by consumers once superior utilitarian functions are offered. On the other hand, symbolic benefits pertain to the extrinsic value corresponding to the non-product-related attributes that deliver brand meanings. Emotional connection with a brand is to be developed when the symbolic benefits reflect consumers’ actual or ideal self-concepts. Consequently, a brand benefits from being further embedded in consumers’s mind and receiving consumers’ intention of staying the relationship.

Thus, it is hypothesised that consumers with higher level of emotional attachment tend to reveal greater brand loyalty (So et al. 2013). After initiating a self-completion questionnaire, it had been sent for pre-test to improve consistency, readability and clarity. A data collection of 282 usable questionnaires from consumers in local shopping arcades was obtained. Data analysis was accomplished by AMOS 20.0. The result indicates that consumers’ emotional attachment positively drives brand loyalty. In particular, it is applicable to nurture consumers’ favourable perception towards functional benefits and symbolic benefits for the purpose of increasing emotional attachment. Emotional attachment can be also adopted through the constant delivery of superior functional benefits and symbolic benefits to gain consumers’ brand loyalty. Furthermore, for luxury fashion, it is also crucial to enhance brand’s symbolic benefits through the maintenance of status of extravagance and elitism by means of scarcity.
2.3 Human Capital

This section tries to interpret the concept design from the perspective human capital. Specifically, the discussion is expanded with two aspects, social capital and emotional capital. The relationship between the two aspects is not the focus of the discussion of this section. Instead, the two aspects provide different yet intriguing viewpoints towards the same subject.

Social emotional bonding and buyer-seller relationship

As a form of social capital, friendship differentiates from businesspeople due to the foundation of relationship (Wan et al. 2012). Friendship is on the basis of social embeddedness whilst business relationship being derived from the offering of quality or innovative product/service, which two are inherently separated. Business relationship can be described as the basis of economic rationality, which is contrary to the non-rationality of friendship. The more recent research has implied the disapproval on the conceptualisation of product/service as part of relationship quality which has been discussed earlier in this chapter. The argument by researchers is that a good interpersonal relationship tends to be friendship rather than business related.

Being the act of social emotional bonding, friendship travels beyond the economic exchanges and is proved being interchangeable to commercial friendship which consists of affection, intimacy, social support, loyalty and reciprocal gift giving (Wan et al. 2012). A buyer-seller relationship can be significantly improved with this direction of evolution to friendship with a consequence that both sides reach a mutually enjoyable accommodation. Further, this true friendship creates trustworthiness between buyer and seller, maintaining a long-term relationship.

However, social emotional bonding, the essence of true interpersonal relationship, cannot be cultivated without continuous long-term face-to-face personal interaction that enhances relationship quality with the processes of information sharing and mutual disclosure (Wan et al. 2012). To empirically discover the relationship of the notions so far, a structured questionnaire was initiated and pilot-tested. A data set of 350 completed questionnaires was analysed. The re-
result indicates that true interpersonal negatively moderates the positive effects of service quality of service provider. The significance of service quality becomes unnecessary with the presence of true interpersonal relationship. However, the quality of the core service reveals to be uncompromising for consumers, implying the boundary condition of the effectiveness of the relationship.

The contribution of social capital to the community

The human capital theory assumes that being capable individual is the premise of becoming people who can perform better, reflecting what social capital claims as the competitive advantage which empowers people with better connection (Cao et al. 2013). Social capital is defined as both actual and virtual resources that are embedded in social structure. It connects individuals with community to generate productive outcome based on sustainable social relationship among people.

Social capital theory captures the essence of information exchange and social collaboration and consists of two constructs (Cao et al. 2013). Bonding is related to the interpersonal solidarity among homogeneous groups and community that share members’ common needs and interests, offering a support on emotion. Bonding social capital has the contribution in knowledge sharing, complementarity, quality control and conflict resolution, though it exclusive effect against heterogenous settings. On the other hand, bridging social capital serves a role of civil responsibility, tolerance and cooperation for social problems.

To understand the relationship between bonding and bridging as social capital, a survey with seven-point Likert scale was initiated (Cao et al. 2013). A data set of online forum where college users exchange information has been collected. The partial least squares (PLS) was used to test the structural model. The result indicates that both bonding and bridging have positive and significant effects on information quality. Besides, information quality positively effects individual well-being and collective well-being in a community.
Emotional capital and human capital

Emotional capital has been considered as a subtype of human capital along with psychological capital and personal capital. Human capital was initially introduced under neoliberal economic theory which is derived from the criticism in the theories of classic economics (Andrade 2015). Neoliberal theory emphasises worker’s role of capital equipment and of means of production, leading to that human being could be considered as a form of capital and as a product of investment. Meanwhile, there is considered to be two ways to deal with the investment in human capital that are becoming hardly to distinguish from each other, which are investment in production capital and in consumption capital. The former of the two ways indicates the expenses of developing specific production capabilities whilst the latter enabling an improvement to conceive the consumption for the purpose of increasing satisfaction. From the perspective of human capital, economic man is redefined and is converted into entrepreneur who conveys practical business with the purpose of maintaining and increasing economic values.

