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Master's Thesis  
Academic Year 2016

*Monolog*: A Relationship-centric Mobile  
Application to Change the Current Landscape of  
the Fashion Industry through Value Co-Creation  
and Fan Club Community

Keio University Graduate School of Media Design

Nianqun Yu

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

Nianqun Yu

Thesis Committee:

Professor Naohito Okude	(Supervisor)
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Abstract of Master's Thesis of Academic Year 2016

*Monolog*: A Relationship-centric Mobile Application to  
Change the Current Landscape of the Fashion Industry  
through Value Co-Creation and Fan Club Community

Category: Design

Summary

In recent years, customer's shopping behaviors are changing with technology updates and traditional bi-annual fashion events cannot satisfy customer's needs for newness. Coincidentally, emerging designers are unexploited area and need attentions and supports from the public.

In this paper, I introduce a mobile application *Monolog*, by incorporating Takarazuka fan's mental model and behavior pattern into the fashion industry, to invoke customer's attachment towards the designer products, increase involvement with the brands and designers to nurture emerging fashion designers in the long-run.

Keywords:

Design Thinking, Service Design, Relationship Marketing, Takarazuka, C2C Communication

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

With the rapid development of Internet technology and diffusion of mobile devices, information distribution and transmission are much faster than ever. Consumer's shopping behaviors, especially in the fashion industry, are changing with technology updates as well. Nowadays, customers receive constant stimulations, require immediate gratifications, aspire to get involved with brands and want to be treated as specific individuals. The trend of customer's behavioural changes can be described by the term high-involved shopping experience.

High involvement customer, a type of customers who are willing to devote their time and efforts to study the brand histories and compare similar products before they make the purchasing decisions, is well-known in the marketing field. Unlike buying cereals or other daily commodities, high-involvement purchasing behavior involves more emotional factors in the decision-making process and customers gradually regard the brand or the product as the representation of their identities and lifestyles. Obviously, current shopping experience cannot satisfy all customer's needs. Therefore, the whole fashion industry faces a transition from traditional transactional retailing model to a more interactive, relation-based co-creating model with the aid of technology. Takarazuka fan is a type of ultra-high involvement customer(Wada 2015). They not only watch the musicals, but also search related information about the star, join star's fan club, attend different types of events, and promote stars or shows to their family or friends. They invest much more time and efforts on the star than purely enjoy the musicals.

This research aims to bring the Takarazuka fan club ecosystem specifically to the fashion industry by involving customers with the items they bought and supporting emerging designers they like. The goal for the research is to arise customer's awareness about emerging designers and to support them in the long-run. Customer's involvement, loyalty and well-beings are expected to increase throughout fan club community, actor-to-actor(A2A) communication, and value co-creation.



The following sections are about to discuss current fashion industry situations from various stakeholders' perspectives, existing business models and services try to involve customers with brand and support emerging designers, Takarazuka revue history, fan club ecology and fans purchasing behaviors, and proposal of integrating fan club model into the fashion industry.

## **1.1 Current Situation in the Fashion Industry**

### **Accelerated Fashion Industry Transition**

The council of Fashion Designers of America(CFDA) employed the prestigious consulting agency, The Boston Consulting Group, to analyze current situation and project future directions. (Council of Fashion Designers of America 2016) The report reveals that both influential apparel makers and individual designers are striving to keep the in-season relevancy to deliver the perception of newness to their customers. For example, at the beginning of 2016, famous British luxury brand Burberry announced a see now/buy now system during London Fashion Week to bridge conventional six months waiting period.(Friedman 2016) Same season, Thakoon Panichgul, a designer whose designs are worn by celebrity such as Michelle Obama, decided to abandon New York Fashion Week schedule and sell his brand to Silas Chou's daughter's investment firm Bright Fame Fashion.(Bobila 2015) Matthew Williamson, Thomas Tait, Tom Ford and Rebecca Minkoff all shorten the waiting period to keep their designs as fresh as possible. (VanessaFrideman 2016)

The CFDA report also appeals four future changes in the fashion industry: support and respect the creativity of designers and brand, highlight the philosophy and idea behind each design, confirm the role played by customer and help emerging designers grow their brand and business.

### **Altered Customer Behaviors in Incessantly Changed Technology Environment**

As aforementioned, abundant information and fast growing technology make customer thinking in a faster way. There is a phrase, "IWWIWWIWI generation", came up by consumer behavior psychologist Kit Yarrow, to describe this phenomenon.(Yarrow 2014) "IWWIWWIWI" stands for "I want what I want

when I want it”. This group of people pursues three main goals in their daily lives: newness, self-expression, and recognition. Firstly, people become more innovation optimism. They are craving for new technology and novel ideas. At the same time, because of the information overload, customers cannot try all available products. Then, the communication among customers becomes more important. Reviews on e-commerce become trust barometers and word-of-mouth voluntary promoting way gradually replace the absolute position of traditional marketing. Solely in the United States, there are more than 1 trillion discussions about brands online every year. This number increases 15% per year. 70% of customers trust reviews online. This type of online communication facilitated the development of virtual relationships. However, on the other side, the depth of virtual intimacy is shallower than the conventional bond.

Secondly, the expansion of technology makes people more self-focused, self-referenced and self-interested. Recently, a person can finish most of the tasks with only several clicks of the mouse. We become lonelier than our ancestors. A salient characteristic shared by all lonely people is they prefer products that are not approved by the general public. The more individualist customer wants more attention, personalization, involvement, and appreciation. They like the feeling of being consulted by marketing experts and companies. Moreover, the items they are using now are far beyond the original functionalities. The items also show people’s taste, sense, ideology, and belief. People prefer scarce products which coincide with their views of themselves as unique individuals. The scarcity even becomes a key factor in making the purchase decision. The yearn for “specialness” explains why multilevel loyalty programs are more effective than dual level programs as well.

However, even though they long for expressing themselves in unique ways, paradoxically they expect recognitions from others. The challenge for the service provider is to balance the exclusiveness, personality, and uniqueness with the sense of belonging. The community builds on commonalities. The brand usually acts as an emotional pipe to connect customer together and the values and cultures behind compelling brands gather like-minded people together. Customers want to be treated as a part of the group also because they assume that group represents the precious virtue they like. The analysis also shows the fastest financial growth brands are usually able to elicit joy from product and experience, enable connections among customers, inspire exploration about the brand, evoke pride and loyalty and finally impact the whole society in the long-run.

## Emerging Designer Issue

There is an online survey tested the public attitudes toward a proposal of nurturing emerging designers<sup>1</sup>. The survey asked people for their interests in financially supporting young designers (set investment amount to 30,000 JPY, around 180 USD). The overwhelming majority of respondents disagree with this proposal. The result exhibits 42% of respondents have no interest in this topic at all and 23% of them don't understand the purpose of this proposal. For the rest, 17% thinks these emerging designers are not good targets for investment and 8% thinks 30,000 JPY is too much for supporting emerging designers. As a result, only 3% has the investment intention to support emerging designers.

The kind of critical situation happens to emerging designers not only on the Internet but also in the real life. There are usually two main career paths for design school graduates: working under major apparel companies or start their own business. For emerging designers who have clear visions and intend to incorporate the worldview into their works, working as independent designers overweighs joining apparel companies. They can control the speed of work by themselves and pick the projects they are passionate with. However, According to an experienced recruiter, while benefiting from these merits, independent designers also need to endure the inevitable risks. Without a mature operational system and supporting team behind them, they have to take care of everything by themselves, from financial management, contacting manufacturers and pattern makers, branding and retailing to inventory control and customer service. The income stream is extremely unstable until their designs are fully recognised in the fashion industry. If emerging designers make any strategic movement wrong, they have to endure all the losses by themselves. There are several existing businesses try to help emerging designers start their own business from scratch. In the next section, the author discusses related works and barriers on the way to success.

## 1.2 Existing Business Models

### Threadless

Threadless<sup>2</sup> is a Chicago-based e-commerce website and online community of artists and illustrators established in late 2000 by Jack Nickell and Jacob DeHart (Lakhani and Kanji 2008). The main products from Threadless.com are t-shirts, hoodies, and tanks. The price range for a regular t-shirt is from 25 USD to 30 USD. There

are around one million “Likes” on Threadless Facebook fan page<sup>3</sup>. The speciality for Threadless shirt is that all the designs sold on the websites are designed and selected by the users within the online community. The online community provides a free space for members to critique the designs submitted by other users, share their daily lives, upload songs and videos which inspired their design, find teammates, ask technical questions or design suggestions, and purchase t-shirts that have won the weekly design competition.

Each week, there are several prescribed themes posted on Threadless.com. Around 1000 people submit their own designs and more than 500,000 members help to select winning designs. The winners can receive 2000 USD cash, 500 USD gift card and collect up to 7 USD copyright fee on each t-shirt of their design sold.

## NOT JUST A LABEL

NOT JUST A LABEL(NJAL)<sup>4</sup>is an emerging designer showroom and online retailing platform founded in 2008. There are seven thousand likes on their Facebook fan page<sup>5</sup>.The goal for NJAL is to help designers gain exposure in the fashion industry and finance them to start their own business. Customers can either choose to order the designer item through the online store or contact designer directly. Emerging designers need to find manufacture by themselves and ship directly to customers. The price of designer item ranges from 300 GBP<sup>6</sup> to 1200 GBP. Currently, more than 20,000 collections designed by 8000 designers are displayed on the website. The NJAL association also choose around 2000 seed players as black sheep and provide a special session to introduce their work.

## Wowcracy

Wowcracy<sup>7</sup> is a Kickstarter-like crowdsourcing website started from 2013 with 25,000 USD initial investment. Everyone can launch and get involved in a creative project. Around fourteen people liked that Facebook pages<sup>8</sup>. Creators need to upload the pictures and descriptions about their products, set the funding goals, narrate the story behind the designs and share the updates. Supporters can leave comments to encourage the creator and invest money to support the project. Depends on the amount of money supporters invested, supporters may get different types of rewards, including receive the phone call from designers, get the sketches, received the product catalogs and receive the real product. However, in order to get the real product, supporters usually need to pay two to three times

more money than directly purchasing famous designer items.

### **Honest by.**

Honest by.<sup>9</sup> is an e-commerce website founded by an award-winning designer Bruno Pieters in 2012. Twenty thousand customers like the Facebook fan page<sup>10</sup>. They offer the new collections from designers through their online store. The Honest by team claims themselves as 100% transparent company. In addition to basic information on fabric and the design philosophy behind each piece of work, they also disclose the time consumed in the manufacturing process, details about upstream suppliers and downstream distribution channels, origins of fabric used in garments. Meanwhile, they divulge the price calculation formula. The Honest by team discomposes the price into the components of labor cost, raw material cost, transportation fee, packaging cost, wholesale markup, and retail markup to attract customer.

## **1.3 Obstacles to Success**

All the online platforms are trying to address emerging designer issues. They can be divided into three types, e-commerce websites such as Threadless and Not Just A Label; crowdfunding platforms such as WowCracy; and one-stop-solution platform such as Honest by., which covered from outsourced production to retailing. Among all these websites, the most successful one is Threadless. For the rest, they more or less met some operational troubles. Ceci Joannou, the founder and editor in chief of online magazine “Brand + Community” analyses four of the hurdles in emerging designer nurturing field(Joannou 2013).

The first problem with existing business models is they lack the clear brand recognition. In order to realize the economies of scale and spread the financial risks, these platforms typically employ across marketing and promotional strategies. Concurrently, the business development expenses per brand or designer are diluted. Each brand/designer does not have enough money to form an effective brand image and brand lifestyle to attract customers. The second problem, a pretty typical topic in the Internet world, is information overload. Most of the websites place themselves as markets of emerging talents. They post all interested people without curation. This action leads to the inconsistent in the style, no clear vision and no compelling and directional assortment. The third problem

roots from emerging designers. Because emerging designers have no recognition in the fashion industry, thus, customers need a certain amount of knowledge and judgemental ability before they make the purchase decision, especially when the emerging designer item are costly. Therefore, the customers of these platforms are usually a small pool of people, who are engaged and knowledgeable fashion experts. The last problem is the financial problem. Current platforms either offer consignment or force designers to accept unfair payment term. But the real needs for these young talents are tangible financial results.

Hence, a screening process is required to balance the accessibility and curation. There should be a clear theme and coherent arrangement of all designs. In addition, a proper fashion education and affordable price of designer items should be introduced.

## 1.4 Takarazuka Fans Ecology

To understand the key elements to raise ultra-high involved customers, it is important to know the Takarazuka Revue and characteristics of fan's behaviors. The Takarazuka Revue<sup>11</sup> is a all-female musical theatre troupe based in Takarazuka, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan. There are five troupes in Takarazuka Revue: Flower, Moon, Snow, Star and Cosmos and each of them has different styles and characteristics. Each year, each troupe performs two to three regular works at Takarazuka Grand Theatre and Tokyo Takarazuka Theatre respectively. Each work performs 45-55 times in each theatre. In addition to Takarazuka Grand Theatre and Tokyo Takarazuka Theatre, there are several special performances performed in the local theatres. Because of long history of Takarazuka revue and uncommon business strategy employed by Hankyu group, Takarazuka fans form a very special ecology in Japanese entertainment industry(Morishita 2014). There are several studies and interpretations of the development of Takarazuka revue and fan clubs.

### Evolution of Star-oriented Fan Club

There are several research about Takarazuka fans' mental model and purchasing behaviors. According to the book "Takarazuka Fans Sociology: Stars are made outside the theatre" written by Naomi Miyamoto, each star individual fan club is formed by passionated fans voluntarily and fans build reliable and loyal relationships with the stars for several years. (Miyamoto 2011) Each year there are around

40 young girls enter Takarazuka music school and learn music theory, dancing and acting. After two years training, they sign the contract with Takarazuka Revue and officially become revue members. They are randomly assigned into different troupes. The rudimentary stage of fan club starts from two to three years after the stars enter the Takarazuka revue. After getting used to the intensive life in the revue and performing on the stage, the stars gradually have the chance to act relative important roles in the shows or plays and get attentions from the audience. Before or after each performance, some experienced fans even wait near the backstage entrance for the greenhorns to give warm supports and suggestions. These experienced fans have already watched Takarazuka revue for several years and understand what are the criteria and qualifications for a top star on the stage. Thus, the young stars are more than willing to interact with these fans to get advice to improve their skills. Bidirectional relationships gradually established and this group of fans is the blueprint for fan club.

Three to Five years after entering the revue, some of the stars get the chance to be the main actresses in a performance called “Shinjinkouen”, which is the work performed by greenhorns. “Shinjinkouen” performs twice per regular work. The scale, scripts, songs and customs are exactly same as regular performance. Selected as main cast of “Shinjinkoen” usually indicates that the star has potential to become the top star or important role in the future. That is the recognition by the producer. Then the fans feel the sense of responsibility to nurture the star to success. The fans select the leader among the original fan group and submit the fan club formation application form to the revue. With the permission of holding fan club activities. The fan club related activities including ticket distribution, troupe musical viewing, club musical viewing, guard for star, selling goods and uniform, making fan club news paper and holding tea party are the main source of running budget.

## **Takarazuka Fans’ Special Purchasing Behaviors**

One special trait of Takarazuka fan is the repetitive purchase behaviors. This section tries to decipher the trigger of people to be Takarazuka fan and incentives for them to support Takarazuka stars. One survey asked 350 people about why they become Takarazuka Fans. (Wada 2015) The authors assorted sample into 4 groups, 21.1% are potential users (watched Takarazuka revue 0 times), 49.4% are light users (watched Takarazuka 1 to 3 times), 20.9% “ are middle users (watched Takarazuka revue 4 to 9 times) and 8.6% are heavy users (watched Takarazuka

revue more than 10 times). Because there are too few sample from heavy users, thus, the collectors conducted another survey among 134 ticket exchange site users and catagorized them as light heavy users(watched Takarazuka revue 10 to 19 times), middle heavy users(watched Takarazuka 20 to 29 times) and super heavy users(more than 30 times). Combined these two surveys, the authors summarized the following form.

	Family	Friend	TV	CS	CM	Original Work	TV Special
Potential	28%	14%	57%	8%	8%	15%	14%
Light	48%	30%	28%	9%	9%	16%	10%
Middle	63%	32%	38%	19%	19%	22%	22%
L Heavy	34%	20%	20%	6%	6%	12%	6%
M Heavy	47%	26%	16%	0%	11%	0%	5%
S Heavy	42%	38%	21%	0%	8%	8%	0%

Table 1.1: Triggers of Being Fans

5 Clusters					
	13 re-sponders	30 re-sponders	41 re-sponders	21 re-sponders	29 re-sponders
Accessing desire	0.56	-0.62	0.95	-26	-0.77
Self-learning	0.05	-1.03	0.82	0.54	-0.51
Growth support-ing	0.41	-0.71	0.69	0.14	-0.53
Bond	0.80	-0.64	0.92	-0.35	-0.73
Pressure Relief	-1.29	0.63	0.60	0.57	-1.33
Superior	-0.09	-0.68	0.75	0.32	-0.54

Table 1.2: Correlation Coefficients of Emotional Motivations: by Clusters

Based on the survey result, the authors found that most of heavy users firstly exposed to Takarazuka because of invitations from family and friends. Heavy user



Characteristics of Each Fan Group					
	Manic Fan	Classic Fan	Voluntary Fan	Non-routine Fan	Fixed Fan
Takarazuka Revue Viewing Behavior	More than other groups	More in Takarazuka	More in Tokyo	Average	Less than other groups
Takarazuka-related Consumption	More than other groups	More relation consumption	more individual consumption	less relation consumption	less than other groups
Relationship with FC	High	High	Low	Low	Low

Table 1.3: Characteristics of Each Fan Group

groups are also willing to invite family members and friends to watch Takarazuka musicals together to nurture more future heavy users. These heavy users, compared with other groups, having more purchasing intention, high involvement information processing ability, community-related consumption and brand supporting consumption.

Another survey is about motivations of joining takarazuka fan club and becoming Takarazuka star-oriented fan club members among 134 Takarazuka fans through a ticket website. The musical watching history of this sample interviewees ranges from 1 year to 55 years and the average watching history is 15.9 years. 95.5% of them are female and 69.4% (93 people) of them watched more than ten times in the past years(Ranges from 10 times to 110 times).

By employing principal factor method, the data analysts abstract 6 key factors: accessing desire factor, self-learning factor, growth supporting factor, bond factor, pressure relief factor and superior status factor, which are the reasons that people want to support the star. Based on these 6 factors, the researcher divided responders into 5 clusters: Manic fan, classic fan, voluntary fan, non-routine fan and fixed fan. Table 1.3 shows that the higher level of communication they have with fan club community, the more money customers want to spend money on

relation consumption and shop repetitively.

Therefore, in the following design section, it is important to design the purchase trigger, start the relationship, strengthen the bond, encourage them shop repetitively and finally feel the sense of self-actualization. Detailed design objectives will be discussed in Section 3.1.

## 1.5 Proposal

Previous analysis and research show that fashion industry is under a dramatic change and clothes turnover rates are faster than before. Customers are seeking for newness and specialty but need a faster way to digest information and others to recognize their styles, emerging designers cannot catch attention from the public, and existing services are too conservative and diluted the focus on designs. On the other hand, Takarazuka fan club model successfully retains repetitive customers, invokes customer's loyalty and involvement, and maintains noteworthy profits. Thus, based on the fashion industry current situation, insights from existing businesses, and basic Takarazuka knowledge, this research aspires to combine ultra-high involved Takarazuka Fan club ecosystem and E-commerce websites together to invoke customer's attachment towards the designer products, increase involvement with the brands and designers to nurture emerging fashion designers in the long-run. Therefore, a relationship-centric mobile application *Monolog* is proposed in this thesis.

### Common Framework

The mobile application, *Monolog*, proposed in this thesis shares a common framework with the other application named *Meister*<sup>12</sup>. Figure 1.1 illustrates the whole service ecosystem. *Meister* is a smartphone application designed exclusively for fashion designers. *Meister* provides emerging designer an outlet to convey their design concept, a channel to expose to the public and an alternative route to start their designer careers. On the other hand, this application focuses more on building the fan community and perceive the value from the customer's perspective. Next section explain the mobile service *Monolog* in details.