The concept of emotional capital is linked with the emergence of emotional economic man and power dispositifs from US management discourse and affected by neoliberal economic theory (Andrade 2015). Emotional capital dispositif shows the four main characteristics: emotions are the point for defining economic behaviours both at work and in consumption; emotions are thought to be competencies that can be learnt and developed for future return and satisfaction; emotional intelligence enables the investment in emotional competencies; the investment in emotional capital can be gained by the economic subject and by the company. Other power dispositifs, such as organisational culture and the commercialisation of experiences, have resulted in a cohesiveness in constructing workers’ and consumers’ emotional lives, accelerating the emergence of emotional economic man.

Human capital has been able to unified the emotional management of work and consumption that used to be contradictory at the emergence of mass consumer society (Andrade 2015). Consumer emotions were managed by the tools of adverts and sales strategies which ended up with involuntary attention and impulsive buying. Emotions affect economic rationale and behaviours, decision-making, individual performance and daily behaviours at workplace social context. They are also converted in to capital that generates complex relations with intellectual
The continuous popularity of social media has created social relationships among consumers with further engagement with interactive online social behaviour, including social commerce. Online community provides the ideal context to improve relationship quality among participants through their reciprocal behaviours. In addition, social interactions generate various values for business, encouraging product/service providers to apply social media strategies to their marketing practice. It has been clear that the trend for business agenda in social commerce from now on is to establish social support and to improve relationship quality within the community. In the particular subject of fashion, consumers’ involvement in fashion and brand is the primary motivator for engaging with fashion brand related eWOM. Hence, it is clear that fashion business can adopt relational marketing on the basis of social support and relationship quality to invoke interactive brand-to-consumer communication instead of traditional marketing strategies.

With a straight approach to the concept design, the discussion of fashion branding in this chapter has explained the theoretical framework that evidently supports the concept design. Brand authenticity and emotional attachment are the two components for emerging fashion designers to focus on. The former is inherited inside the essence of being a fashion designer, and the latter can be achieved through the concept design.

Human capital has been rarely discussed in the practical context of fashion industry. Accordingly, it lacks empirical data on the application of human capital theory (including both aspects of social capital and emotional capital). This concept design aims at providing a practical adoption of these theories that consider employees’ competencies and intelligence. Further discussion on the perspective of entrepreneurship is suggested.

Throughout the literature review on the domains of social commerce, fashion brand and human capital, the most related theoretical knowledge has been reviewed. However, there is still the gap between the academic support with
the reality. Social commerce has been increasing its adoption in the entire business world, but not touching the issues related to fashion designers. On the other hand, though fashion branding has been under the discussion for quite a while, there is rare attention paid to a model connected with nurturing the next generations of fashion designer. Human capital with even less debate and practical application to the apparel industry is becoming noteworthy along with the growth of social media and net celebrity. To bridge the gap, the concept of *Meister* has revealed its novelty and importance, directing to the next chapter of the design process of this concept.
Chapter 3

Design

3.1 Design Objectives

Meister is a smartphone application designed exclusively for emerging fashion designer to socially connect with customers based on the making process of new collections. It can not exist outside the MUJIN eco-system introduced in Chapter 1, which aims at designing high involving experience of shopping designer fashion. Within this scope, Meister is specifically designed to promote emerging fashion designers by adopting their human capital to build the relationship with customer in the context of social commerce. Emerging fashion designer is the sole target user of Meister. In other word, Meister is an exclusive tool for emerging fashion designer to build customer relationship and to claim design approach. To achieve this, there are three major aspects to deal with:

- Interactive communication channel between emerging fashion designer and customer
- Seamless transmission from online communication to offline activity
- Dynamic delivery of emerging fashion designer’s approach to customer

The methodology conforms the design thinking process which consists three major procedures of ethnography, concept design and prototyping. In ethnography, based on the fieldwork done by the author, five-model analysis of the fieldwork and mental model analysis of the fieldwork master are followed up.
The concept design includes the creation of target persona, concept sketching, use case and key path scenario. Prototyping refers to detailed UI design.

The common framework

![Figure 3.1: Stakerholder of Mujin ecosystem](image)

The *Meister* application is derived from the *Mujin* ecosystem as a project which the researcher has been devoting to. This ecosystem aims at designing high involving experience for shopping apparel. On the other hand, it also tries to adopt consumer’s buying power to create the environment to nurture emerging fashion designers. Within this system, emerging designers and consumers are affiliated by management team, which is also responsible for providing support on manufacturing the garments and the entire organisation of sales activities (See Figure 3.1). The direct connection between designers and consumers enables the former to gain exposure and popularity along with the release of new collections. For the latter, consumers are able to shop apparel with fresh fashion approach and design, and to encounter the designers they like for higher involvement in fashion which is not provided in any existing business. The ultimate goal of this ecosystem is to incubate independent fashion designers with their own group of supporters.

The role of *Meister* application within the *Mujin* ecosystem is depicted in Figure 3.2. The service blueprint explains the mechanism of the ecosystem and
Figure 3.2: Service blueprint of *Mujin*
how two main stakeholders, fashion designer and consumer, interact reciprocally.