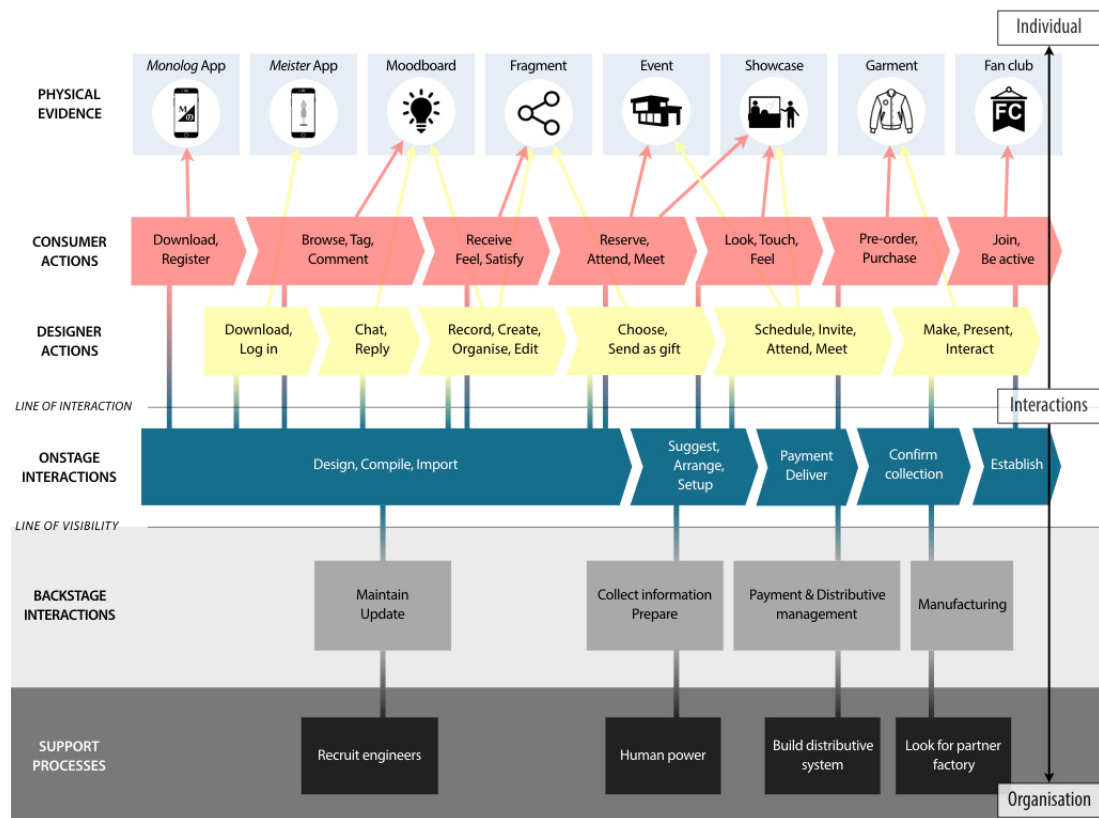


Figure 1.1: Service Blueprint

## *Monolog*

*Monolog* aims to provide an interactive shopping platform with affordable designer items, a direct channel for customers to access to emerging designers and their designs, and an exclusive fandom community connect similar people together. All the elements listed below interact together to create a customized fashion experience for the users.

- Shopping Page
- Mood Board
- Friend's Log
- Instant Message
- Snapic

- Monolog
- Designer's Blog
- Profile Page
- Offline Event Reservation System

On this platform, customers can browse items designed by emerging designers, check the inspirations and thoughts behind each designs via Mood Board, join emerging designer's fan club, purchase designer items at an affordable price, receive personalized hand written message cards from designers, log stories and moods associated with the items they bought and share with other users, check designer's daily activities on designer's log and participate online communication, send instant message to other fan club members, share inspirations and pictures with designers to indirectly contribute designer's design, and attend offline fan club event to meet designers and other fans.

All these elements are integrated together by employing Takarazuka fan's customer journey. At the beginning, users are purely non-relational customers and only good-exchange involves in the transaction. As customers gradually understand the concept behind the designs and involve more with the brand, they are willing to passively accept offers proposed by service providers. The relationship fortified and slowly a community formed. Progressively, users start to actively contribute the the brand and designer and ultimately become part-time marketers.

## 1.6 Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters.

Chapter 1 discusses current situations in the fashion industry, existing business models, obstacles to success, Takarazuka fan's ecosystem and proposal.

Chapter 2 reviews academic articles in relationship marketing domain, computer mediated communication domain and value co-creation domain and find the gap to fit the concept.

Chapter 3 describes the design process of *Monolog* in the order of design thinking process, which includes three fieldworks, abstracted mental model, target persona based on mental model, concept scheme, concept sketching, use case, making story, key paths, customer journey and concept drawing.

Chapter 4 evaluates the concept designed in Chapter 3 and modifies the concepts grounded on users' feedbacks.

Chapter 5 draws the conclusion, introspects limitations and looks ahead to the future works.

## Notes

- 1 Minnanokoi Survey [vote.smt.docomo.ne.jp/news/society/result/5158](http://vote.smt.docomo.ne.jp/news/society/result/5158)
- 2 Threadless Official Website <https://www.threadless.com/>
- 3 Threadless Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/threadless/?fref=nf>
- 4 NOT JUST A LABEL Official Webpage <http://www.notjustalabel.com>
- 5 NOT JUST A LABEL Facebook Fan Page [https://www.facebook.com/NOTJUSTALABEL/info/?tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/NOTJUSTALABEL/info/?tab=page_info)
- 6 Great British Pound
- 7 Wowcracy Official Website <http://www.wowcracy.com/>
- 8 Wowcracy Facebook Fan Page <https://www.facebook.com/Wowcracy/>
- 9 Honest by. Official Webpage <http://www.honestby.com/>
- 10 Honest by. Facebook Fan Page <http://www.facebook.com/hoestby>
- 11 <http://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/>
- 12 *Meister*: a smartphone application designed exclusively for fashion designers under the Mu-jin system, that socially connects the designers with customers to deliver design approach and build long-term customer relationship.

# Chapter 2

## Literature Review

### 2.1 Secrets Behind Takarazuka's Success

Since this paper aims to bring Takarazuka fan's mental model to fashion industry, it is important to recognize the key factors in forming the successful Takarazuka business model and study related academic literatures. Section 1.5 discussed history of Takarazuka Revue, fan club formation process and characteristics of Takarazuka fans. Based on several scholars' analysis, the success of Takarazuka could be summarized into three decisive factors: solid fan club community, online and offline mouth-to-mouth promotion, and long-term star raising process.

In order to understand the rationales behind these three factors, this chapter delves into the following three domains: brand community, computer-mediated communication, and value co-creation. Brand community section discusses characteristic of transactional marketing, critical factors regarding relationship marketing and nature and impacts of brand community. Computer-mediated communication session reviews marketing in computer-mediated environment, influence of electronic word-of-mouth and the impact of online communication on offline interactions. Value co-creation section explores the theoretical origins of customer-dominant logic by comparing it with good-dominant logic and service-dominant logic and studies customer-to-customer value co-creation in different social layers.

### 2.2 Relationship Marketing

The concept of Relationship Marketing, is firstly mentioned by LL Berry in 1983 at Frontiers in Services Conference.(Barnes 1994) Berry defined relationship marketing as attracting, maintaining and- in multi-service organizations-enhancing customer relationships. Berry viewed the attraction of new customers as the first step in the marketing process. After attracting new customers, marketing per-

son should focus on hardening the relationship and converting customers from apathetic customers into passionate and loyal customers.

## **Factors Determine Effectiveness of Relationship Marketing**

In the article factors influencing the effectiveness of relationship marketing: a meta-analysis written by Palmatier et. al, they find several key factors influence the usefulness of relationship marketing. (Palmatier et al. 2006) Based on previous works, the authors point out three situations which relationship marketing plays an indispensable role in the success of companies. First, because of four characteristics of services, intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability, service consumers and service providers more connected to each other than manufacturing industry. Thus, consumer-seller relationship directly influences the value perceived by customers. Second, Compared with direct exchanges, indirect exchanges, or channel partner exchanges involve several stakeholders in a relatively complicated decision-making process. The relational mediators can reduce the opportunistic behavior and lower the risks. Third, for the industry heavily depends on working relationship, relationship marketing has the greater impact on exchange outcomes. In addition, individual-to-individual relationships typically last longer and create more powerful outcome than individual-to-organization relationships does.

In this research, the authors gathered more than 100 published and unpublished works and inspected usefulness of each factor in influencing relationships. All factors are categorized into three groups: relational, mediator, and outcome. Antecedent factors contain relationship benefits, dependence on seller, relationship investment, seller expertise, communication, similarity, relationship duration, interaction frequency, and conflict. Relational mediators include commitment, trust, relationship satisfaction and relationship quality. Outcomes include the expectation of continuity, word of mouth, customer loyalty, seller objective performance and cooperation.

Based on the univariate analysis and correlation co-efficient analysis, the authors concludes that expertise and communication are the most powerful relationship-nurturing tools. The skills and knowledge and communication determines the quality of the relationship. Furthermore, the overall performance is decided the most by relationship closeness and strength and the least by affective, behavioral, obligation and normative commitment. Commitment has the greatest influence on customer loyalty and the smallest influence on objective performance. The

findings also suggest that the more service providers make in relationship investment, the more dependent customers are. Final finding confirm previous theories that individual-to-individual connection is stronger than organization-to-individual connections. After knowing the most effective relational factors, we will review the obstacles to relationship building approach.

## **Hurdles to Relationship Marketing Engagement**

The relational tactics implanted by companies are in the forms of loyalty card programs, company credit cards, personalized offer enrollment via mail or e-mail and rebate offers. It is well-acknowledged that relationship marketing is a powerful approach which can both improve profitability and increase market share, but several papers implied there are impediments hinder customers to participate events and program organized by the firms. (Ashley et al. 2011) The attitude of customers towards brand and company is measured by Relational Program Receptiveness (PRP) index. The study proved that inconvenience, anticipated benefits, privacy concerns, involvement and shopping frequency are factors effect PRP index. The conclusions drawn from the study is that customer level of commitment is modeled by their preference between the value of company offerings they perceived and opportunity cost. Furthermore, not all satisfied customers want to get involved in the relationship marketing program.

## **Brand Community**

Brand community is subset under relationship marketing. By definition, a brand community is a community without geographically limit and focus on certain area, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand. (Muniz Jr and O'guinn 2001) Three main stakeholders in the brand community are customers, company, and other customers. From customers, point of view, actively participating in branding community associate them with new identities and increase their social power. They build new relationships and social ties through communication within a collective group. Furthermore, customer-to-customer communication educates another about product usage, brand history, and available accessory.

There are three main characteristics of a brand community: consciousness of kind, presences of shared rituals and traditions, and moral responsibility. Among these three features, the most important one is consciousness of kind. The col-



lection of people feel the deep-rooted sense of belongings and connect with one another mentally. They share the same beliefs and social identity. The second factor is presences of shared rituals and traditions. Based on shared value and initial bond, activities and events distribute, convey and strengthen the symbolic meaning to the pooled of people. The third factor is moral responsibility, which represents the sense of obligation to contribute the community as a whole. Sense of duty not only captures and retain customers, but also cultivate a brand culture.

Professor Katharina Goellner et al. specifically discussed the impact of sense of duty on brand community.(Goellner et al. 2016) Through a survey about social identity, sense of duty, the intention for community-based behavior and intention for brand-related behavior, the authors found the sense of duty bridges social identity and intention for brand-related behavior. The more brand community members feel the responsible to help other members and contribute the collective of people, the more likely the will make further purchase decisions. Additionally, they find sense of duty strengthens social identity and community behaviors.

## 2.3 From Online to Offline

The Internet provides a platform to connect people together and utilize various marketing strategies. Due to the different functionalities of different social medias, the social outcomes and marketing outcomes varies as well. For example, social network sites such as Facebook connect people who also have already known each other offline together. For other online space such as e-forum and message board provide a space to connect people who have never met together. Actually, the social media websites can be divided into five categories: blogs, SNS, content communication, e-forum and content aggregators. This section aims to review the marketing strategies in a computer-mediated environment, the power of electronic word-of-mouth and the impact of online communication on offline face-to-face communication.

### Marketing in Computer-mediated Environment

For the past two decades, there are tons of research related to the marketing strategy in a computer-mediated environment. (Yadav and Pavlou 2014)There are four types of interactions in the computer-mediated environment: customer-firm interactions, firm-customer interactions, customer-customer interactions and

firm-firm interactions. The main focus here will be on firm-customer interactions and customer-customer interactions in the digital world.

### **Firm-Customer Interactions**

The researches done in this domain are about product mix 4Ps: product, promotion, price and place. For the product-related research, researchers address how the Internet and telecommunication technologies influence customers' purchasing behaviors. Internet and computing speed improvement simplifies customers' decision-making process and reflects customers' needs directly in the product designs. The filter system refines the number of the search result based on customer's preference and recommendation system provides purchase suggestions on customer's preference, suggestions from other customers, expert opinions, and demographic data. Moreover, online platform eliminates unnecessary functions in the product design and customer can customize ideal products by themselves.

As a promotional space, the internet facilitates the understanding of advertisement exposure and integrated marketing strategy to keep repetitive customers. The studies show that repetitive banner advertisements arise negative feelings of customers and lower the chance they click for further information. Also, through the interaction with customers online, firms learn to acquire new customers and retain repetitive customers through interaction.

The Internet makes pricing scheme more flexible. On the internet, the price is determined by consumers' variety-seeking behavior, the level of brand loyalty, geographic location, purchase situation and willingness to pay. Employing price discrimination can maximize consumer surplus, supplier surplus and minimize the deadweight loss as well. The experiments also reveal that price customization can acquire new customers in short-term and invoke customer's commitment in long-term.

The last but not the least, computer-mediated environment expand the existing distribution channel and attract customers who are less price sensitive and make fewer changes after each transaction. The challenges in marketing field are customer-relationship management and shipping cost control. Companies need to balance the real shipping cost incurred and the shipping costs perceived by customers.

### **Customer-Customer Interaction**

Social network and user-generated content are two main research areas in customer-customer interaction domain. Social network emphasizes personal significance such as personal milestones and accomplishment. A research conducted among four online brand communities shows social network can shape customers' perception and purchase behavior. Online brand community engagement increases the chance of new product adoption. User-generated content is the other branch in this field. A conclusion drawn from audience rate study shows that audience's discussions online have positively correlated to the Nielsen ratings. A specific type of user-generated content online is eWOM(word-of-mouth), will be discussed in the following section.

### **Power of eWOM**

By definition, electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) describes both positive and negative feedbacks about product or company posted by potential, actual, or former customers on the online platforms which can be accessed by others. The study shows eWOM in SNS influence institutional-based trust in structural assurance and situational normality way. (See-To and Ho 2014) Positive eWOM will audience's institutional-based trust and vice versa. Also, eWOM effects trusting beliefs include benevolence, competence, and integrity. Positive eWOM improve company image in customer's mind and negative eWOM weaken customer's trust towards companies. Similarly, the positive eWOM positively correlated to SNS user's purchase intention and value co-creation level. Good feedback encourages customer to purchase the product and perceive the value with the product in different contexts.

Similar study shows that customers are more likely to trust other users than advertisements. Colliander et. al state the publicity effectiveness of fashion bloggers is higher than online fashion magazine because customers treat fashion bloggers as friends in real life(Colliander and Dahln 2011). A group of peer customers forms the brand community.

### **Modality Switching from Online to Offline**

Computer-mediated communication especially discusses the situation human connect with others through electronic devices. (McEwan and Zanolli 2013)There

are several theories related to CMC. Compared with face-to-face communication, CMC lacks nonverbal cues. The cues-filtered-out theory claims face-to-face communication can add extra cues to improve the relationship. The SIDE theory stands for social identity deindividuation effects, asserts that the more users engage with online community with similarity, the more likely they label themselves as part of the group, typecast other users as good individuals, and conform the social norms. Hyper-personal model argues that online environment glorifies the image of users because forum users are apt to organize their verbal message carefully before sending the message to the message board and they idealize the other users existence with asymmetric information.

McEwan and Zanolli discuss changes of users' perception of other users from online to offline environment. The authors conduct two surveys among 101 large message board users who have the intention to meet online friends at theme parks and another meetup events, to test their attitudes and recognition toward other users. 6 of all participants reported in the first survey that they have never met online acquaintances in the reality before. Around 10 days after online friend meetup event, the researchers sent out the second survey to evaluate the quality of face-to-face communication quality and change in perception. The amount of communication, engagement with message boards, satisfaction, closeness and predicted outcome value are the four parameters to verify the online-offline transition of perception. The results show that offline communication invokes the positive perception toward first met online friends, which confirms the cue-filter-out theory. The authors also conclude that longer time customers engaged in community board, the higher chance they recognize themselves as part of a community. However, no clear evident supports users view others in a positive way. Finally, this research also proves online communication assists relational development. Nevertheless, high predicted outcome may lead to a decline in closeness after real life interaction.

## Value Co-creation

According to Good-Dominant logic, which prevailed in the marketing field for decades, the value of products or services is determined in the production process. Consumers, as passive value recipients, perceive the value of products and services during the exchange. However, in 2004, Vergo and Lusch re-emphasize the roles played by customers and claim the real value is co-created by customers and service providers. The value, rather than residing in the products, is experienced

during consumption (Vargo and Lusch 2014). Service providers can only provide value propositions to customers, and co-create the value with their customers by implementing and integrating both operand resources—tangible resources such as gold and steel, and operant resources—intangible resources often known as infinite and tangible skills or competencies. Moreover, customers incorporate certain contextual elements such as family relationship, community, and commercial relationship in their consumption experience, internalize new values. Vargo et al. coin the phrase “value-in-context”. The theory of customer-dominant logic extends the scope of S-D logic based on phenomenology and use the phrase “value-in-the-experience” to redefine the perceived value from services. Husserl’s phenomenology and theory of lived experience assert that the value not only perceived by individuals through internalization but also generated through inter-subjective exchange.

## Customer-Dominant Logic

The theory of customer-dominant logic extends the scope of S-D logic based on phenomenology and use the phrase “value-in-the-experience” to redefine the perceived value from services (Stauss et al. 2010). C-D logic shifts the focus from service provider perspective to customer perspective to investigate how customer process and interpret the value. There are five essential traits build the base for C-D logic: business perspective, customer logic, offering, value formation and context. Firstly, the main property of C-D logic is a marketing tool. The difference between C-D logic as a business tool than other business tools is that C-D put the customer at the center of the stage. C-D logic interprets the business world from customer’s view of point. Thus, as a strategic implement, the ultimate goal is to assure both short-run and long-run revenue by decoding customers’ logic.

In order to reach the revenue maximization goal, customers logic is the critical point. Customer logic hides in a series of customers apparent and obscure behaviors. Although customers as emotional individuals behave diversely, still there portrays a whole pattern of their activities, tasks and goals, and context. The traditional customer behavior and decision-making process study solely focus on one product. Instead, C-D logic strives to recognize general patterns through among decision-making processes in different contexts over time.

The offering in C-D logic defines services, products, solutions promises and value propositions. The difference of offerings definition exhibits in the perspective of customers and service provider. Because the value propositions offered by service providers may not concord to customers needs, the way customer ex-

perience the offering is the challenge to the service providers. Value formation indicates the process where unintended values begin to emerge during both the physical and mental experience in customers daily life. The outcomes can be both positive and negative. In this value formation process, symbolic and emotional value comes together with the functional value. Traditional services thinking theory limits value generated the moment to interaction and the interactive contact points between customers and service providers. However, C-D logic asserts the value may not only be co-created while consumption. Customers perceive the value during idle time as well. C-D logic also introduces presence as a part of value formation. Presences can be either in physical form or mental form. The presence of products or services extends the co-created value from “value-in-use” to “value-in-the-experience”.

The last essential, context, describe where the value actually is created. A customer ecosystem includes service providers, other customers, other actors and physical and virtual structure related to the service.

## **Social Layers of C2C Value Co-creation**

Based on C-D logic, Ivana Rihova et al. explore the conceptual insights into customers social circles and propose recommendations to service providers to maintain C2C co-creation. According to Ivana Rihova et al., there are four value co-creation layers in different contexts, where customers can co-create the value with other users: Detached customers, social bubbles, temporary communities, and ongoing neo-tribes(Heinonen et al. 2013). The authors pay special attention to the tourism and festival context, analyzing traits of each co-creation layers and providing the hints to service providers. For the first value co-creation layer, detached customers, they are usually grouped in a small number and well acquainted with on another. They are seeking for isolated and private space to escape from the reality. However, they are friendly to strangers and willing to provide help to others. Thus, in the service design, service providers should provide separated space with books and magazines, where facilitates the communication among a small group of customers. On the other hand, positive critical incidents can be employed as strategies to nurture the customers-strangers interaction through shared events and push customers into bigger social circles.

The second co-creation layer is social bubble layer, composed of known acquaintances, friends and family members. Social bubble group is larger than detached customers and more open to the existence of strangers. They may in-

vite outsiders to join in their group activities such as playing Frisbee, football and tennis and naturally form a temporary communal community. In the service design, service providers can arrange the physical space closely and offer the family-oriented theme to encourage customers to come together. In the digital world, providing a platform to encourage target users to share the brand story before or after consumption is an effective way to generate new value among the group and invoke brand loyalty.

The third type of co-creation layer, temporary community, is composed of unknown temporary customers. They are trying to break down the social barriers, share the goodwill and feel the sense of belongings. In the temporary community, community members forget all the prejudice, stereotype, social norms and social status and attribute themselves as equal and similar human beings. They introduce themselves by first names and build strong emotional bonds and connections in the short period of time. Sorting customers who have similar interests or share a common goal together and creating a surreal world can help generate the sense of unity among users.

The last type of C2C co-creation layer is ongoing neo-tribes. Customers express their identity and belongings to a specific group through consuming certain food and drinks, wearing special clothes or using particular discourse. They also share and exchange specialist knowledge, experience and skill both online and offline. These information sharing activities, both happened online and offline, can form a reciprocal, trustable subculture and neo-tribes. The customers in value co-creation layer sometimes create their own values beyond a specific service context, which benefit service provider to improve product, service quality and new product development. Thereby, service providers offer the online platforms for their users to share their interest and experience and resources and foster the sense of closeness.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Reviewing above researches, the author found the main character of capital market is shifting from firms to customers and online platform is a good place to start communication and value co-creation while offline interaction provides richer contexts and less information loss via online communication. Previous research conceptually discussed the significance in relationship marketing, computer-mediated communication and value co-creation in general without considering industrial

differences and suggesting concrete proposals. This research intends to implement abstract theories in particular context, fashion industry, by providing a case study of applying service-dominant logic and customer-dominant logic framework to bridge the gap between virtual and real brand communities. Online B2C value co-creation and C2C value co-creation nurture customer relationship and sense of belongings through and offline shared fan events solidify emotional bond through richer verbal cues environment.



# Chapter 3

## Design

### 3.1 Design Objectives

*Monolog* is a mobile application aims to invoke customer's emotional attachments and involvements with designers and designer items through logging and sharing customer's stories related to designer items within exclusive fan club and participating the online discussion and offline fan club events, to invoke their sense of belongings and customer loyalty.

Five stakeholders are involved in the design: customer, emerging designer, manufacturer, pattern and management teams. Customers aim to purchase stylish fashion items and represent their lifestyle through what they wear. Emerging Designers design unique items which contain their own design philosophy, build the trustful relationship with customers, and hope to be recognized in the fashion industry. Pattern makers model the patterns based on design sketches of the garment. Based on the patterns pattern maker modeled, manufacturer product on the large scale to realize the economy of scale and scope. This application will mainly focus on designing the relationship between product and customer, emerging designer and customer, and customer and customer. Several challenges which the author intends to address in the design are listed below:

- Buying triggers- what kind of factors provokes customers' wants to purchase items designed by emerging designers?
- Relationship initiation- how to encourage customers to communicate with emerging designers and other customers?
- Bond-How to consolidate the affiliation?
- Repetitive purchase-what makes customer purchase again?

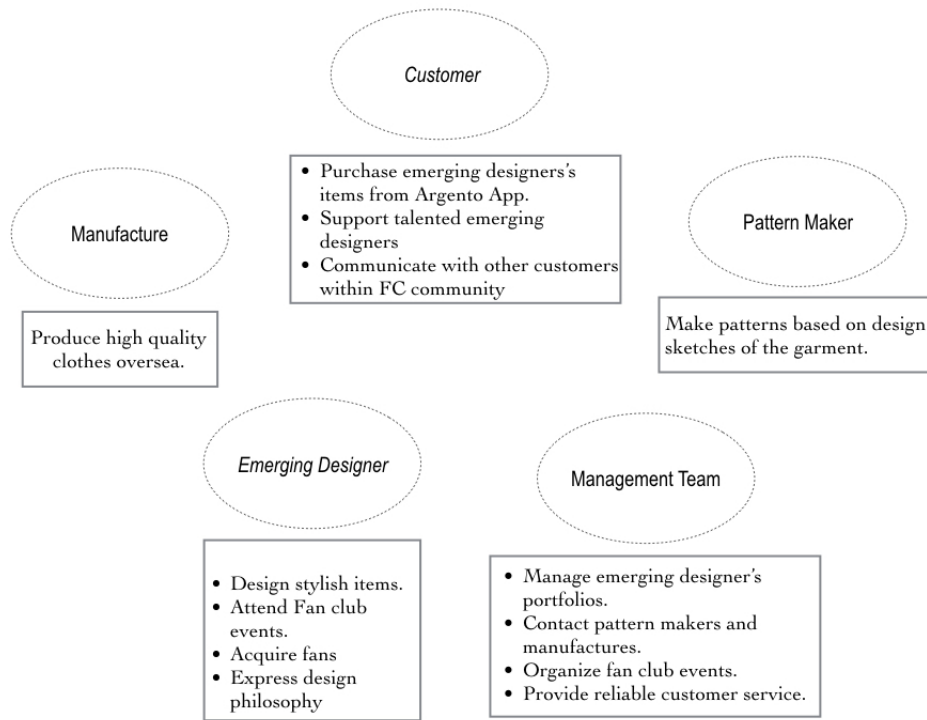


Figure 3.1: Stakeholder

- Emerging Designers supportive activity-what makes customers want to support emerging designers and promote emerging designers to their friends.
- Self-actualization-how customers improve their well-beings after building connections with others and involving with the items they own.

To tackle challenges mentioned above, the author conducted three fieldworks about Takarazuka Revue and Takarazuka fan club events both in Tokyo and Takarazuka, Hyogo Prefectures. In the following sections, the author will discuss the design process by following design thinking method, from the observing Takarazuka fans behaviors, analyzing rationales behind fieldwork master's actions, ideating based on mental model abstracted from fieldworks, creating target persona, making stories, to proposing concepts and modifying them.

## 3.2 Ethnography

The focus points of conducting fieldworks are to understand what factors make them become Takarazuka fans or fans of certain stars, what are their motivations behind their warm supports, what factors shape the long-term loyalty and maintain the long-term relationship. The first fieldwork is about a typical Takarazuka fan club events, “Irimachi”, waiting for star entering backstage entrance, to understand the communication among fans and value co-creation process with the star and other fans. The second fieldwork observes Takarazuka fans’ reactions in Top star’s dinner show to apprehend sources of their attachments toward stars. The third fieldwork aims to grasp the offstage communication between the star and her fans through the tea party and observe how the star promotes herself.

### Fieldwork I



Figure 3.2: Fieldwork I: Fans and the star

The first fieldwork involves Takarazuka fans who are waiting for the stars they supported to enter the backstage entrances. The author did first fieldwork on Feb. 8th, 2015 (Sunday) in front of Takarazuka Grand Theater. On that day, there were two performances, one in the morning from 11:00 a.m. and the other

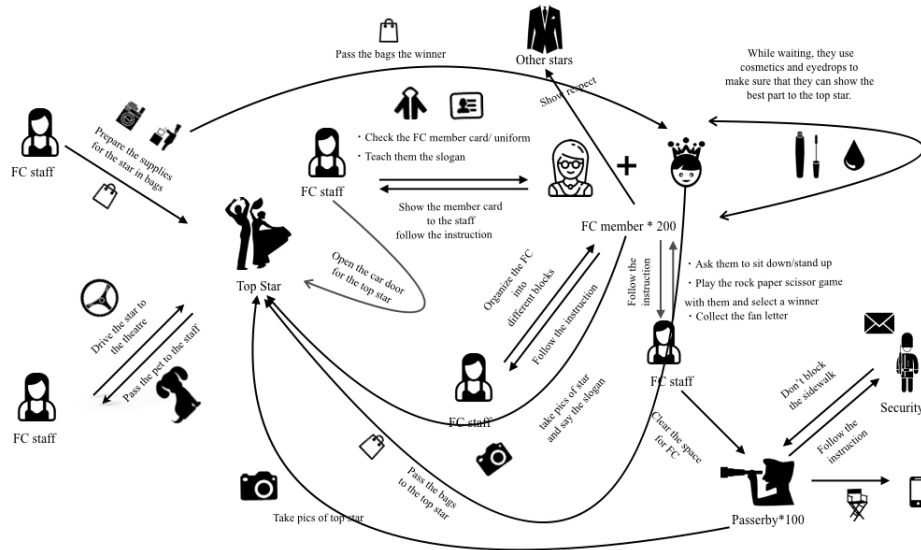


Figure 3.3: Fieldwork I: Fan club member's flow model

one in the afternoon started from 5:00 p.m. The author arrives at the backstage entrance around 7:15 a.m. and there were around 20 fans there.

The author chose to observe several Takarazuka Fans and their behaviors. At first, fan club staff checked fan club member's membership card and uniform to make sure the identity of fans. Fan club staff organized fan them into blocks. Where they stand is decided by the order of arrival. The earlier they come, the closer they are to the star. After finding their spots, they started the conversation with fans stand beside them. The topics of conversation range from details in star's performance, the brand star usually wears, interview contents, star's growth and personal life to recipes, their personal life, and family. Also, during the waiting time, they took their cosmetics out and touched up their makeup, to make sure they could show their best image to the star.

Around 8:30 a.m., the fan club staff started to organize fan club events. Firstly, a senior fan club staff led fan club members to practice prescribed slogan together. The slogan was related to the star's tea party which was held on the day before. Fan club staff encouraged fan club member to say the slogan louder and more

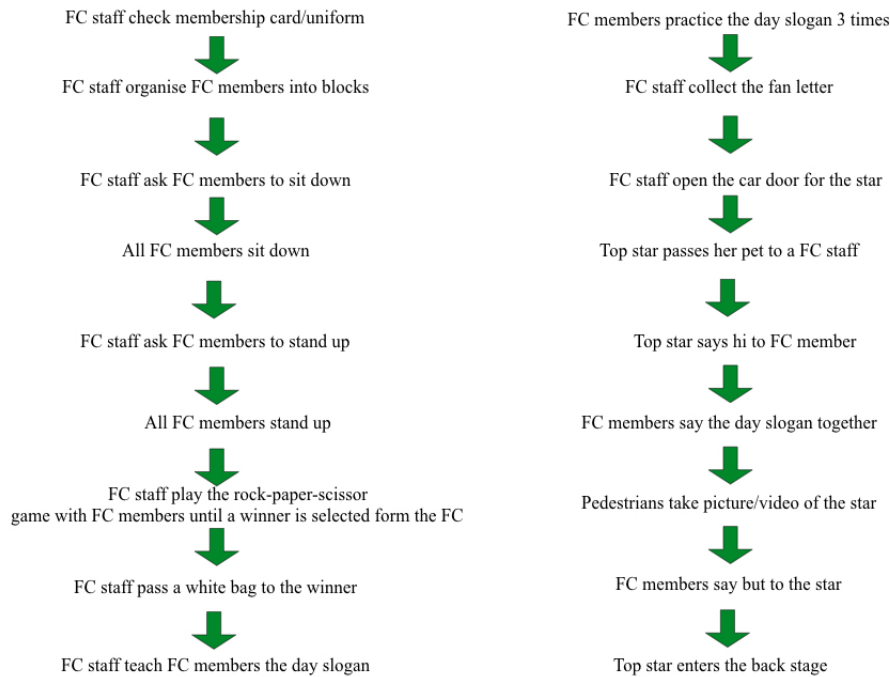


Figure 3.4: Fieldwork I: Fan club member's sequence model

emotional. They practiced 4 times. After the slogan practice, fan club members played rock-paper-scissor game with the fan club staff. The one who won fan club staff moved to the front of the fan club block and hold a white bag. Fan club staff collects the fan letters from the members as well. Fan club members usually express their thoughts and opinions about the play and show and give star advice. At 8:48 p.m, there was a car stopped in front of the crowd, and the star appeared in front of the fan club. She passed her dog to other fan club staff and greet to her fans. Fans uttered the prescribed slogan with their loves and passions. Then, the rock-paper-scissor winner passed the bag to the star. Then the star entered to the backstage.

To understand the deeper reasons behind fan club member's behaviors and interactions between fan club members and the environment around them, the author simplifies the fieldwork into flow model, sequence model, artifact model, physical model and cultural model.

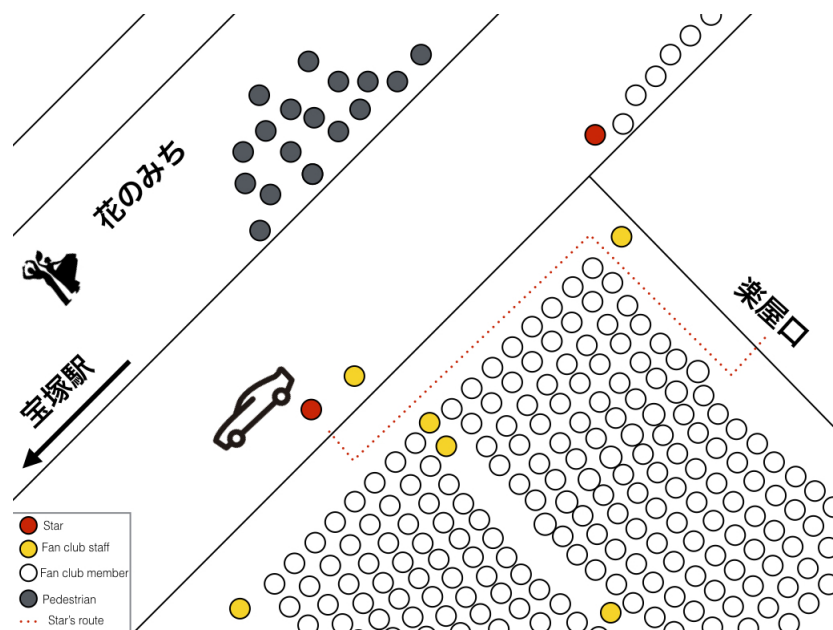


Figure 3.5: Fieldwork I: physical model

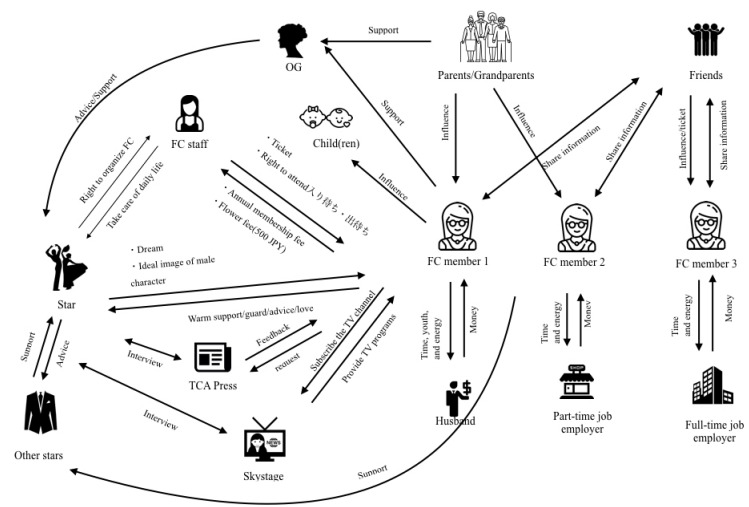


Figure 3.6: Fieldwork I: Fan club member's cultural model

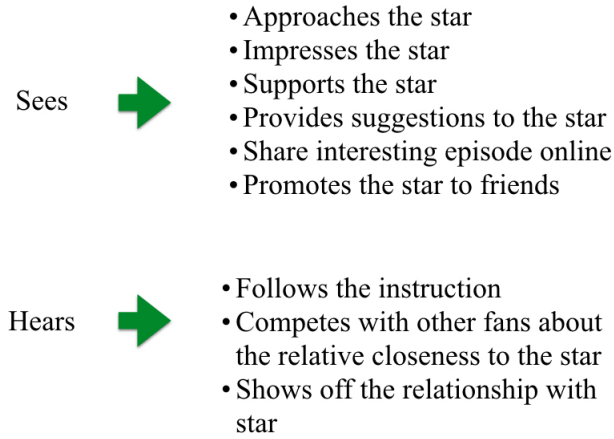


Figure 3.7: Fieldwork I: Fan club member's mental model

Flow model described the roles played by each actor in the fieldwork and the way they communicate to achieve the goal. Figure 3.3 exhibits the way fan club members, fan club staff, Takarazuka star, pedestrians, and security guard communicate with each others to realize their goals, which are successfully organizing “irimachi” event.

Sequence model sorts the work tasks chronologically. Figure 3.4 exhibits the sequence of fan's action simplified a complicated process linearly, emphasize the order of a series of events.

Figure 3.5 delineates the physical environment in the fieldwork. It shows the space fan club members stood, the space non-fan club member watched the event and taking pictures, the spots fan club staff stood to organize the event and the routes of the star's movement. The physical model shows the privileges of fan club members and the relative distance to the star as well.

Figure 3.6 illustrates the important roles played by people and organization which do not appear in the fieldwork but shape fieldwork master's behavior and decision making process. In this fieldwork, fans are highly influenced by former Takarazuka stars, their parents, and friends. For most of Takarazuka fans, the trigger of watching Takarazuka are due to recommendations from friends. The TV shows played on Takarazuka TV channel, the interviews published on

Takarazuka magazines strengthen the relationship and deepen the understanding of the star. Their spouses, full-time employees and part-time employees are the financial sources for the fans' star supporting activities.

### **Mental Model**

Figure 3.7 abstracts fan's behavioral patterns into pairs of cognition and action. When the fan sees the star remotely, she admires the star and tries to get close to the star. When she sees the star closely, she tries to impress the star and helps the star with available resources around her. After the fan club events, she immerses the star in her daily life by purchasing the items recommended by the star and items owned by the star. Moreover, she shares interesting episodes about the star online and promotes the star to her friends. She tries to compete with other fans about their relative closeness and contributions to the star. To some newcomers, she shows off the relationship with the star to get self-actualization.