3.2 Ethnography

Ethnography is applied to study the particular targets and to observe their behaviour. Two fieldworks have been conducted to get different approaches to create the target persona. Ethnography also serves as a crucial role for the interoperation of fashion designer’s mental models.

Fieldwork #1

![Fieldwork #1 Fieldwork scenes](image)

Figure 3.3: Fieldwork #1 Fieldwork scenes

The first fieldwork was done at Maker’s Base Inc. in Meguro-Ku, Tokyo, on Aug 9th 2015. The goal is to understand what fashion accessory designer’s attitude is towards the communication with customer and the communication pattern. Maker’s Base is the largest workshop in Japan that provides both facility and tutoring for general customers (‘general customers’ indicate people without training experience on handicrafts) to make original handicrafts from raw materials. The author observed a silver golden ring workshop with two attendees tutored by
a craftswoman (fieldwork master). The workshop lasts approximately two hours and it is conducted by professional craftspeople and some crucial procedures are done by the craftsman in charge to prevent both failure and unintended injury. Figure 3.3 is some photos of the ring making process.

A thick description has been compiled chronologically to summarise the entire fieldwork and to provide the basic data for further analysis. After the attendees arrived the reception on the second floor, the fieldwork master led them to the engraving area on the first floor and started with a self-introduction. For the full details, please refer to Appendix A.

Fieldwork master

The fieldwork master Tomoko Oowatari works as an instructor at the workshop, being responsible for fashion accessory workshops (See Figure 3.4). She was born in Nagasaki Prefecture and left for Tokyo ten years ago. She enjoys spending time in museum or art gallery on leisure time. The master has a background of art education, and worked in a jewellery company before where lacked communication with customers, which became the reason of her job transfer to
the current employer. Besides the full-time job, she’s taking personal orders on fashion accessory. Her goal is to instruct the attendees to make nice handmade fashion accessory that carries attendee’s own memory. In the long-term, the master also hopes to launch her own brand of fashion accessory to fulfil her design approach to customers.

**Five-model analysis**

Five-model analysis consists flow model, sequence model, artefact model, cultural model and physical model. This process provides a multi-angle to the fieldwork and sets the foundation for further analysis of the mental model of fieldwork master.

![Figure 3.5: Fieldwork #1 Flow model analysis](image)

Flow model (Figure 3.5) shows how the fieldwork master interacts with the attendees and other characters during the workshop. The master shows all the artefacts to the attendees and explains the way of using them. Also, she demonstrates the tips of creating perfect effect to the attendees, making sure that the attendees have the best experience. The flow model indicates that, even though the fieldwork master now becomes able to physically interact with
attendees, namely her customers, her creation of the work is still conformed by employer, signifying only partial independent designer’s workflow.
In the sequence model (Figure 3.6), the ring is basically made by the attendees themselves under fieldwork master’s instruction. This does not provide an implementing model for the concept design, since customers are not able to get involved this much for lacking expertise and time in the real context of fashion designer’s work. The reason is that the master has a totally different goal for the workshop than for the personal orders she receives from individual customers.

Artefact model includes the artefacts used by fieldwork master during the process of ring making (See Figure 3.7). As the process proceeds, the fieldwork master shows each artefact to the attendees and explains how to properly use the artefact with both useful tips and cautions. Some artefacts are only used by the fieldwork master for the process may be too skilful for the attendees or may cause injury.

Figure 3.8 and Figure 3.9 are the physical environment that supports the fieldwork master to conduct the ring making workshop. Figure 3.8 is the reception on the second floor where the attendees check in before the workshop starts, then led by the fieldwork master to the work space accordingly. Figure 3.9 is the first floor with two rooms of wood work and metal work. In the engraving section of the metal room, the master interacts with the attendees. The physical model shows the consistency of the environment that supports the master’s work.
According to the information collected during the communication with the fieldwork master, the cultural model that interprets the master’s desire, expectation, or general approach to achieve her goal is shown in Figure 3.10. Not only the workplace has influence on her decision making, but her hobbies and interests, education, and social network also significantly help her during the process of forming up career goal.
Based on the five-model analysis, fieldwork master’s mental model (Figure 3.11) can be further extracted. The left block is the master’s cognition and the right block is the master’s action.
one is the consequent actions. When the master sees the artefacts, she introduces
them to the attendees and explains the manual. She praises attendees’ work when
she sees them doing well. Besides, she demonstrates the correct way of using an
artefact when she sees the attendees doing it incorrectly. The master answers in
detail when she hears attendee’s question. This mental model provides an abstract
perspective to design the concept.

Fieldwork #2

The goal of Fieldwork #2 is to understand how fashion designer’s delivers the
design approach to customers and the communication pattern with customers
in a physical environment. The fieldwork was conducted at a fashion designer’s
showcase of new collection in Daikanyama, Tokyo, on April 10th 2016. Not only
the designer’s customers visited the showcase, but also buyers, boutique stores
owners, etc. attended to order new samples for the next season. The fieldwork
lasted approximately forty minutes. Please refer to Appendix A for the thick
description of Fieldwork #2.