### **Fieldwork II**

After analyzing the relationship between fans, fan's friends, stars and fan club staff, the next fieldwork focuses on the value co-creation process, aims to focus on how the fans interpret star's offerings and build emotional attachments remotely. In this fieldwork, the author observes fan's online interactions with other fans and her reactions to star's performance while viewing star's dinner show remotely. The second fieldwork is about star's dinner show, conducted on March 16th, 2015 at Tokyo Takarazuka Theatre. The star planned to graduate from Takarazuka Revue soon. The first time author contacted fieldwork master is via SNS platform, for purchasing live viewing ticket of star's dinner show. Fieldwork master applied for two tickets from the fan club and she had a spare ticket. Thus, she posted it on SNS. Several SNS users who followed the fieldwork master re-posted her post. Fieldwork master and the author agreed to meet in front of Tokyo Takarazuka Theater 30 minutes before the show. The ticket was put in a regular envelope, instead of fan club special envelope. After the transaction, the author and fieldwork master entered the theater and watched the show together. The theater staff checked the ticket and handed a dinner show souvenir to us. Fieldwork master carefully held the souvenir and we went to our seats. On the seat, she put her coat and handbag on the floor and put the souvenir on her lap. There was a program of the show and cookies in the souvenir bag. She took the program and



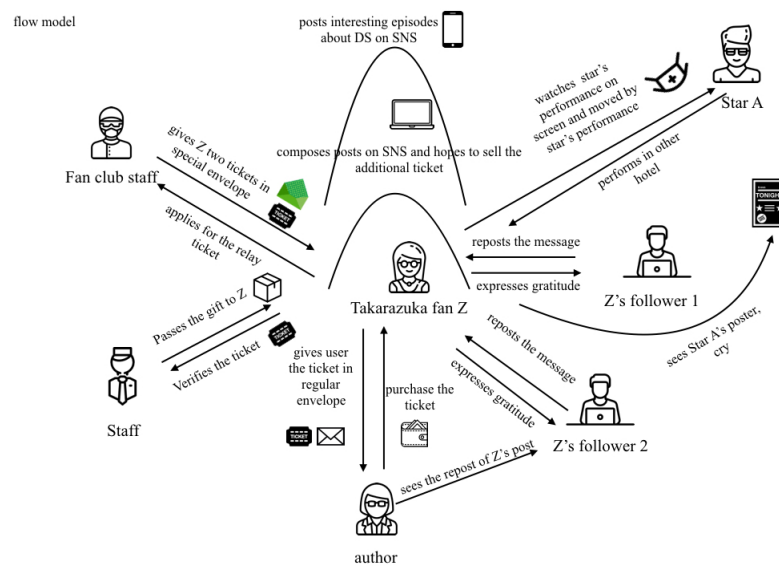


Figure 3.8: Fieldwork II: flow model

cookie out, used her smartphone to take pictures and uploaded the pictures on SNS. She socialized with her followers on SNS and tried to convey the atmosphere of dinner show to her oversea followers. Although the live viewing event held in Tokyo Takarazuka Theatre, there were no orchestra and light. Instead, there was a projector and screen on the stage.

Five minutes before the show, she took her binocular out and tried to adjust the focus because according to the reports she read on SNS before, the star might come to the relay theater. During the dinner show, she still put the souvenir on her laps. She was moved by the star's performance and applauded for each song with the tempo. The last song named "For good", written by the star, reminds her a lot of unforgettable moments she used to share with the star. She realized that the scheduled graduation date is coming closer and closer. She could not help to burst into tears. She used a tissue to wipe her tears quickly and put a mask on to cover her face. Right after the show, she headed to the restroom and touched up her makeup and bought more memorial items related to the star. At train station next to the theater, Hibiya station, while waiting for the train, she saw star's poster on the other side of the platform. That poster reminded her the deplorable fact that the star would leave the dream world soon. She cried again. On the train, she posted several short reports on SNS related to the show.

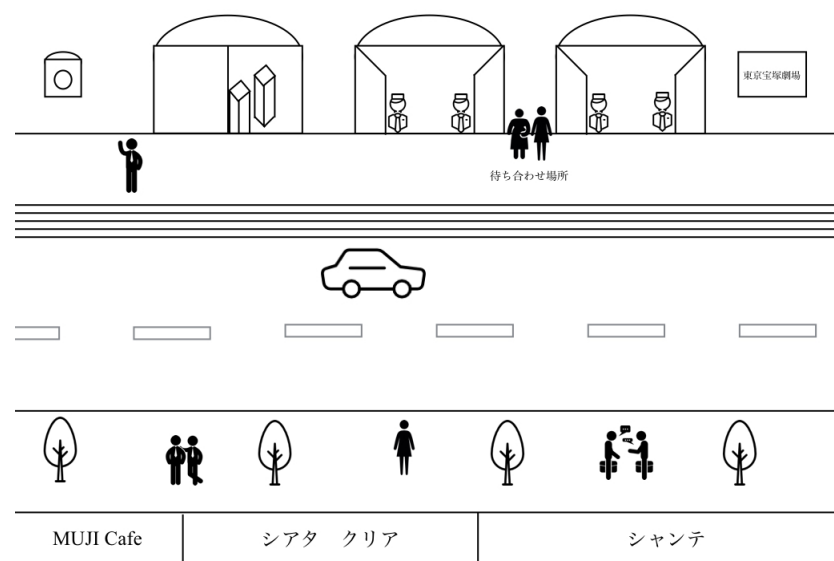


Figure 3.9: Fieldwork II: Physical model-outside of the theater

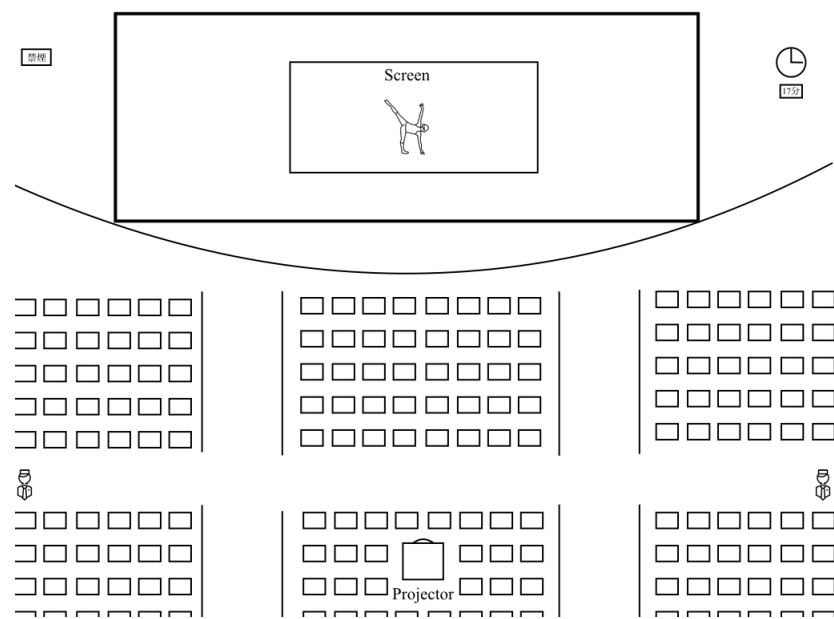


Figure 3.10: Fieldwork II: Physical model-in the theater

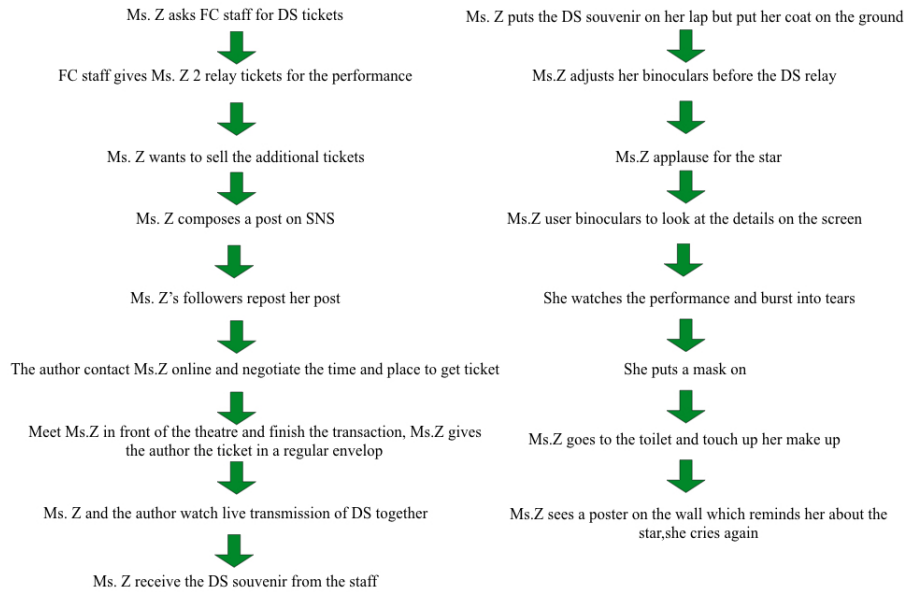


Figure 3.11: Fieldwork II: Fan club member's sequence model

Figure 3.8 exhibits the interactions among main characters in the fieldwork the artifact they used to realize their goals. One interesting point of the flow model is the envelope exchange part. Fieldwork master received an envelope which printed star's picture and message on it from fan club staff, but the one she gave to the author is regular envelope which can buy from the post office. Also, the C2C communication in this fieldwork was heavily relied on smartphone and computer.

Figure 3.10 shows the physical environment around Tokyo Takarazuka Treater.

Figure 3.11 illustrates the sequence of this fieldwork and shows the transition from online to offline. Because of the prior online communication, it was relatively easy to initiate the offline communication and build the relationship.

Figure 3.12 is the cultural model of fieldwork master. This fieldwork master focuses on sharing the interesting episode with other SNS users. She not only shares her own experience but also translates the information posted by others and share on her SNS. She aims to earn the reputation among Takarazuka fans.

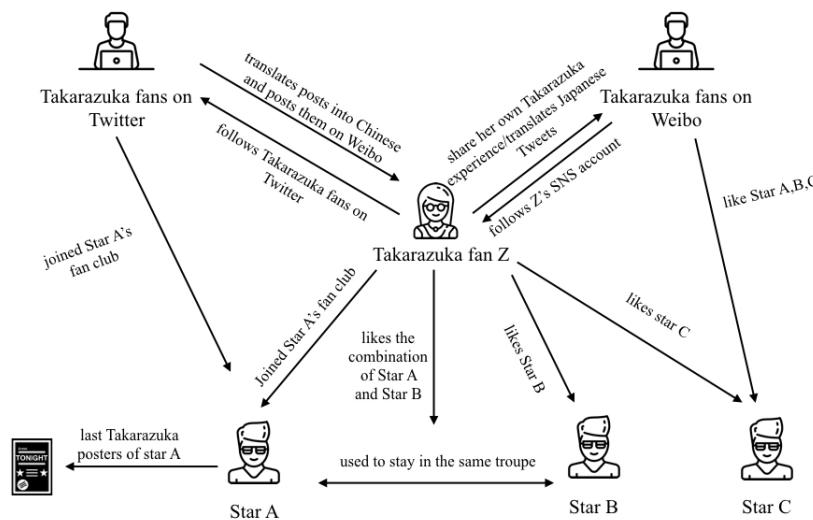


Figure 3.12: Fieldwork II: Fan club member's cultural model

### Mental Model

After the previous analysis, Figure 3.13 shows the a few pairs of cognition and action are drawn from this fieldwork. When she reads ticket information, she buys dinner show relay ticket. When she sees star-related items, she collects all the memorial items about the star. When she sees anything related to the star which reminds her that her favorite star is going to graduate from Takarazuka Revue soon, she cries. When she reads other fan's posts or finds star's interesting facets, she posts reports and opinions on SNS to earn reputation. When she received some gifts related to the favorable star, she cherishes them even though the economic value is not that high. When she hears familiar melody sang by the star before, she applauds with the tempo and create the memorial moment with the star.

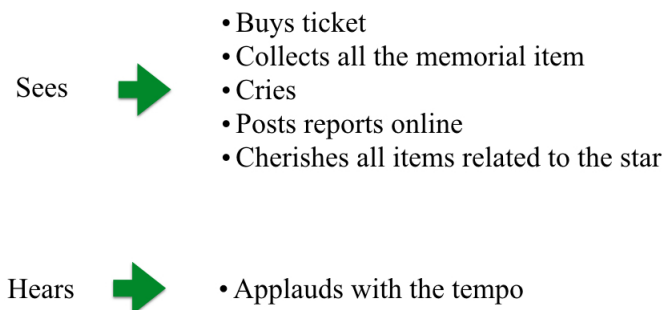


Figure 3.13: Fieldwork II: Fan club member’s mental model

### Fieldwork III

For the fieldwork III, the author changes the angle to view from star’s perspective. The third fieldwork is conducted on April 24th, 2016 at Hotel New Otani. The fieldwork master is Takarazuka Revue Snow troupe top star Sagiri Seina and the focus of the fieldwork is to observe how the star interacts with her fans to make them happy.

The top star Sagiri currently lives in Takarazuka-city. She was raised in Sasebo-city and she has one younger sister, who is working as a newscaster at Nihon Television Group. She failed Takarazuka Music School entrance exam twice and she entered Takarazuka Music School in 1999, ranked the 19th out of her classmates. After spending two years at Takarazuka Music school, she entered Takarazuka Revue and was assigned to Cosmos Troupe. She transferred to Snow Troupe in 2009 and became the Top star in October 2014.

The fieldwork is about the Sagiri’s tea party. The tea party is a fan club event where star and fans have close interactions. Fans can directly ask questions related to the role the star played or her private life. They also play a game together to have a deeper understanding about star’s personality. The fieldwork was held in the period of musical “Ruroni kenshin” on air. Not only the Takarazuka fans but

also the original manga fans attend the star's tea party. More than 1200 fans attended the tea party.



Figure 3.14: Fieldwork III: Star's tea party at Otani Hotel

On that day, the star had two performances before the tea party. The tea party scheduled at 7:30 p.m. and the star appeared around 7:50 p.m. When she entered the venue, all the fans started to clap for the star. The star tried to make eye contact with every fan. After arriving at the stage, she raised a glass of tea and cheers with the fans. All the fans were happy and stared at the star. Then the star sat down and started to answer questions asked by fans. The first questions asked by fans was what the star felt when the first time she knew she would play the famous manga “Rurouni Kenshin”. The star answered, she was surprised that it was Japanese story and again and she had to wear Kimono for another three months. All the fans laughed. The star was quite satisfied with the reaction and continued to answer the question seriously. She said she received several fan letters which written that she has the suitable appearance to play the role of the main character in “Kenshin”. All the fans were happy with the fact that the star actually read the fan letters. The second question is about the way star shape the character. The star asked that it was all thanks to the stylists and the small props used in the performance. The fans felt happy again. The star



### FIELDWORK MASTER(Star)

**Personal Profile:** Sagiri currently lives in Takarazuka, Hyogo Prefecture. She was born in Sasebo-city. She has one younger sister, who is working as a news announcer at Nihon Television group. She entered Takarazuka Music school in 1999 and she was ranked 19th out of her classmates.

**Working Profile:** Finishing all required curriculum at Takarazuka Music School, she entered Takarazuka Revue in 2001. After that, she was assigned to Cosmos Troupe and started her journey as a Takarazuka star. She transferred to Snow Troupe in 2009 and became Top star in Oct. 2014.

**Goal:** To build the rapport with her fans and entertain them.

**Mental Model:**

Sees—> Makes eye contacts with every fan  
Nods to respond fans  
Expresses thankfulness to fans

Hears—> Entertains fans  
Expresses her persistence

**Name:**早霧せいな  
**Gender:**女性  
**Hometown:**長崎県佐世保市  
**Current city:**兵庫県宝塚  
**Occupation:**宝塚歌劇団  
 雪組トップスター

Figure 3.15: Fieldwork III: Fieldwork master

started to explain the points she focused to vividly interpret the character. The third question is about finale song and dance. The star answered regularly. At the end, she added that “I know you want me to mention the kiss scene with my stage partner, well, that scene is impressive.” The fans are astonished by the way star answer the question and started to laugh and discuss again.

After the Q&A session, the fans got chances to shake hands with the star. All the fans prepared to put hand cream, apply eye drops and checked their faces in mirrors. Fan club staff instructed fan club members to form a line. Each fan held star’s hand for two seconds. The star looked at fan’s eyes, thanked him/her for coming to her tea party and softly hold the hand back. Going back to their seats, the fans discussed the expressions on star’s face when the star looked at her/him and described the personal experience with the star. The session after the handshaking corner is the game corner. The rule for the game is each table writes a question down on the paper and provide two choices. The fan club staff collects the game sheet beforehand. The star randomly draws the game sheets from box and moves to that table to answer the question. One fan from each table

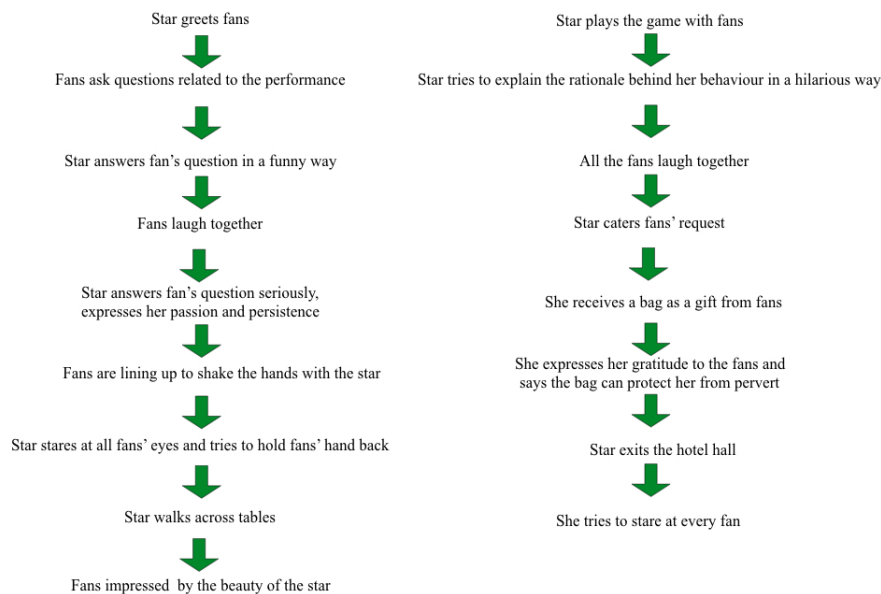


Figure 3.16: Fieldwork III: Sequence model of tea party

represents the whole table to reveal their answer. If the star's answer is same as fan's answer, the star has to respond fan's request and act what they ask to do. Otherwise, the star doesn't to do anything. Some fans deliberately come up with the questions the star will not choose to make sure they can win the game. One of the questions was, which car do you prefer, and two answers are the sports car or truck. The star chose truck, and the fans chose truck as well. The star said this is a tricky one and the fans successfully predicted her mental activities. The fans required her to high touch with them and she actually did that. Through this part of the tea party, fans know humanize aspects of their star and her naughty personality. After the game session, the star drew several lucky participants and gave them gifts with signatures, such as programs, posters and pictures. Taking two-shot pictures with the star was the privilege for the fan club members. The star helped the fans to wear the scarf and posed to take pictures. The star also announced the schedule afterward and promoted the magazine was on.

At the end of the tea party, when she exited the venue, instead of walking in the shortest distance, she walked around the tables and tries to have eye contacts



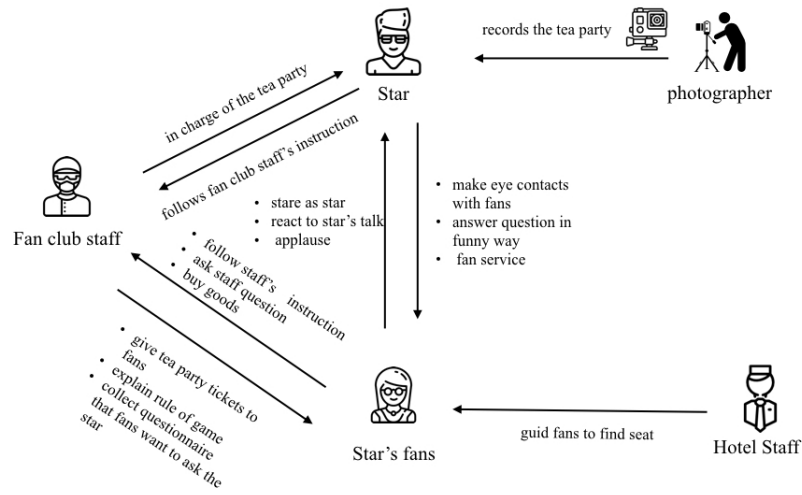


Figure 3.17: Fieldwork III: Flow model of tea party

with everyone in the table to make the experience of tea party personally.

Figure 3.15 shows basic information, goal and mental model of the fieldwork master. Figure 3.16 simplified the tea party in sequence. Figure 3.17 exhibits the role played by each actors and their interactions. Figure 3.18 shows the environment of the venue, which also sketches the route star walked to take pictures with fans and the route she exited the hall. Figure 3.19 describes the actors directly or indirectly influence the actions and behaviors of the stars.

## Mental Model

The mental models abstracted from this fieldwork are discussed as following. When the star sees the fans, she makes eye contacts with them. While talking with fans, she also tries to nod her head to respond her fans. She expressed her gratitude to every fan to personalized the experience of each fan. Also, when she hears the questions asked by fans, she tries to answer the question in a funny way first, to entertain her fans. After that, she explains in details to express her persistence.

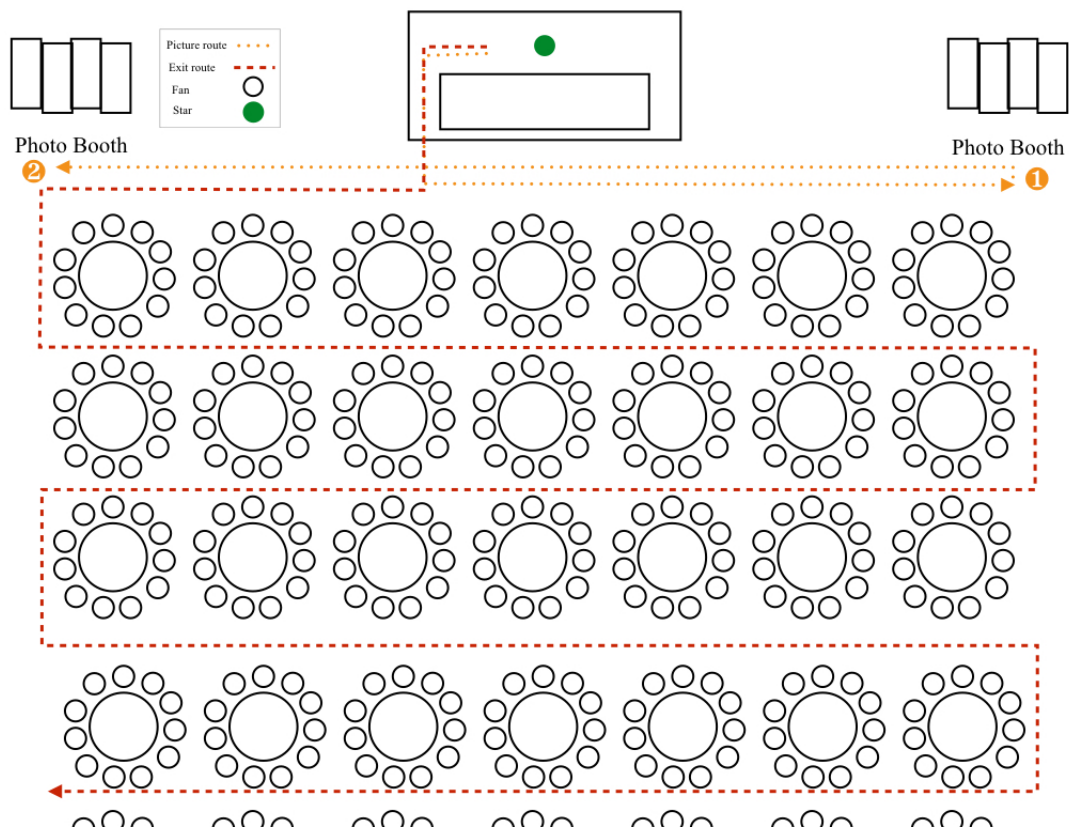


Figure 3.18: Fieldwork III: physical model of tea party

### Insights from Ethnography

The aforementioned fieldworks explored customer to customer relationship, customer to designer relationship and value co-creation process. Based on the analysis related to fieldworks and previous studies about relationship marketing, the brand fandom development process among customers can be divided into four stages: embryo, birth, growth and mature. In Takarazuka case, at the very beginning, the audience only buy the ticket and watch the show. However, during the show, some fans may be impressed by certain stars and have interests in them. Then, they try to approach the star and express their willingness to support the star. After that, they get the permission from the revue and officially form the fan club. The rudimentary fan club does not have that many functions. They hold tea party or fan meeting every three months. Fans or other Takarazuka mania still purchase the ticket from the official website or from the box office in the

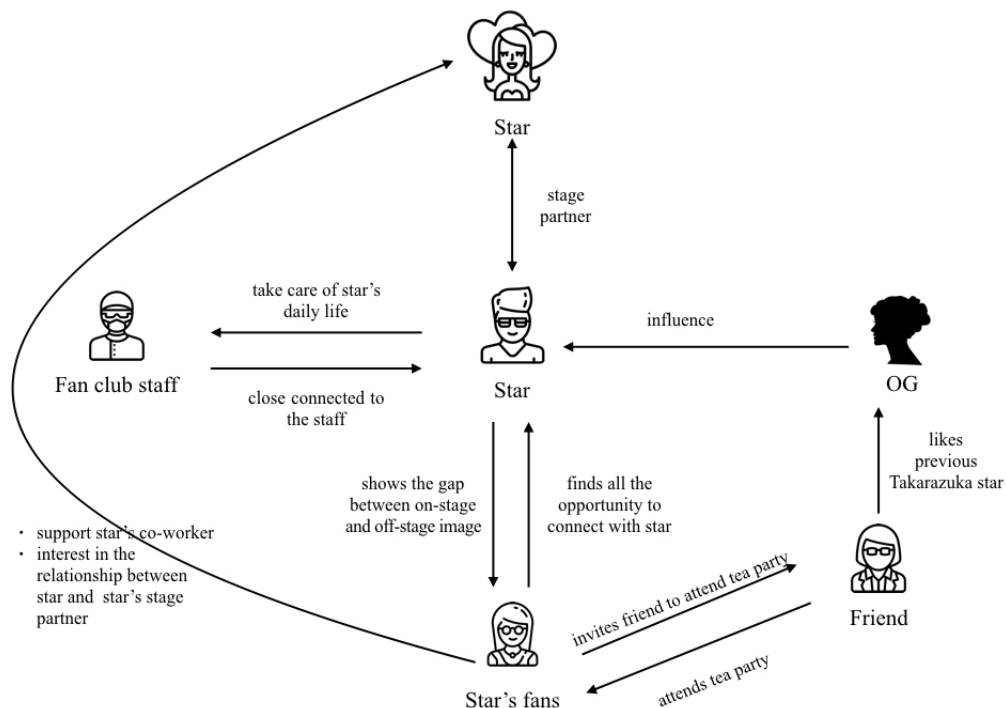


Figure 3.19: Fieldwork III: Star's cultural model

theatre. As the fan club developed, there are more rights enjoyed by the fan club. Some people who want to have same privileges join the fan club as well. They can directly purchase tickets from the fan club and there is a mature ecosystem under Takarazuka Revue's supervision. Finally, after the star graduate from the revue, the fan club continues to operate on their own. There is no interference from company anymore and the fan club activity all functioned by itself.

Similarly, the brand community and emerging designer supporting case can be illustrated by the Figure 3.21.

In the embryo stage, there is no obvious difference among customers. Customers passively purchase products from the retailers with no specific attachments. However, during the search and use of products, a group of users generates the attachments towards the products and actively contact with designers and management team. The fandom upgrades to born stage. A voluntary brand community forms naturally with the help from the management team. For the rest

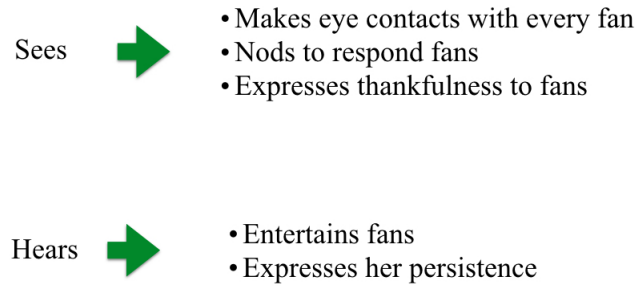


Figure 3.20: Fieldwork III: Star's mental model

of users, some of them accept offers from the service provider and starts passively interacts with the brand. In the growth stage, the fan club owns more rights. They can hold offline fan club events with the permission and assistance from the management team. Finally, when the emerging designers become independent designers, fan club also split out and support the designers on their own.

### 3.3 Design Concept

#### Persona

In order to design product benefits all users, it is important to think from each user's perspective. The following section will build the target personas based on the key points from three fieldwork discussed above. Target persona I is the target persona for fans who want to support emerging designers. Target persona II is the emerging designer who wants to expose to the public and earn popularity.

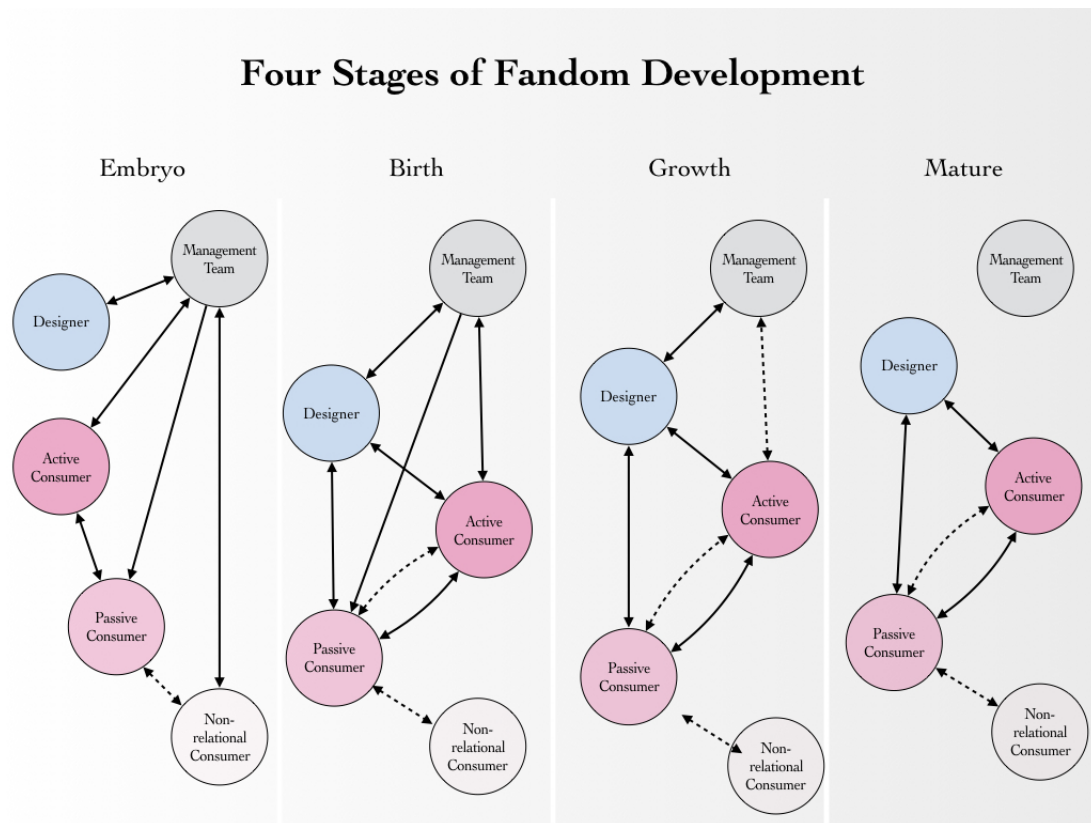


Figure 3.21: Four Stages of Fandom Development

### Persona I

Kanna Izushi-Caiokosz is a 21 years old university student from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She majors in Japanese and Arts and plans to graduate in 2016 winter. Kanna's mother is from Japan and her father is from the United States. She goes back to Tokyo, Japan during the summer and winter break. In Tokyo, she stays in her grandparent's home. She likes fashionable items and she works for a selected shop on the State Street as a part-time model. Instead of purchasing the garment from famous makers, she prefers to buy clothes from independent designers. She also becomes friend with several emerging designers. To support their business, she voluntarily works for them as a model. She promotes these emerging designers online and to her friends. Sometimes, designers consult her for advice and ask for inspirations. She spreads no efforts to help them. In the future, she wants to become an English-Japanese interpreter. Her personal



**Name:** Kanna Izushi-Cäiolkosz  
**Age:** 21  
**Gender:** Female  
**Hometown:** Madison, WI  
**Current city:** Tokyo, Japan  
**Occupation:** Student

### TARGET PERSONA(Fan)

**Personal Profile:** Kanna Izushi-Cäiolkosz is from Madison, Wisconsin. Her mother is Japanese and father is American. She grown up in Madison and went back to Japan during summer and winter vacation. She likes fashionable items and she works for an apparel shop as a part-time model. Instead of purchasing clothes from big brand, she prefers buying clothes from independent designers. She becomes friend with several emerging designers. To support their business, she voluntarily works for them as a model

**Working Profile:** She entered University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2012. She majors in Japanese and Arts. She attended exchange program and studied in Kyoto University for one year. In the future, she wants to work as an interpreter in Tokyo.

**Goal:** To find fashionable items.  
 To support emerging designers' work.

#### Mental Model:

Sees—> Approaches the emerging designers  
 Impresses the emerging designers  
 Supports the emerging designers  
 Provides suggestions to emerging designers  
 Promotes emerging designers online and to her friends

Figure 3.22: Target Persona I

goals are finding fashionable items and supporting emerging designers' work.

### Persona II

Barbara Casasola is a London-based Brazil-born fashion designer. She has a younger sister and a young brother who live in her hometown. She went to Parsons School of Design in New York for four years. She majored in apparel design and minored in fashion management. After graduation, she worked for a renown apparel maker as a fashion designer. Because of the long history and clear brand style, Barbara could not design as her wants. Sometimes the fashion supervisor forced her to change her design to conform brand culture. Although Barbara was proud of herself being part of that brand and contribute to the brand history, at the bottom of her heart she hopes to find a place where she could express her own idea freely. At the same time, she could not hear the feedback directly from customers. Staff from marketing department gave her market analysis and sales reports and asked her to serve to customer's needs. Barbara wanted to build the relationship with customers directly and be inspired by their feedback and



Figure 3.23: Target Persona II

suggestions. Her personal goals are expressing her own philosophy through her design, providing a personal experience to her fans, and understanding customer's needs.

## Concept Scheme

Based on each target persona's mental model and goal, figure 3.24 demonstrates concept scheme. In the concept scheme, it lists all available resources, values proposed by the service provider, and expected co-created values come up by target personas. Five values proposed by the author to realize target persona's goal. They are a channel to purchase products designed by emerging designers, a platform to connect customer together, a bridge to connect end customers and emerging designers, an interactive design process and a journal for items. For customer, the expected co-created values are a way to support emerging designers and a channel to make friends who have the same fashion tastes. For emerging designers, the value they may receive is a promotional tool, an outlet to express

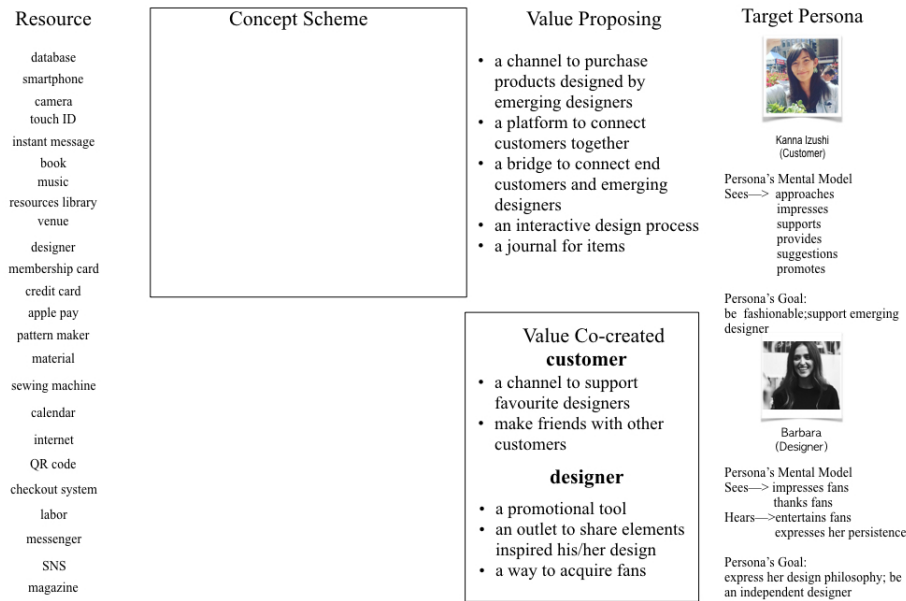


Figure 3.24: Concept Scheme

their design philosophies and a route to acquire fans.

### Concept Sketching

Depending on the target personas established before, concept sketching was drawn as following. In figure 3.25, there are important five phase in the concept: preparing, purchasing, using, repetitive purchase, involving and contributing.

### Use Case

Figure 3.26 identifies main activities conducted by stakeholders and lists the key functions. For customers, they can register accounts, fill required information such as credit card and delivery address, check designer's profile and collections, follow favorable designers, check designers' design philosophy, pre-order new items, log their own stories about the items they bought, associate special meanings to the clothes, optionally share the value to the rest of fan club members to generate empathy. They can also reserve offline fan club events and directly and





Figure 3.25: Concept Sketching

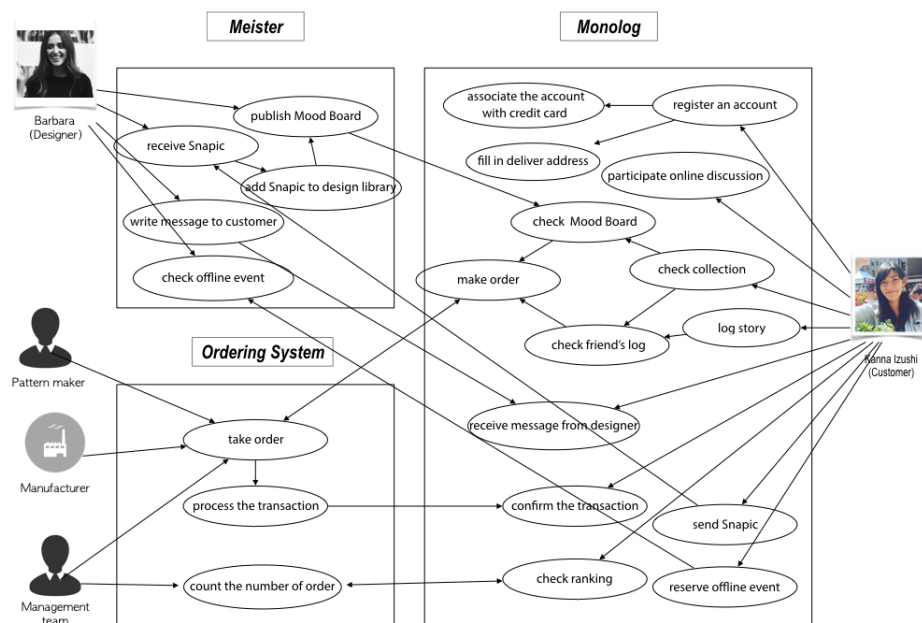


Figure 3.26: Use Case

indirectly contribute to the designers. For designers, they can check their sales, receive inspirations from customers, share mood board and random design ideas and review customer's stories about the products they designed. For management team, they are in charge of the overall operation and maintenance.

## Making Story

To design in contexts and view and value from different stakeholders' perspectives, stories related to target personas were written as following.