Fieldwork master

Mr. Takeshi Mori, the fieldwork master, works in a design company as design
director. He is in charge of the fashion brand exhibited at the showcase. Though
the work is Tokyo-centred, the master travels to Europe, Singapore sometime. He
has a great interest in museum and music creation. His original sound tracks,
mainly in the genre of electronics, are published on SoundCloud\(^1\) and used by the
employer as well.

The fieldwork master has a undergraduate education on American-European
literature, after which he attended Bunka Fashion College. After graduation he
worked at Issey Miyake Inc. From the perspective of profession, the master’s goal
to design the garments that sell. Besides, he also has a strong desire to deliver
his design approach to the customers.
Five-model analysis

Figure 3.13 shows the flow model, in which the fieldwork master interacts individually with each group of visitors. By initiating a Facebook event\(^2\), the showcase reaches a wider audience. There are three noticeable points in the flow model. First, the fieldwork master asks the women visitors about specific design on sleeves of dress by showing sample pictures in his iPad, since he has been planning to design a series of dress and he has no previous experience on that. He asked very detailed preferences from the group of women visitors as a replenishment to his market research. Second, he appoints the next meeting time with one couple of visitors, implying a very close relationship between them. Third, he interchangeably interacts with each group of visitors, and emphasises his design approach of the new collection to each visitor.

Figure 3.14 is the sequence model. The left column of actions are repeated whenever a new visitor arrives, which indicates that the fieldwork master’s emphasis on claiming his design approach. Several sequences are worth noticing here. The master shows female visitors some pictures of dress with different sleeves to probe the favourable design from the perspective of female customers.
Although he has done market research on the preference on sleeve types, the master still trusts his customers’ feedback. Besides, he also appoints the date to meet with a couple at his own house when the couple leaves. This implies that the master has a very close relationship with that couple visitors.

Figure 3.13: Fieldwork #2 Flow model

Figure 3.14: Fieldwork #2 Sequence model
Figure 3.15 shows the artefacts used by fieldwork master at the showcase. Two artefacts have drawn the author’s interest. First, the master mentioned during the conversation with visitors that he likes dressing in all black. The hangers and stands are also pure black, representing an extension from his preference. Second, the iPad as a modern digital device, appears to be the most important artefact at the showcase for showing visitors sample pictures.

The physical model as Figure 3.16 shows, implies the elaboration on the location of the showcase. Daikanyama area is well-known for its clustered apparel-centred layout, with a wide range from boutique shop, buyer shop, designer shop, etc. This appeals to the customers with requirements of better design, enabling them to attend the showcase in their familiar zone.

Figure 3.17 is the cultural model with two noteworthy points. First, the social network has a significant influence to the fieldwork master as most of his friends on Facebook appear to be fashion or art related, not to mention that he uses social media to promote himself. Second, he is highly involved in music and museum, which are considered as the major sources that generate inspirations for his practical design.
Some detailed factors that play an important role have been discovered through this five-model analysis. It enables the author to study fashion designer’s work from a practical perspective. The noteworthy discoveries are: first, the fieldwork master reveals a consistency of his aesthetic preference from garment to
other ordinary objects; second, the master sincerely listens to customer’s opinions even on specific design details; third, the master has a positive attitude towards the communication with customers and even maintains intimate friendship with them. These discoveries are to be integrated into the concept design.

**Mental model analysis**

![Mental model diagram](image)

**Figure 3.18: Fieldwork #2 Mental model**

The fieldwork master’s mental model is shown as Figure ???. The left column is the master’s cognition including 'see, hear, and speak', with a series action of 'great, talk to, encourage, appoint, explain, inquire, take notes,' etc. The master reveals a mental model that seeks for communication with customer not only for building and maintaining relationship, but also for getting inspiration on specific design of new collection. This offers a highly adoptable experience for the concept design.
3.3 Concept Design

Target persona

The target persona is fictionalised based on the fieldwork analysis, as Figure 3.19 shows. Shinya Yamashita, who graduated from one of the world-famous fashion schools, is seeking the possibility to work independently after having been working for an apparel company in Tokyo for six years. However, due to insufficient experience on customer communication and other business-related issues, the target persona hesitates about this decision. Though he has a positive attitude towards customer communication, he finds it also challenging to attract general customer. His mental model is an integration of the two fieldwork discussed hereinbefore, with a series action of introducing, explaining, reminding, demonstrating, suggesting, appointing, asking, answering, taking notes, memorising, etc. His goal is to design the garments which represent his own design approach and to maintain close customer relationship to figure out what customer’s preferences and needs are.

Figure 3.19: Target persona
Concept scheme

To develop the specific concept, the process of concept scheme is necessary to propose the value to the target persona and imagine the co-created value through the value proposing process (See Figure 3.20).

Figure 3.20: Concept scheme

Concept scheme shows how all the elements are integrated into the entire concept and the value that the concept tires to propose to target persona. The persona’s mental model is crucial here as well as It provides prediction to the co-created value based on the value proposing process.
Concept sketching

The idea of the concept sketching for *Meister* is to visualise the process that designer gets inspiration and adopting it to the practical design. Traditionally customer is not able to approach to designer’s original idea about a specific garment, for the purchasing process is merely trade. Also, the concept sketching also consists events activities (communication and interaction between designer and customer) in a physical environment, adopting a traditional way of building designer-to-customer relationship.

![Figure 3.21: Concept sketching of Meister](image)

Furthermore, it is also intended to enable emerging fashion designer to communicate with customers in a more mobile context in the form of smartphone app, which leads a everyday-life impression to designer-to-customer communication.
Use case

After having created the target persona and having illustrated the concept sketching, a detailed use case can be further compiled to include more detailed functionality. Figure 3.22 shows how the target persona uses the *Meister* application in a non-contextual environment.

![Figure 3.22: Use case](image)

The functionality is divided into three sections that fits the general user journey: draughting, creating and releasing. It should be addressed that this use case does not provide a chronological order. Instead, it clarifies the specific details of the concept design and how the target persona becomes able to do with it. The *Monolog* on the lower right corner consists a totally different use case for customer, which is not discussed in this paper. For detailed information about it, please refer to Chapter 1.
**Making story**

A story based on target persona’s profile has been compiled to get further understanding of the real context of possible user journey.

Kinosuke has been considering about quitting the job in the apparel company for a while. Day after day he feels that his brain, hands are all tightened with the company’s marketing strategy instead of a pure pursuit of unique design.

One day he goes to a cafe nearby a museum and sees a group of people sitting together, chatting every lively. One lady in the group, who seems to be the centre of the discussion, expressing her impression about the exhibition in the nearby museum. Her words of ’putting the colour combination into my next SS collection’ catches Kinosuke’s attention. He continues eavesdropping on the conversation, and finds that the lady is a fashion designer working under an service named *Mujin* which helps emerging fashion designer to approach to customers and become famous. He sees the lady taking photos of the brochure of the exhibition and posting on an app called *Meister*. He downloads the app, and finds it available only to *Mujin* designers.

Kinosuke searches the service and decides to join it. Because he is experienced with the process of making garments from sketching, Kinosuke is accepted by the service. Now his is able to log in to the app and starts his journey. Kinosuke has never considered digitalising his inspiration and sharing with others. But as he posts new content, more customers are following his Moodbaord for the authenticity. He feels very surprised and actively interacts with those people. When he finishes his first capsule collection of several garments, he checks the Meister app and finds his work is marker as ‘wanted’ by unexpectedly many people. His first capsule collection is soon produced, and it sells well.

**Key path scenario**

The key path scenario represents the most valuable moments for the user of *Meister*, namely the emerging fashion designer. Three most representative values are illustrated as below.
In Figure 3.23, the designer takes photo of an object that has inspired him recently. In this case, it is a book that the designer has been reading lately. Then he uploads the photo on the app, and puts it under the Moodboard that is related to the photo. The value he receives then is that customers actively comment and add hashtags which is the image perceived by customers. The designer then knows about what his customer think about his design approach and if customer’s perception differs from his original idea.

The second valuable moment starts with a new activity created by the designer, as Figure 3.24 shows. Customers mark 'going', or 'interested' to the
activity, in this case it is exhibition in a museum. Then designer and customers go together. When they exchange feelings about the exhibition, the common feelings and opinions bond the designer and customers emotionally.

Figure 3.25 shows the valuable moment when the designer has finished a collection. He creates a showcase event for his new collection, inviting customers to see the final work that they have been following. When the designer and customers meet at the showcase, they talk about the final work and the designer gets more feedback. Later, the designer feels quite satisfied as he finds that he receives a lot of pre-orders and positive comments.

**Experience map**

The experience map has been created to illustrate the process that the target persona goes through the concept (See Fig3.26). It explains the persona’s behaviours within the process of using the concept and shows how the service offers the values to the persona. In other word, this experience map shows how the concept fits into target persona’s life.
Figure 3.26: *Meister* Experience map
3.4 Prototype

Based on the concept drawing of the mobile application, a working prototype has been created.

![Figure 3.27: Meister user interface: Moodboard](image)

Notes

1. https://soundcloud.com/
Figure 3.28: Meister user interface: Event

Figure 3.29: Meister user interface: Message & Chat
Figure 3.30: *Meister* user interface: Association of inspirations with music
Chapter 4

Evaluation

This chapter evaluates the concept design by presenting the prototype of the Meister application to participants recruited according to the target persona built in Chapter 3. The objective of the evaluation is to examine whether the target persona feels the value proposing and further co-creates new values according to the concept scheme (See Figure 3.20) in Chapter 3. The assumed experience map (See Figure 3.26 in Chapter 3) is to be evaluated as well to understand if the target persona shares the same experience with the Meister application in real situations.

4.1 Evaluation Workflow

Evaluation on a big group of participants is considered to be unnecessary since the objective of the evaluation does not pursue the proof of statistic significance. The target persona has been built specifically upon the profession of fashion designer, hence two participants related to the apparel industry are invited to this evaluation.