### Customer's Story

Kanna Izushi is a senior student majored in Japanese and arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has an interest in fashion and works as a part-time model for a local apparel store. She loves fashionable items and has several friends working as emerging designers. Because of her current city, she does not have that many chances to expose to the latest trend. She usually browses updated styles online. One day, she finds an attractive bag designed by an emerging designer named Barbara Casasola, who resides in London. She is totally enchanted by the delicate item click the link to know more information about this designer and bag. She finds that designer's design philosophies can be accessed from a mobile application named *Monolog*. She downloads the application and checks mood board about the bag. She totally becomes Barbara's fan and pre-order the bag immediately and joined her fan club. She finishes the payment on her smartphone and waits for the delivery. Two days later, she receives a message on the application, informs her the transaction has to be processed and the bag has been shipped. At the same time, she receives a secret message from the designer. She checks the message with curiosity. Surprisingly, there is a handwritten thank message from the designer. In the message, designer thanks Kanna for purchasing the bag and expresses her future vision. Kanna is moved by the message and decides to support the designer. On that application, Kanna finds a page named fan club. A lot of people like her impressed by Barbara's outstanding talent. She participates a discussion initiated by others. Through the communication, she understands Barbara's design deeply. Meanwhile, she figures out Barbara is working on a project related to travel and asking for ideas. Kanna takes the picture of the train she uses every day. Two hours later, she receives a notification realizes that Barbara not only opened her photo but also added the picture to

her design library. Kanna is so happy that she calls her best friend immediately to share the episode and ask her friends to buy the items designed by Barbara. Kanna feels she makes a concrete contribution to Barbara and wants to support her to become a designer with the good reputation in the industry.

Another two days later, Kanna receives the bag. She checks the bag several times in the mirror and very satisfies with the design. She is more familiar with the application. She finds there is a function to count how many days she owned the product and log the memories about using this item. She inputs the information and picture when after attending a graduation party. Astonishingly, she receives comments and likes from other fan club users. She feels that she is a part of the community. She wants to meet these people and designer in person. On the application, there is an upcoming event in Chicago and the guest speaker is Barbara. Kanna swiftly reserves the spot prepares to see the designer in person.

On the event day, Kanna wears the clothes designed by Barbara and goes to Chicago the in the early morning. Kanna visits Chicago Modern Museum and eats deep pan pizza. Around 2:30 p.m., Kanna goes to the venue and meets several other fans. After the small talk, she notices one girl is close to her online. After the event, she meets Barbara in person and they talk a lot. Barbara recognizes Kanna because of the pictures she sent to her before. They become friends.

### Designer's story

Barbara is a London-based Brazilian designer. She graduated from Parsons School of Design and majored in fashion design. After graduation, she worked for prestigious apparel maker as a fashion designer. In that company, she has to respect long brand history and follow producer's instruction. After several years working experience, she was tired of obeying and wanted to express her own philosophy through the design. She quitted her job and started her own business under an on-line vendor named *Monolog*. Compared with the old job, Barbara has the chance to hear the voices directly from customers. She can check her products which daily used by customer and stories associated with them. She also frequently meets with fans and receives inspirations from fans. Thanks to this system, she saves time to collect resources and focuses on design detail. Currently, she has 200 fans and a well-organized fan club.

## Key Paths

From the stories about target personas, three value generated moments are identified. The value generated moments are illustrated in series of close-up shots. The most valuable moment is circled by the green line.

### Key Paths I



Figure 3.27: Key Paths I

The first scene is about Kanna finds her favorite designer Barbara is working on a new project and collecting inspirations from customers. The second scene is Kanna takes pictures which fit the theme. Then, Kanna edits the pictures and sends it to the designer. A few hours later, she receives a new notification. She

checks her smartphone and sees Barbara added the picture she took in the design library. She feels the sense of fulfillment and thinks that she contributes to the designer.

## Key Paths II

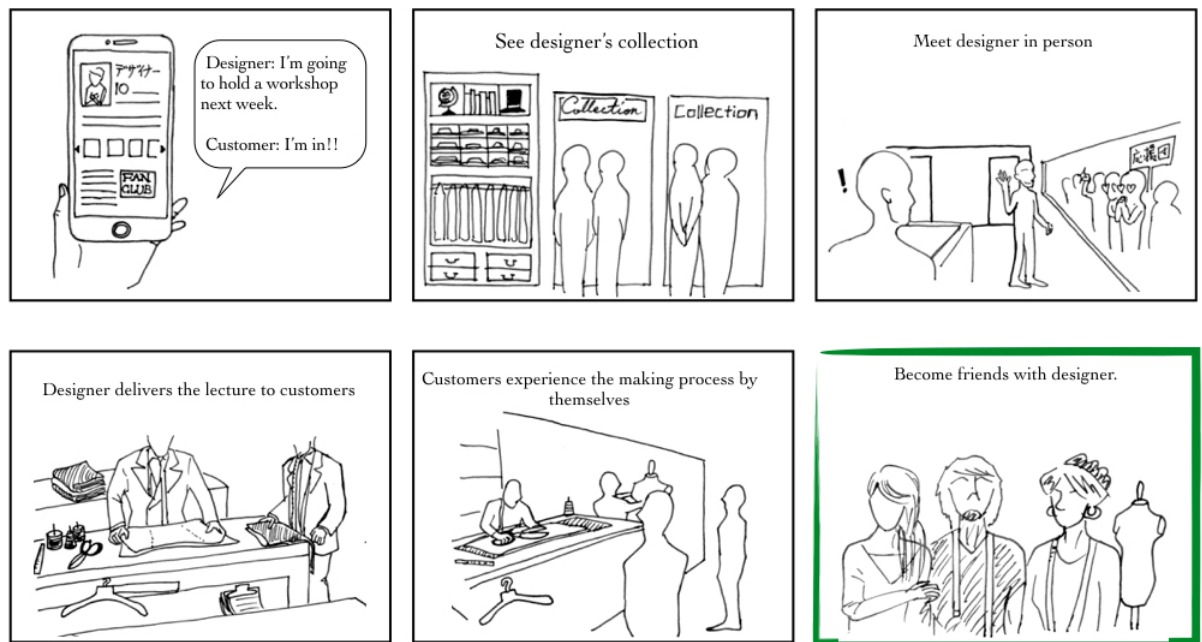


Figure 3.28: Key Paths II

The second key paths are about offline fan club. Kanna receives a message on the *Monolog* application from the designer about an upcoming offline event. Kanna notices the events is near her current city. She decides to attend it. During the event, Kanna meets several fan club friends she met online and she sees the designer in person. The designer explains the material she used and her concept carefully, and let customers touch and make small things by themselves. Kanna

impressed by the talent of Barbara again. The admiration of designer increased and connection with other strengthened through the fan club communication. After the event, Kanna talks with designer and designer remembers her inspiration pictures before. They talk a lot and become friends. Kanna wants to support Barbara as a friend in the future.

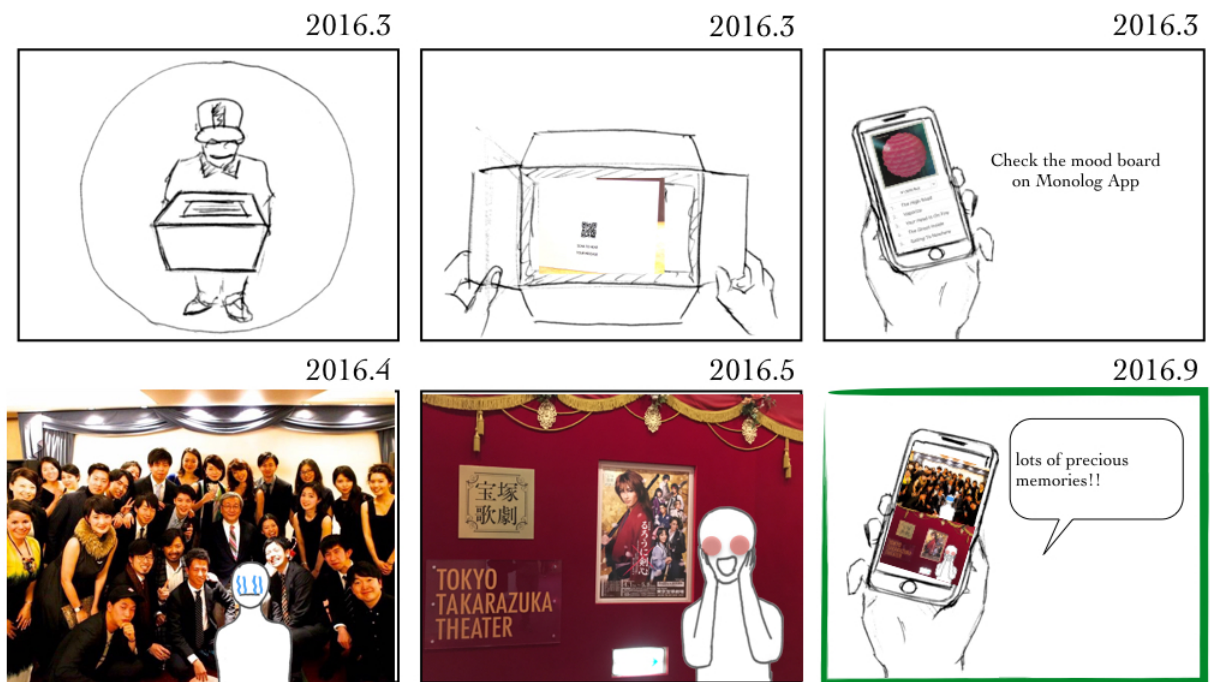


Figure 3.29: Key Paths III

### Key Paths III

The third key paths are about the scenes when customer receive the products and log the experiences about the product. In the morning, Kanna receives the package from the postman and there is the designer bag in a well-wrapped box. She also notices that there is a paper with a bar code. She scans the bar code

and a mood board which includes all inspirations and explanation about design details appears in front of Kanna. With the help of the mood board, Kanna understands the meaning of design, notices fine point and engages more with the product. Kanna used this bag in different occasions with different people. She logged two stories in the *Monolog* application. One is the graduation party, with her classmates and professor, the other is watching the staged performance of her favorite actress. When she reviews all these stories, a lot of memories flood to her and she cherishes the product more.

## Customer Journey

Found on fandom development in Takarazuka case, concept sketching, use case and key paths, figure 3.30 illustrates customer journey. Similar to the four phases fandom development, there are four stages in the customer journey: embryo, birth, growth and mature. As these four stages developed, customer's emotional association and level of participation increase. Customers evolve from and brand laymen to brand part-time marketer as well. Throughout the customer journey, customers might encounter both linear and non-linear process, sometimes even experience loops. However, all these processes aim to incite customer's devotion and consolidate bonds among actors. Varying touch points appear in different conditions, deepen the affiliation and generate new co-created value.

## Concept Drawing

The following section will describe the main functions, logo design and naming of the application *Monolog*.

## Function and User Interface

There are three main function of this mobile application: logging story, sharing inspiration with designers and participating online and offline fan club events.

- Logging stories- Customers can log the stories and experiences while using the items designed by emerging designers. At the same time, they are able to set the privacy level and choose whether to share their logs with other users or not. During logging story, customer perceive the value and co-create the value with designers



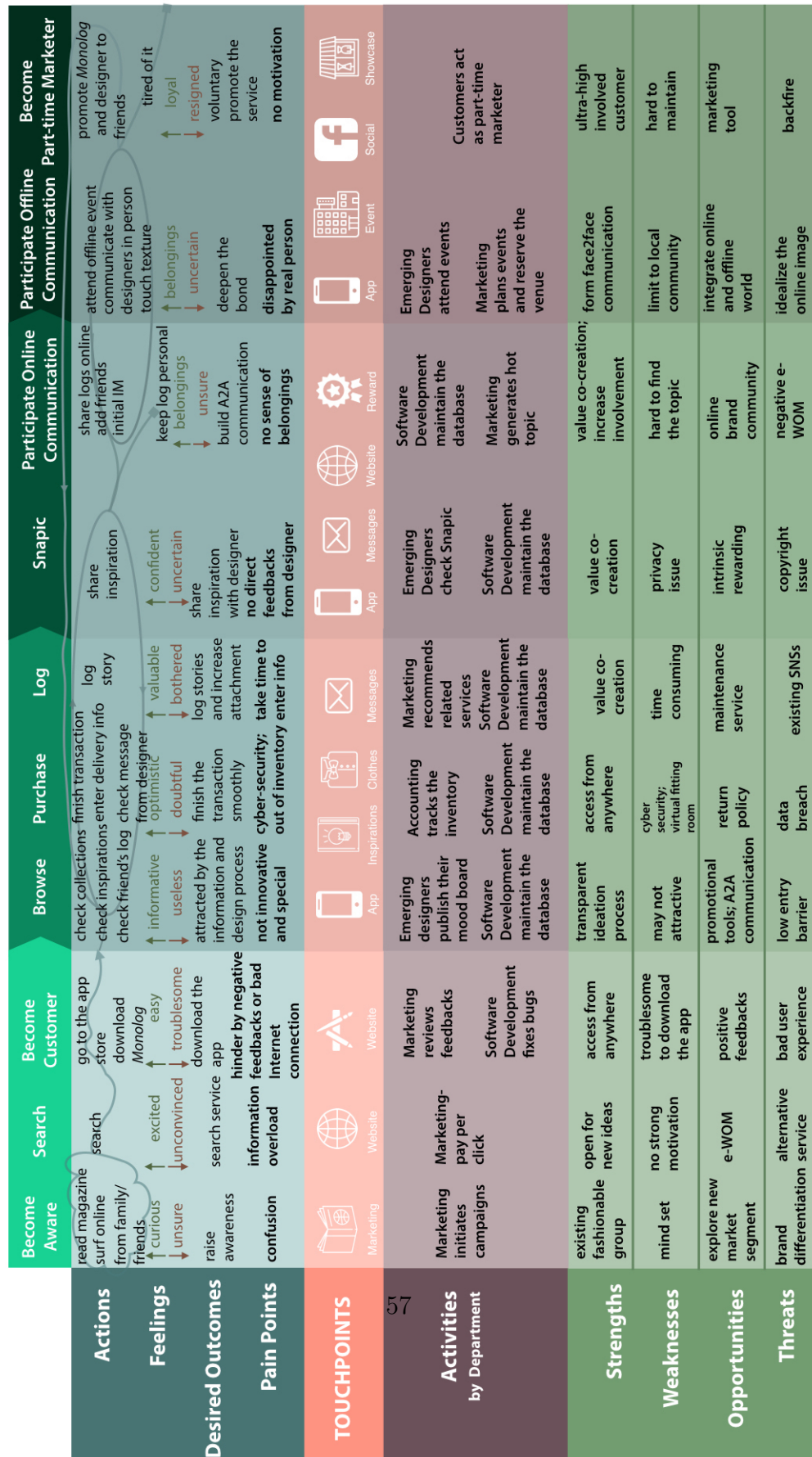


Figure 3.30: Customer Journey



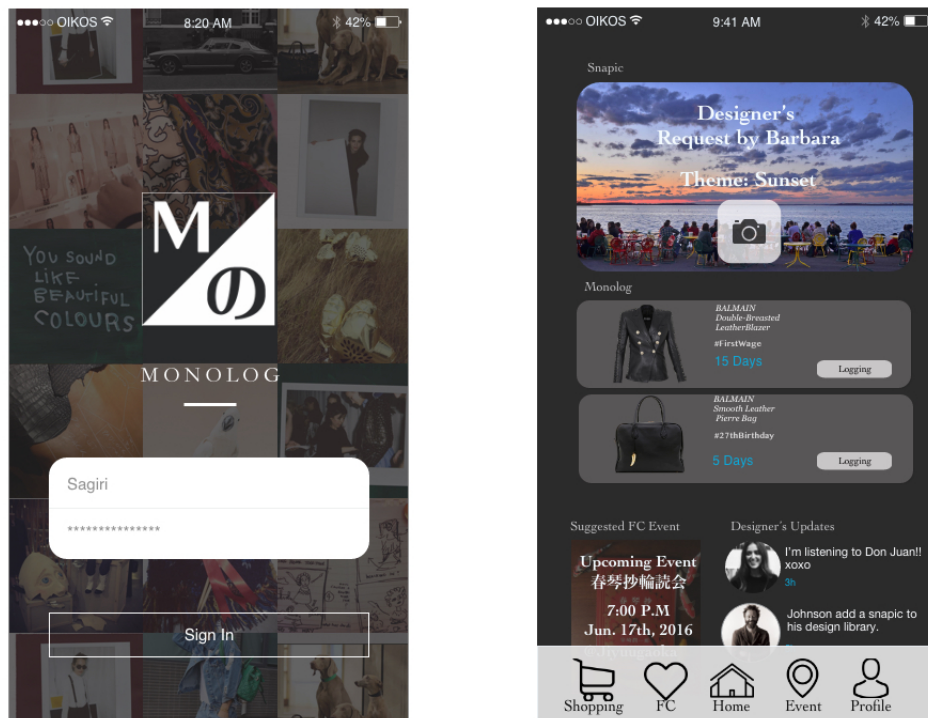


Figure 3.31: Login Page and Home Screen

- Sharing Inspiration- Customers directly send the inspiration to designers, initiate the communication, and receive the indirect feedback from designers. Feedback from designers include open the pictures, bookmark the pictures, add pictures to the designer library and use them in the Mood Board. Customers feel that they contribute to the designers to their design and have the sense of self-actualization when they receive the indirect feedback from designers. They feel the competitiveness and superiority with one's feedback is better than others as well.
- Participating online and offline event-Customer-to-Customer(C2C) communication is another feature of this mobile application. There are two layers of C2C communication: online discussions and offline fan club activities. On the application, customer can share their logs, discuss any topic related to designers or elements used in designs in the forum section. They can

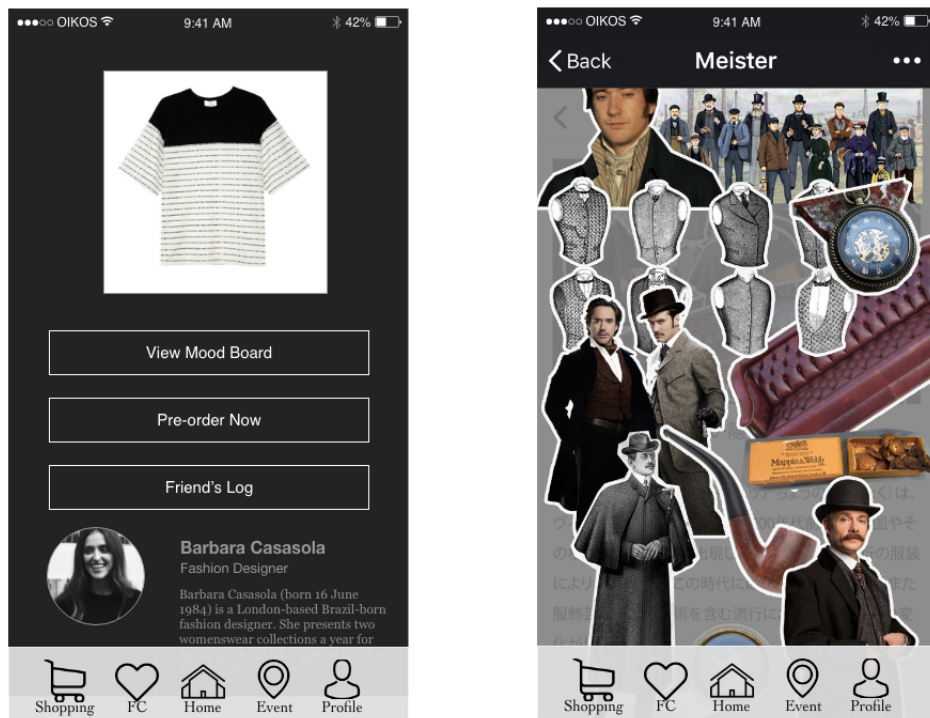


Figure 3.32: Purchase Page and Mood Board

also reserve the offline events via the application. By attending the offline fan club activities, the bond among customers are strengthened. Customers have better understanding about designs, receive direct feedback and establish the rapport with designers. The ultimate goal is to invoke customer's loyalty towards emerging designers.

Figure 3.31 illustrates the login page and the home screen. The home screen shows all the feature functions of this application. On the top of the home screen is the Snapic function. It the the request from designers. Designers prescribe the theme beforehand and the theme and designer are weekly rotated. By clicking the camera icon, customer can directly take pictures related to the theme and send it to the designer. The detailed function will discuss under fan club section. *Monolog* section is located below the Snapic corner. The system automatically lists items recently purchased by customers and encourage customers to start

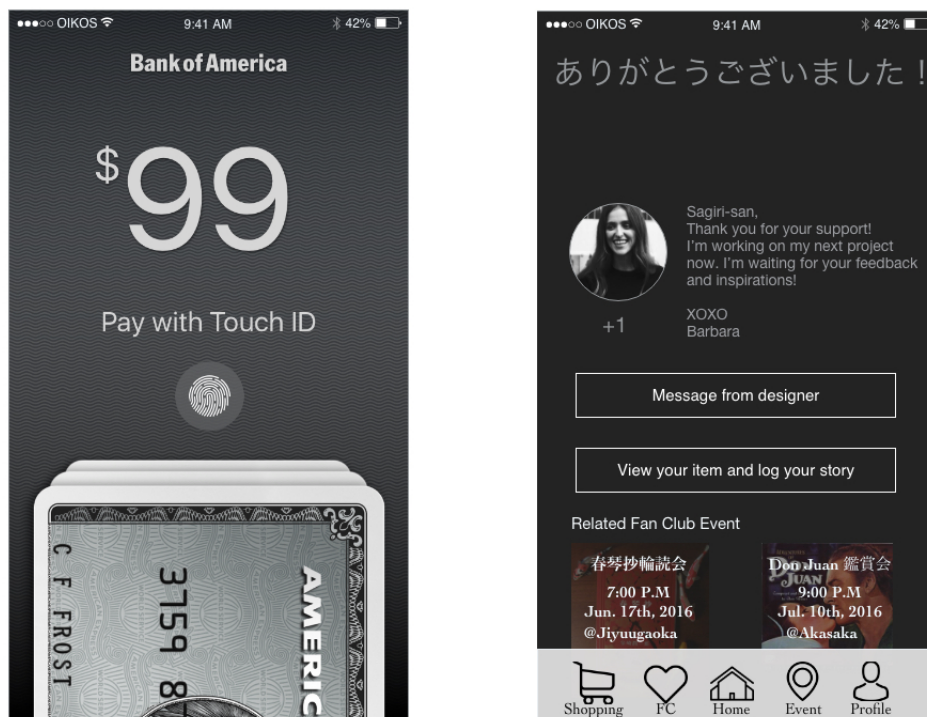


Figure 3.33: Payment and Purchase Confirmation

logging stories. On the bottom are the suggested contents picked by the system based on customer's purchase history. On the lefthand side is the fan club events related to elements in designer's design or designer's showcase. On the righthand side is updates from designers checked by customers before or liked by customer's friends.

At the bottom the screen, there is a navigation bar with the five signs. By clicking the first button in shopping cart shape, the customer can look up the collection and purchase new items. The second heart icon is for fan club activities. The customer can communicate with other fan club members, read designer's post and send design inspirations directly to the designer. Their icon is home screen. The fourth button is for fan club activities. Fan clubs reservation can be made through this page. The last button is profile page. Customer can check their status and their rankings in the whole ecosystem.

Figure 3.32 is the product description page and mood board page under pur-

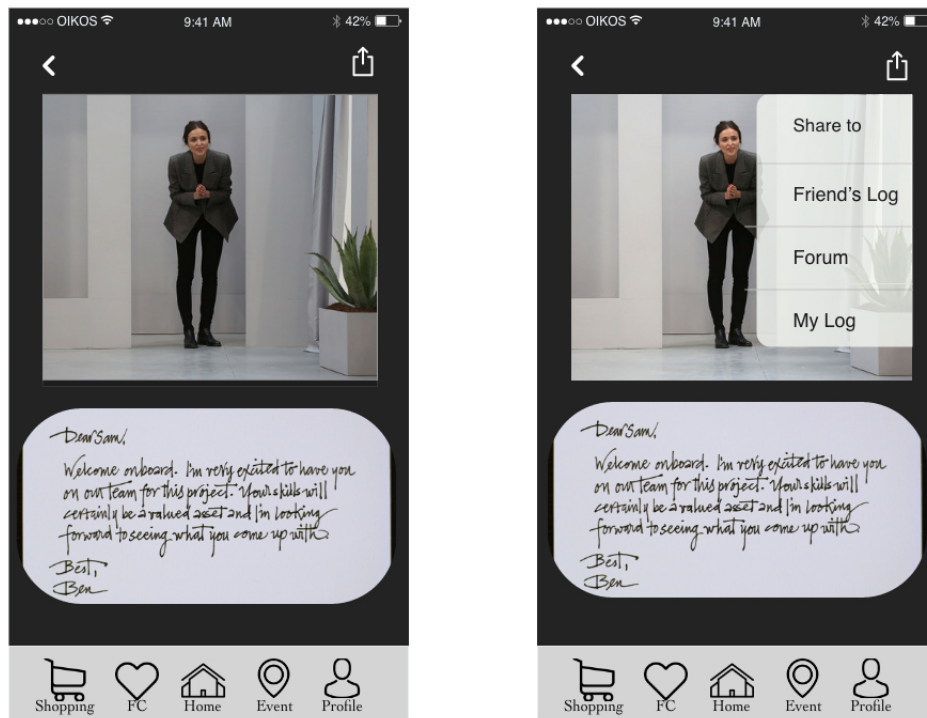


Figure 3.34: Message from Designer

chase button. The photo of the item is displayed on the top of the page. Below the picture, there are three buttons. The user can choose to view mood board, pre-order the item, and check other's logs related to the item. After choosing to view the mood board, customers can check all the components and elements which inspired designers in creating process. The customer can click each item for detailed explanations. That helps customers to understand designer more. Checking other's stories about the item is the other purchase trigger. It stimulates the wants of users to create their own stories.

Figure 3.33 shows payment method and confirmation message. After clicking the pre-order button, the screen will be automatically directly to the payment page. The transaction will be finished by Apple pay or other credit cards.

On the confirmation page, customers receive thanks letter the designer. Under the picture of the designer, there is the point indicates how many points the purchase contributes to the designer. Also, customers receive special message

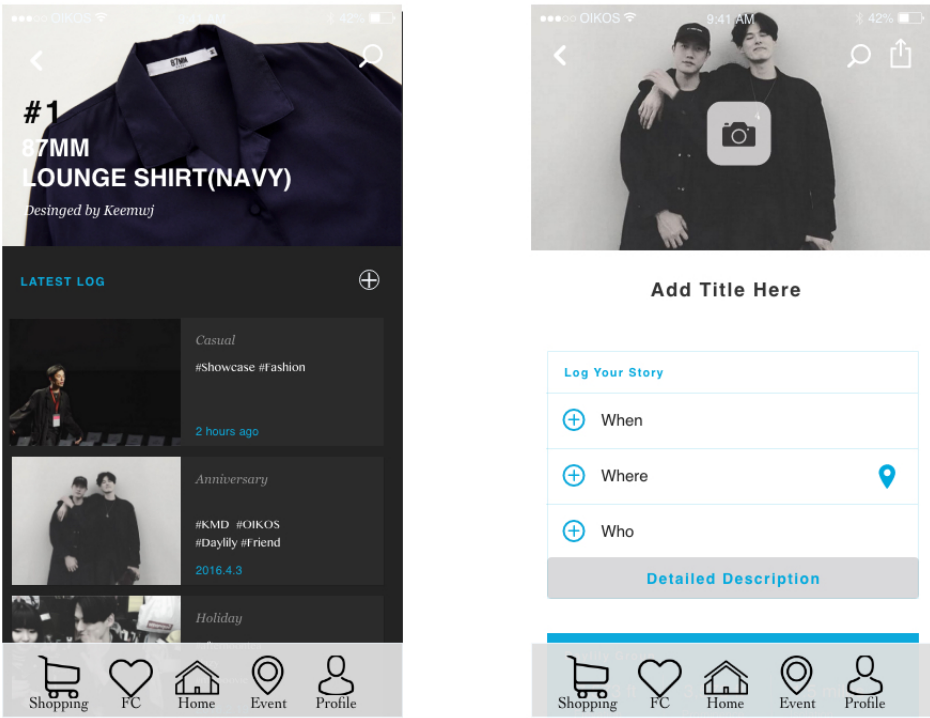


Figure 3.35: Check Existing Logs and Add a New Log

from the designer. Customers can begin to log their stories about the item as well. The system suggests related events to help customer form tight connection with the products and designers.

Figure 3.34 shows the screen of thank picture and letter from the designer. Below the picture, there is the handwritten message tends to customize the purchase experience. That makes customers feel like a special individual rather than an ordinary player in the mass market.

Figure 3.35 is the story logging page. On that page, it shows basic information about the item, such as designer, picture, color, brand and how long the customer owned the item. Blow the header, there will be the logging stories about the item. These stories are sorted chronologically, from the newest to the oldest. For the logging stories, there will be composed of pictures, tags to describe the emotion, upload time, and style. Users can also add new story by clicking the plus sign. Through editing time, place, people, and pictures, users automatically associate



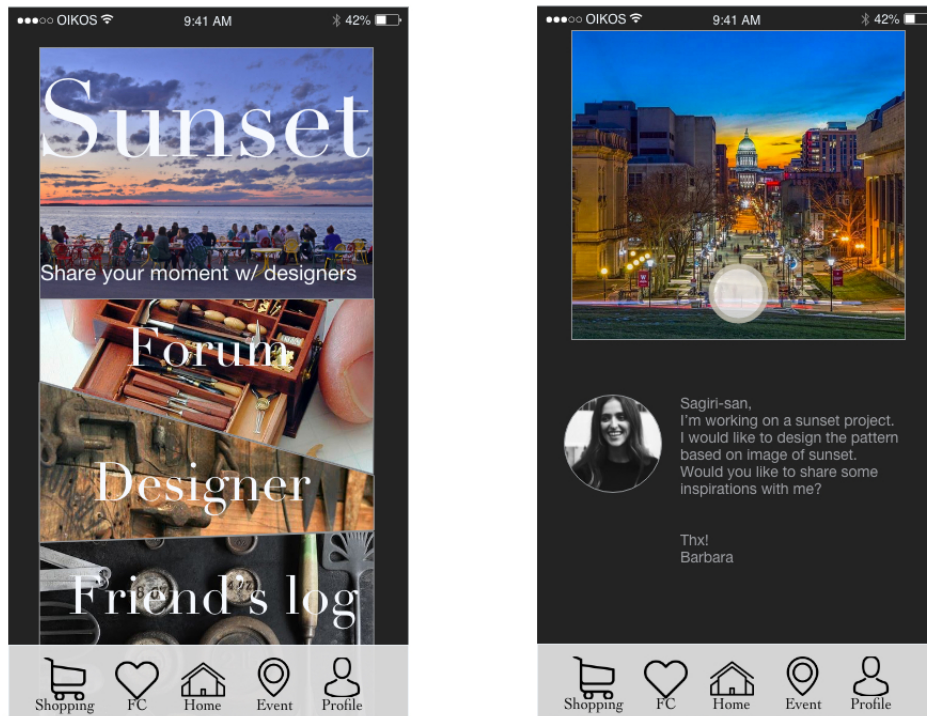


Figure 3.36: Send Snapic to Inspire Designer

the clothes they wear to happening in their daily life automatically.

Figure 3.36 explicates the fan club page. There are four subsections under this page: Snapic, forum, designer's blog and friend's log. For the first and the feature part of fan club page, Snapic aims to bridge the gap between designer and customers and make customers feel of the sense of contribution. For each project or new design, the designer is working one, the designer can raise ideas from his or her fans. For example, on this page, the designer is asking for inspirations of the sunset from fans. Fans can take the pictures of the sunset and send it to the designer. Customers can also edit the picture or directly send it to the designer.

Figure 3.37 continues the Snapic part. If users choose to edit the picture, they can add filters or adjust exposure, saturation, and contrast. Then they choose the designer to send the picture to. After sending the picture, the users can get follow-up status of the pictures. They will know when the designer opened the picture and be notified if the designer saves the pictures in his or her designer library. This will

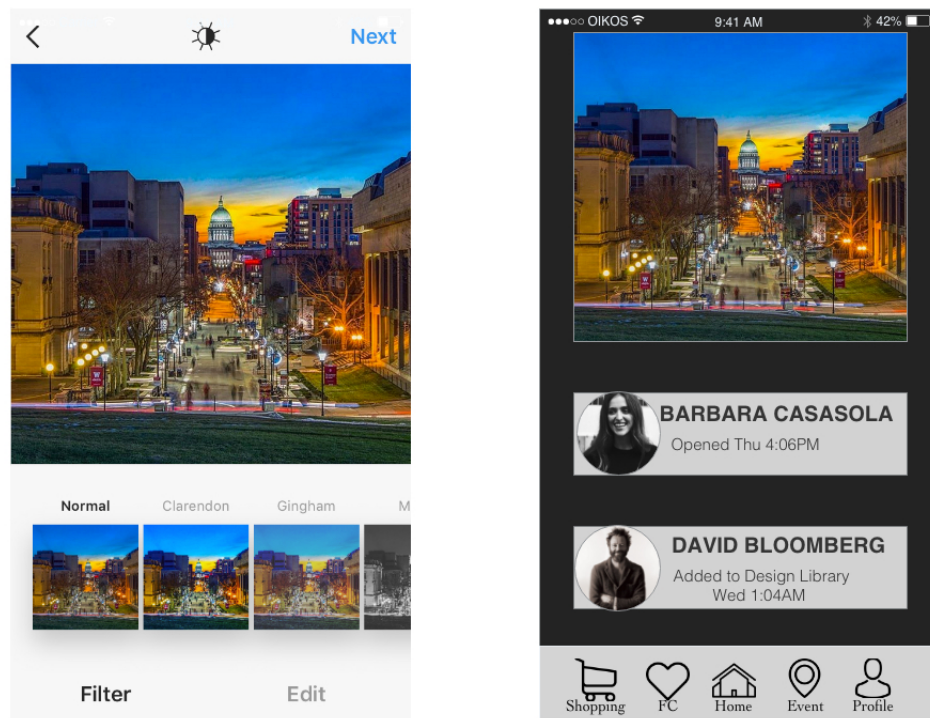


Figure 3.37: Send Snapic to Inspire Designer 2

help customers feel the sense of actualization.

Figure 3.38 shows the forum section and friend's log section under fan club page. Forum part provides a platform for customers to communicate with other fan club members. Their topic can range from designer's design, philosophy, thank letter to designer's personality, book or music used in their mood board. This forum facilitates the information exchange.

Under the friend's log, users can check the stories associated with designer's product by other fan club members. The goal of this section is to generate discussion and sense of belongings.

Figure 3.39 contains screen of designer's blog and screen of designer's information page. Screen of designer's blog is under fan club tab. On this screen, designers share their daily activities or their design process with their fans. Customers can comment under designer's post. Depend on the contents customer commented, designers randomly choose comments and reply. Designer information page contains

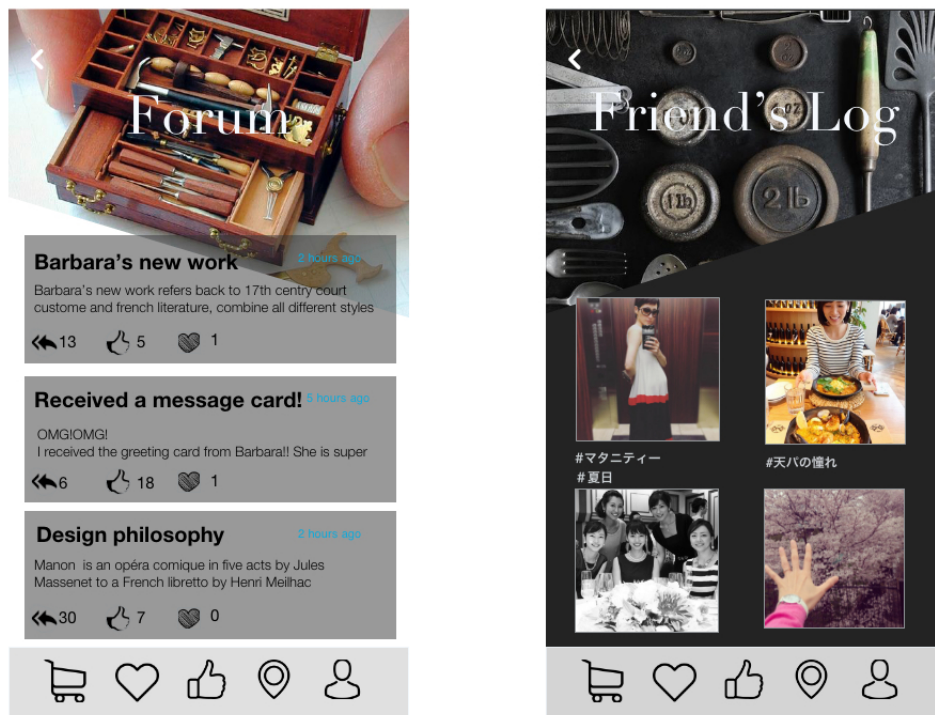


Figure 3.38: Forum and Other's Logs

three main components, designer's information, a link to designer's collections and related fan club events. There is also a heart mark on this page. By touching the heart mark, customers can join designer's fan club and become fans.

Figure 3.40 is for offline fan club event. On the right hand side, users are able to choose fan club events by category. By choosing a specific category, the screen switches to the page on the right hand side, users can check event in details and reserve the event before the deadline.

Figure 3.41 contains the user's profile page. On the user's profile page, customers can edit their profile pictures and nickname, check items they bought, stories and experiences about items, friends from the same fan club and designers they marked. They can also check upcoming fan club events. Also, customer can check their status and relative position among all fan club members. This design aims to incite competition among customers and sense of superiority.



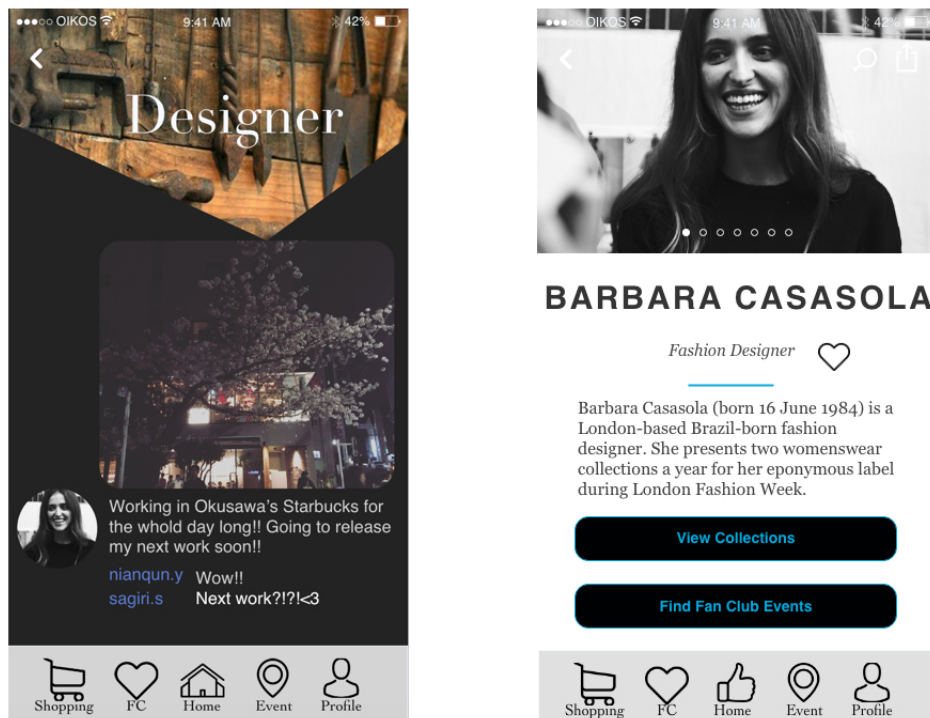


Figure 3.39: Designer's Profile and Ranking

## Naming

*Monolog* is composed of two parts: “Mono” and “Log”. “Mono” originates from Japanese, which means thing or person. “Log” stems from the English word “log”, originally means achieving a certain distance, speed, and time of ship or aircraft. The “log” means logging stories of things or people, which conforms the proposed value.