Value is indeed the crucial part of the concept design, which consists an individual’s emotions and behaviours (Kalbach 2016). The evaluation does not deal with value exchange. Instead, it is about a process of value proposing to the target persona and value co-creation with the target persona. Hence, the process begins with a hands-on session for the participants to experience the prototype application, and followed by a discussion with the participants about the values they have perceived through the hands-on session. Finally, the co-created new
values between the researcher and the participants are listed and compared with the assumption in the concept scheme (See Figure 3.20 in Chapter 3). The entire process is illustrated as Figure 4.1.

4.2 User Test #1

Testing

The first evaluation was conducted on May 20th, 2016 in a cafe located in Shibuya, central Tokyo. The setup of the environment is considered to be one of the real
situations that the target persona uses the application (See Figure 4.2). Participant #1 is a collage student in his second last academic year at a fashion college in Tokyo. His primary goal is to become a professional pattern maker due to the obsession about the various looks of the same piece of garment on different wearers. He spent approximately fifteen minutes on the application.

![Figure 4.2: Scene of User test #1](image)

**Result**

Through the hands-on session, Participant #1 has perceived several values through value proposing (See Figure 4.3). Firstly, he considers the *Moodboard* as useful element to promote his thoughts. Since he has a personal way of recording the inspirations, which is a set of relational digital vintage pictures that merged together by Photoshop, he further co-creates the value of importing his existing inspiration sets directly to the *Moodboard* so that his followers can see them as well. This indicates that even the fashion designers choose various ways of organising their visual inspirations and resources, the idea behind it remains identical.
The other value perceived by Participant #1 is that he enjoys being recommended about various interesting events around him. It would be his pleasure if some of his customers can accept his invitation and attend the events together with him. Further, he co-creates a new value of seeing this element as an compass to discover new events, exhibitions, galleries, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE PROPOSING</th>
<th>PERCEIVED VALUE</th>
<th>CO-CREATED VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deliver inspirations &amp; approach</td>
<td>Tool of promotion</td>
<td>A tool to combine his existing digital inspiration sets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share workflow of design</td>
<td>Chance of meeting potential customers</td>
<td>Discover interesting events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get support on manufacturing</td>
<td>Keep in touch with customers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build own customer group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control economic performance</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.3: Result of Test #1

Revision

Through the observation of the hands-on session and in-depth interview, the researcher has summarised three major revisions suggested as below:

- Inspiration sharing function position & text hint
- Default view of Moodboard section is intense
- Single moodboard seems to be static picture rather than interactive unit
- Feature of importing existing content from cloud services

Although Participant #1 has given very positive feedback on both the prototype and the concept design, the unsettled career goal of Participant #1 as a fashion school student, makes the researcher to rethink about the target persona setting by limiting target persona of Meister to only fashion designers with work experience. However, the value proposing to Participant #1 has been perceived and further co-created two new personal values, which is thought to be a positive proof of the concept.
4.3 User Test #2

Testing

The second user test was conducted on Jun 3rd 2016 in Suginami, Tokyo. The environment setup was Participant #2’s workplace (See Figure 4.4). Participant #2 is a fashion designer working in Tokyo who has been preparing for his new collection lately. He has been working on selling his work to local buyers and boutique shops. His design approach indicates an emphasis on accurate tailoring that fits the human body and for sure that he hopes that his customers can feel his philosophy.

![Figure 4.4: Scene of user test #2](image)

The revised prototype was used for this test to let the participant focus more on the functionality without interfere from misleading UI design. The researcher observed that Participant #2 was able to keep focusing on each section and had a better user experience with the prototype.
Result

The result of the second test is illustrated in Figure 4.5. By experiencing the application for approximately twelve minutes, Participant #2 has revealed the perception of three values. He feels that the Moodboard as a tool for direct self promotion. Further, he has a new co-created value through experiencing the application which is to introduce the idea of Moodboard to his craftsman and fashion accessory designer friends, especially the traditional craftsmanship lacks channel to get the recognition from general consumers. He also considers it valuable of being supported by manufacturing partner so that he does not need to put efforts in establishing his own manufacturing network. Besides, the participant perceives the value of maintaining customer relationship via the application, and further generates a co-created value which treats random visit from customer as casual get-together with friends.

![Figure 4.5: Result of Test #2](image)

Revision

According to the test results and in-depth interview, several improvements are considered to be feasible for the next prototype: Specify the Invitation of Event, Showcase to customers (e.g. customers with purchase history, new customers).
4.4 Revised Prototype

The main screens of revised prototype are show in Figure 4.6 and 4.7. Designer’s personal page has been set as the fifth main screen that can be accessed more easily, which provides statistical information for the designer to understand his current progress on number of fans, customers with purchase history and followers. Besides, the designer can also compare his popularity against other designers under the same platform and sales performance of released collection. The sharing function has been improved as well as now only content of Moodboard can be created via the sharing button.

Figure 4.6: Revised main screens
Figure 4.7: Revised main screens
Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Conclusion

The concept design of Meister aims at implementing social commerce theory to the fashion industry with an adoption of fashion branding and human capital theory. Social commerce has been a global trend that influences across various industries with a specific focus on relationship marketing. Brand loyalty theory indicates the direction for emerging fashion designers to win over new customers not only for single-purchase but for building long-term relationship and achieve reciprocal value co-creation. Emerging fashion designer’s human capital haven’t been discussed in the academic world, not to mention as part of concept design for social contribution.

The evaluation process has validated the value proposing from the Meister application to its users by checking the participants’ perceived values and further generated value co-creation. This means that the concept design of Meister is perceived as valuable by its target user. Speaking from the perspective of the backstage on system design, partial Mujin system is evaluated as well though it is not the focus of this paper. However, this implies a guidance for future work based on current progress.
5.2 Limitations

The concept design of *Meister* is on the basis of related research on the fan culture of Takarazuka Revue in Japan\(^1\). The uniqueness of this fan culture is not seen anywhere else in the world which makes it unpredictable to expand to other cultural and social context.

Besides, due to lack of sponsors the research project that parallels the *Meister* application had few chance to implement the system design of *Mujin* even in scaled down prototyping. The concept design also does not include fields such as fashion entrepreneurship which has been growing its popularity for academic discussion.

5.3 Future Work

There are several elements within the prototype that have been remained as pure concept with difficulties to realise at the moment. Though the service blueprint of the whole system design (see Figure 3.2 in Chapter 1) has been created, the integration of *Meister* application with the system still requires elaboration. Besides, the two applications within the same eco-system, *Meister* and *Monolog*, have uncovered features by each other, which needs consideration too.

Elements of the concept design

The first feature in *Meister* that needs improvements is the algorithm of analysing the multi-media based inspirations recorded by designers. The multi-media content, including picture, video, text, webpage clips, music, recordings, film entry, etc., requires a comprehensive allocation into specific genre in coordination with designer’s various styles and trends. The co-relation between the multi-media content and fashion genres is connected by programming this analytical algorithm. Once the algorithm is designed, both the designers and customers are able to select and deliver the coordinating fashion style and trend based on the media content they like or have tagged. In that case, designers would enjoy more freedom and
possibilities of associating their preferences on media content with their practical design and bring brand new experience for customers to explore fashion as well.

The other feasible improvement is an extended gameplay experience based on the current statistical information available for designers. It is believed that the existing feature has a positive effect on increasing designers’ dedication to the whole Mujin eco-system, but with a deeper integrated characteristic of gameplay, the designers would be able to manage their progress towards becoming independent designer more effectively and enjoyably.

Concept design within the ecosystem

The concept design of Meister is derived from the Mujin eco-system which includes more stakeholders and separate concepts. Though the evaluation has provided proof of the value proposing of the concept of Meister, it is notable that this concept cannot be individually established without the entire support from the eco-system. Hence, a deeper integration with the Mujin eco-system is called for the long-term development.

Seamless user experience between Meister and Monolog

As mentioned above, the Meister has a dependent relationship with the other Monolog application which is designed for consumers. These two applications ought to share incessant value proposing process from either side of the users, designer or consumer. However, the evaluation is separated and the interaction between these two applications are nor observed and documented yet. The value co-creation process as a combination of both applications is considered to be the validation of the entire Mujin eco-system.

Notes

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Appendix

A  Fieldwork Thick Description

Fieldwork #1 Thick description

We walked to the Maker’s from Meguro Station and arrived there a bit earlier than 10 am. The studio stands out from its neighbours with the architectural style, which is a three-story building looking like factory, with a giant triangle canvas covering it’s right side. There were some gangs of people stepping into the studio, seemingly to be routine members. But also two were standing at a nearby crossing, checking with their cell phones to confirm the location. The empty area in front of the lobby seems to be the parking area for employees’ bicycles and motorbikes. We took some photos of the exterior and stepped in.

The two rooms ahead of the entrance are very spacious, one for wood and one for iron works. Machines and some raw materials, such as wood, can be seen alongside the wall. One the left of the entrance is the stairs to the second floor with a sign ‘Reception’ on the wall, and room for ceramic pottery work where there are already two ladies working on their own. We went upstairs some people were lining up in the room right beside the stairs and we did so too. Some were paying at the reception and some didn’t just like us who might have paid with credit card. After several minutes, we confirm our bookings and a female staff guides us to engraving room on the first floor, where our workshop is to be held. Another two women who are making bracelet today will work with us in the same room.

The person in charge of our workshop was Ms.Oowatari. She introduced herself and confirmed what we were going to make and showed us the samples
in the studio. By showing the samples, she told the basic knowledge of the two material to be used, silver and brass. She asked if any of us had allergy to metal, passing the samples to us, and continued the introduction with the different designs of the ring, finishing, etc. After the introduction, Ms.Oowatari let us choose the material to use. She passed the finger gauges to us to measure the sizes.

The first step was to shape the ring. Before shaping it with the wide roller, the material needs to be heated. Ms.Oowatari did the heating process for us by heating the metal stick along the tarmac cube by gas burner. Then she let us put the heated metal with tweezer into water to cool it down. By doing this, the metal is ready to be shaped. Ms.Oowatari showed the wide roller which compresses and shapes metal, and explained how it works by rolling the handle. She let us insert the metal from one side while rolling the wheel clockwise, and she picked up the metal from the other side. This process was repeated three times. Then the metal was shaped into long flat hexahedron. Then Ms.Oowatari heated the metal for us again and told us to pick the metal on the upper part with the tweezer since it had been shaped which could make it fall up side down and hurt us if picking it on the lower side.

The next step was to create the pattern on the surface of the ring with hammer. Ms.Oowatari guided people to iron work room which is outside the engraving room. She showed us the set of different hammers and the stand where to hammer the metal, then explained in detail how to hold the metal and hammer, and how to make the pattern beautiful. By pass us a piece of metal to test different pattern of the hammers, she let us to start. While we were trying out different hammers, Ms.Oowatari watched us a few steps away and came to check our work when we looked at her for help. She praised our work and let us adjust the powder. After a while when we finally finished this part, she collected our metal sticks and reshaped them into a perfect straight line with mallet.

The next process is engraving. We went back to the engraving room and Ms.Oowatari heated the wax stand which was used to hold the metal stick to engrave marks onto it. She put the metal into the wax and let us think about what to engrave while waiting. After the wax fell down to normal temperature so it held the metal firmly, we were passed a set of engraved marks and small hammer. She suggested us to test on the metal stand first before engraving and
to engrave all the marks within two-finger-wide. After we finished engraving, she
checked our work and gave the comments.

Then she let us bend the metal stick into ring shape with the calibrated
ring mandrel. She took over our metal and said the next step of cutting extra
length out would be done by her since we were not skilled to use the machine. She
cut out the extra part of the metal and then took out a box of adhesive materials.
She fixed the ring onto a stand, and heated the adhesive material onto the joint
part of the ring. After a while she finished it.

Then she let us to polish the ring with files and created angles on the
side of the ring for better wearing comfort. She checked every now and then to
see how we had done.

The final step was to complete the finishing. After removing some spots,
we could choose shinny, gloss and other finishing. Ms.Oowatari put our rings into
the ultrasound machine wash.Then she took them out and wipe away the water
on them. The shinny finishing was done. The mat finishing needed another step
of washing the ring with some special colouring powder to create a white look.
She did it as example and passed the ring to me to finish the rest. Finally the
mat finishing was done too.

Fieldwork #2 Thick description

I arrived at the venue of the showcase at 5:30 p.m. The venue was located in the
third floor of the building which was at the back of a apparel shop. I took the lift
and went to the third floor. The room was wide but separated with white curtains,
so there was merely less than 20m3 area from the entrance for the showcase. A
man in all black was standing in the centre of the area, with a lady standing at
the entrance. There were two more people in the room, which made the room
look even unspacious. I introduced myself and the man said that he was Mori, the
designer of the collection. After explaining my purpose, I stood aside and started
to observe Mori’s actions.

There was a couple with their baby at present that time. The husband
was viewing the garments on the stand and Mori tried to tell him about his design
philosophy. Mori thinks that the size of 'S', 'M' by the manufacturer creates a subconscious impression for consumers that they have to choose the size that fits their body size, which is an obstacle for free-style coordinations. Instead, though he has labelled the sizes numerically, he insists that one should try and compare with different sizes of the same garment to have the most ideal effect on body. The husband put on a sweater and expressed his feeling to Mori. The wife carried the baby and stood beside, glancing the garments and talked to Mori every now and then. After some more time of discussion, Mori wrote down the couple’s required sizes on a sheet. Mori also answered the question from the couple about the availability which would be June.

Meanwhile, two men arrived and Mori turn to them and greeted. He joked about one of the them in casual having drunk as his face seemed red. The other in suit seemed to be the friend brought here and met Mori for the first time. After taking a look of all the garments and Mori’s explanation again about his 'size theory’, the suit man asked if Mori had any formal slacks than jogger trousers, but with a negative answer.

Soon a group of 'Arasa’ women arrived and Mori turned to them. There were four in total and one of them carried a kid. All of them dressed casual but chic and seemed to be very familiar with Mori. Mori asked the woman with kid that if he had taken a siesta before coming. They started freely checking out the garments on the stand, and Mori started to explain his design philosophy for the collection, mentioning about the characteristic of free-customisation on the patterns and colours. One of the women put on a long sweater and asked for Mori’s suggestion on size. Her companies also gave her advices on colour. Then she put on the sweater with other colour as well. One of them wished to find the right size for her husband, so Mori took off his jacket and put on the sweater as demonstration.

Meanwhile the two men left and Mori saw them off at the entrance. The husband wrote down his preference on the sheet with his baby in arms, and the wife put on a pair of jogger trousers. Mori talked to the couple and the Arasa group in turn. The husband made an appointment to visit Mori’s house before they left.

After finishing viewing the garments in the right area, people moved to
the other side of the room and the assistant prepared more chairs and served them with tea. Mori lit the iPad on the shelf and told the women that he needed help. He showed several photos of model wearing different dresses, and asked which collar and sleeve they preferred wearing. He said that he had never designed any dress before so he needed some research on consumer’s preferences, which might differ from European consumers’ preferences. The women’s reply surprised Mori, since they did not choose the design that Mori thought would sell as non-sleeve design would make the arm fat. They also asked Mori about the availability of the collection and they thought it was fast that Mori could make the manufacturing done by June. Mori told them that he went to the factory and negotiated with the partner in person.