*Monolog* can also imply “Monologue”, a long speech by one action in a play or movie, or as a part of a theatrical or broadcast program. Customers perceive the value provided by the designer and co-create the value with designer and other customers. They perceive the value by themselves.

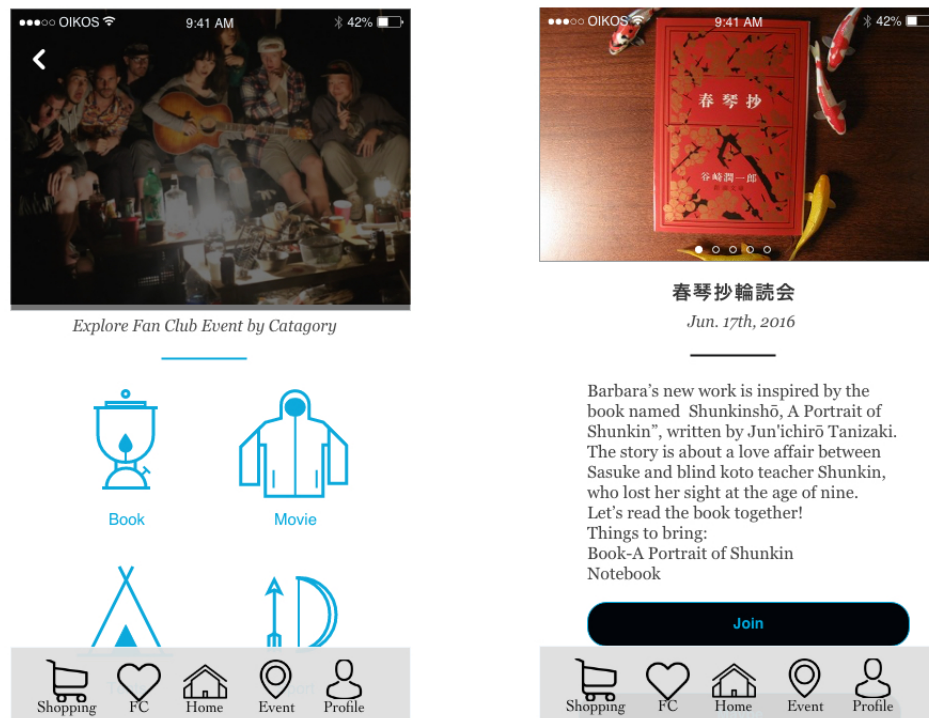


Figure 3.40: Offline Fan Club Event

## Logo

The logo is composed of a capital letter "M" and Japanese Hiragana "no" and it is in black and white. Using Japanese Hiragana "no" in the logo design is because of the meaning of "mono" originates from Japanese. The black and white color choices for this logo try to convey the sense of classic and simple. The square unified by two triangles stand for "Log" part. The triangle stands for "L", the square stands for "O", and the square with a diagonal line is simplified "G".

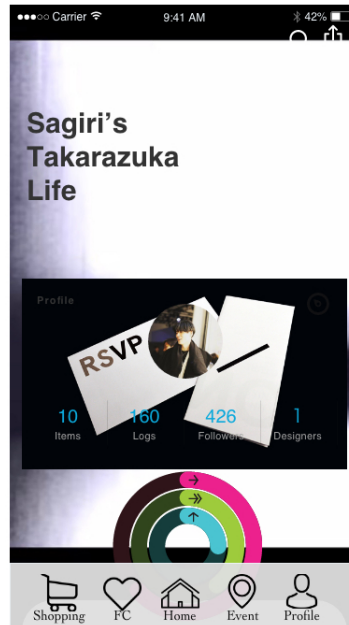


Figure 3.41: Profile



Figure 3.42: Logo

# Chapter 4

## Evaluation

This chapter evaluates the aforementioned design concept by conducting observation and contextual interview among users. The initial prototype was modified based on actions and feedback from the users as well. This chapter are organized in the order of methodology, result, discussion and revised concept. Methodology section explains the method used in the evaluation to measure the effectiveness of mobile application. Result section lists and reorganizes feedback gathered from user. Discussion section analyzes and interprets the result and draws the conclusion about the evaluation. In the end, the revised concept section, initial prototype was modified and improved corresponding to received critiques.

### 4.1 Methodology

The main focus of this evaluation is to understand interviewee's perceived values of this application and value co-created by the service provider and end users. Perceived values and co-created values are apprehended by observation and contextual interview.

Users are assigned smartphones installed with the working prototype and asked to use the application by themselves. Through the hands-on workshop, the author subjectively judge user's emotions and attitudes by observing user's facial expressions and and body movements. Questions considered by the researcher are does user like or dislike the application, has user experienced any emotional change while using the application and so on.

After using the application, a contextual interview follows. There are six open-ended questions asked in the contextual interview. The questions include participants' original fashion taste, favorite styles and designers, channel to purchase apparel goods, perceived valuable features, the most satisfying moment, and co-created values.

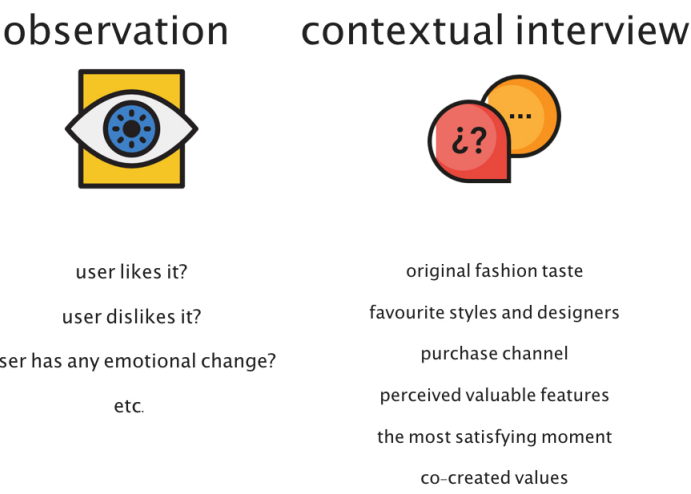


Figure 4.1: Participants' Accumulated Baseline Journey

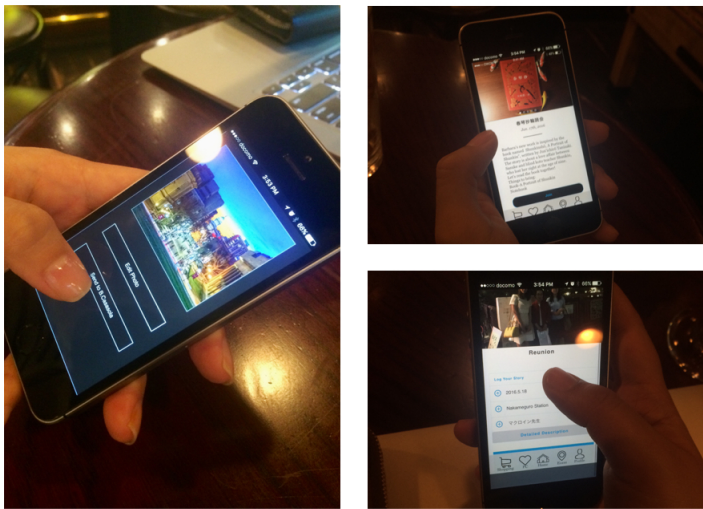


Figure 4.2: Evaluation

## 4.2 Result

There were seven people participated the evaluation. The hands-on session lasts for ten minutes and a contextual interview follows. Their ages range from 23 to 30. Two of them are males and five of them are females. Their average maximum budget for fashion items is 53,000 Japanese Yen. Their purchase triggers are style, material and easiness to coordinate and fit his or her existing clothes. Rather than following the current trend in fashion industry, most of respondents want to have their personal styles.

From the perspective of fashion tastes and attitudes towards emerging designers, four out of seven users state that even though they have interest in or want to support emerging designers, they cannot find an effective channel to contact and support designer's business. In their minds, emerging designers and emerging designer items have certain stereotypes such as expensive and inaccessible. Their favorite brands are Cos, &other story, Zara and Roxy. For the rest, two of them have no interest in fashion and usually purchase clothing from Muji or Uniqlo. One of the participants is supporting a emerging designer now. She buys all her clothes directly from emerging designer's online store and select shop which holds designer items.

From the perspective of purchase channel, five of them usually buy clothes both online and in brick and mortar store, they are familiar with online shopping environment; the remaining two are more comfortable to actually try the clothes on and purchase them in store.

## 4.3 Discussion

### Co-created Values

Overall, users were satisfied with the core value, personalized fashion experience, proposed by the author. <sup>1</sup>They felt they were recognized as special individuals and actually be a part of designs. At the same time, they created their own values through using the working prototype.

To make the result clean and clear, the interviewees are sorted into three cohorts:

- Fashion conscious people
- Fashion experts

- Fashion Laymen

Each cohorts traits and co-created values will be discussed respectively as follow.

### Fashion Conscious People

The first cohort is fashion conscious people. According to the contextual interview, they have certain interest in fashion items. They usually buy high street brand such as Zara and entry-level designer items. They are the original target user of this service. Figure 4.3 shows values perceived and co-created by this cohort. They felt using this application can help them explain the design concept to their family and friends. They feel like a brand contributor and being recognized as an special individual by the designer. Thus, for users in this cohort, this application is a platform which presents fashion knowledge and design process, a channel to nurture emerging fashion and a place that they can feel the sense of superiority.

Since this cohort is similar to the original target persona, that co-created values are almost identical to the values proposed by the author.

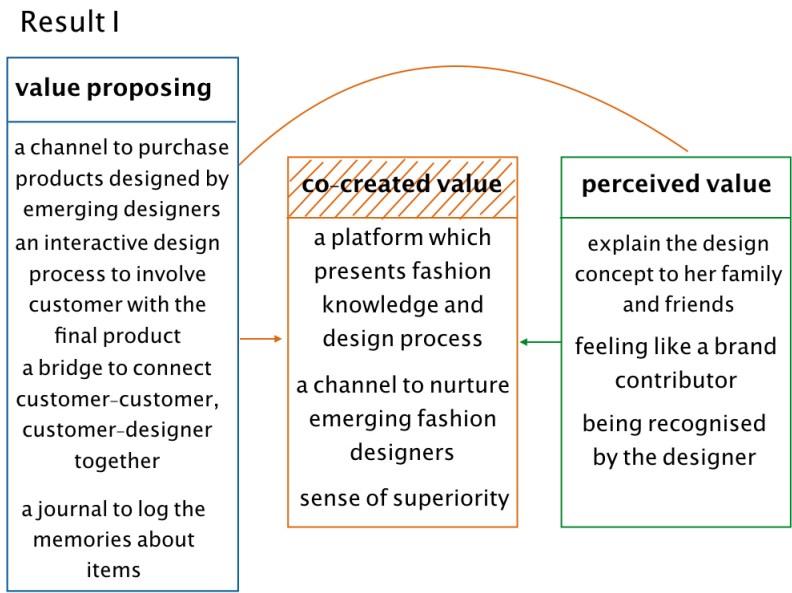


Figure 4.3: Result I: Fashion Conscious People

### Fashion Experts

The second cohort includes people who have their own fashion tastes. Usually, they directly purchase fashion items from emerging designers and have personal connection with emerging designers. For them, the story behind each item is more important. The perceived value for them are they feel the added values to items. They generate percussion with other users. Thus, the co-created value of this application *Monolog* is a blog to track fashion-oriented experience, an exclusive space to share personal fashion attitudes and experience to generate percussion. The different focuses between fashion conscious people and fashion experts can be easily told. Although their co-created values are more or less deviated from the original proposed value, they are better off from using this application.

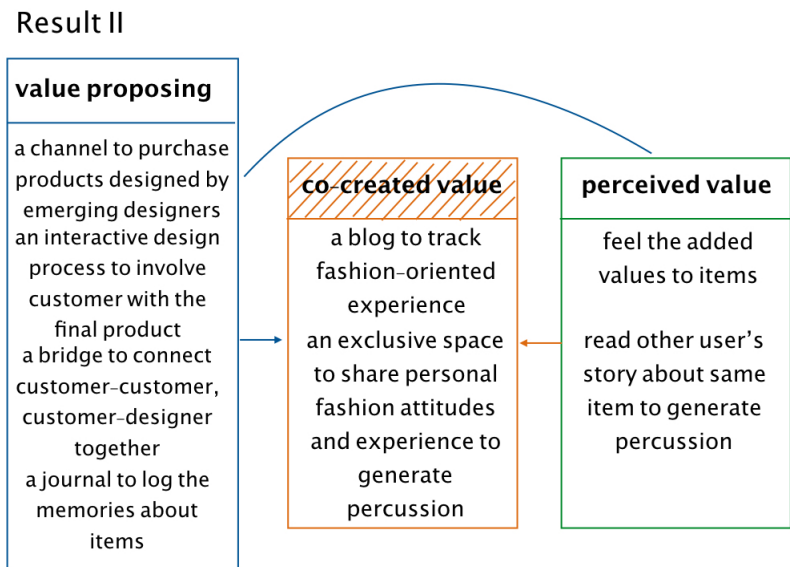


Figure 4.4: Result II: Fashion Expert

### Fashion Laymen

The third cohort contains people who have no interest in fashion at all. The quality of clothes is more important than the design. This cohort is not included in the target users at the beginning. However, while using the application during the evaluation, they perceive and co-created their own values.



They feel this application can improve their fashion tastes, help them to have a better style and make friends with fashionable people. Thus, this application acts as a trend-setter, provides fashion education and works as a community to mach people have similar interest together.

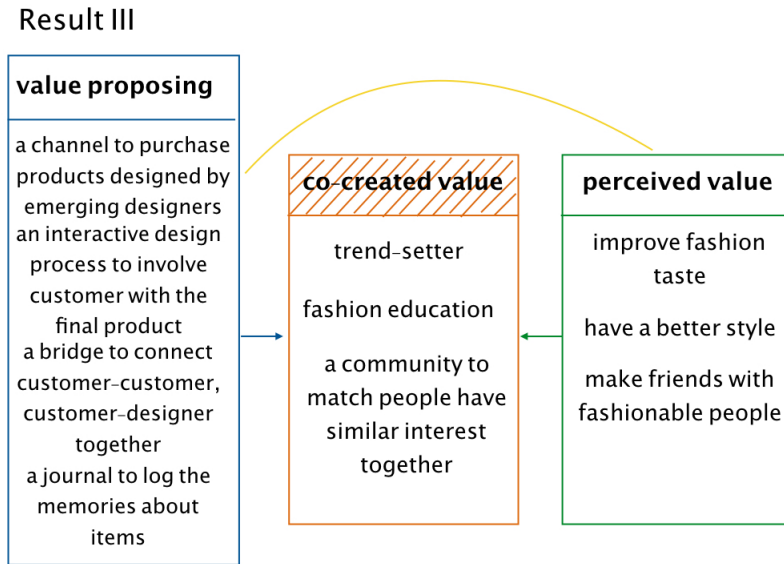


Figure 4.5: Result III: Fashion Laymen

## Findings

Based on the data collected from evaluation and brief analysis, there are five main findings. These findings help to refine target users and revise current concept.

- New values are co-created by individual user.
- Fashion laymen could be potential target users, but corresponding branding strategies are needed.
- The stories behind items are more attractive to fashion experts.
- Obstacles of virtual shopping experience are needed to be overcome.
- Forum and competition functions are not effective.

Firstly, as we discussed in the previous section, each user generates their own value and co-created certain value from using this application. That is a good sign that *Monolog* may have potential positive impacts on target users, cater customer's needs and help emerging designers.

Secondly, the contextual interview shows there are two users purchase clothes from mass manufactures and have no interest in fashion. However, after using the application, they shown the intention to use this application and purchase designer item. Thus, in addition to people who have fashion consciousness and care about their style, the target users can also expand to those people who have no interest in fashion at all. Thus, it is important to invoke their awareness of fashion and initiate them to use the application at the beginning. Brand strategy and Marketing seem important to attract this type of user.

Thirdly, one of the interviewees is supporting emerging designers by herself now. For her, rather than communication or interaction with designers, she cares more about other users' stories and other users' experience. Thus, the function such as Monolog or Friend's log have the possibility to separate from the ordering system to be an individual application.

Fourthly, in the interviews, users expressed uneasiness about shopping online. The worries root from two different sources, virtual shopping environment and online payment security issue. For the first problem, it can be solved by taking advantage of offline fan club events and introducing flexible return policy. By inviting users to attend offline showcase, users can not only communicate with designers and other fans, but also feel the texture of clothes, try the clothes on and check the size, and pre-order the newest designs. Flexible return policy such as 30 Days No Questions Asked Return Policy may also lower customer's hesitation to purchase online. For the second problem, the management team should increase the security level and provide multiple alternative payment methods. In addition to finish the transaction by credit card, customers are able to wire the money in the bank or exchange when they receive the product.

The last but not the least, current prototype can be modified based on feedback. Functions such as forum and competition seem not that attractive. One of the users uttered that other social networking sites change her behavior. In stead of sharing her emotions to the unknown fan club members, she preferred to share the interesting episodes with close fan club friends. The fan club friends can be made by other functions such as friends's log, designer's log or offline activities. Thus, the fan club exclusive forum will be replaced by an instant message system

instead.

On the other hand, competition function is a relative controversial function. Some users like to check their status within the fan club and feel the competitiveness when they compare with other fan club members. Others think the competition is unnecessary. They do not care other’s performance at all and the competition itself make no difference for their shopping experience. To balance the feedback from both sides, competition will be redesigned and a rewarding system will be introduced. Details will be explained in “Revised Concept” section.

4.4 Revised Concept

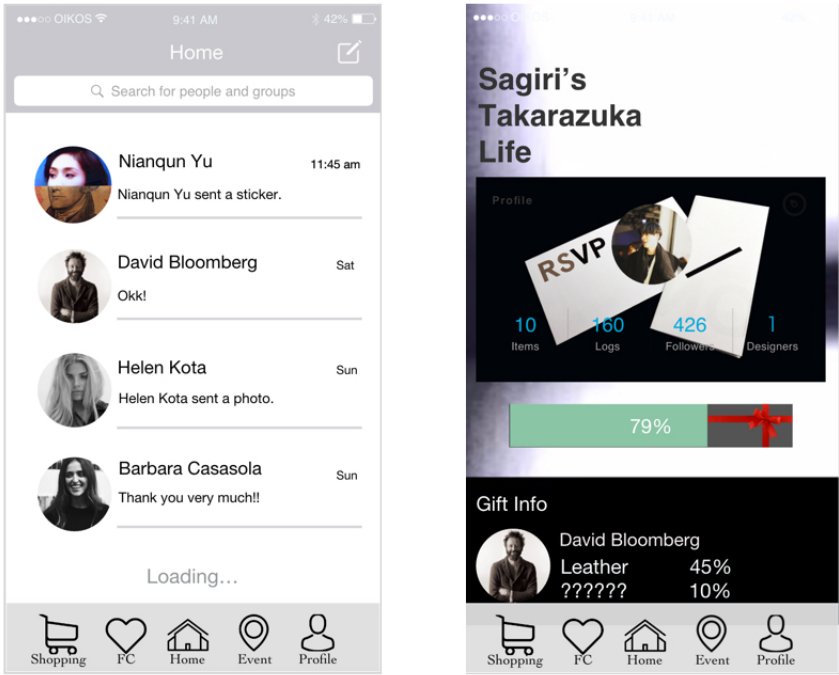


Figure 4.6: Revised Concept: Instant Message and Gift

As discussed in findings, the forum function is replaced by the instant message function. Users are able to send and receive personal messages from his or her

friends on *Monolog*. On the top of the screen, there is a search bar. Users can search for people and groups by typing key words. On the left hand side, there are friends' profile pictures. On the right hand side, there is the date and time when the users sent or received the messages.

On the original competition page, there are three circles show fan club ranking, contribution to the designers and amount of money spend in the mobile application. The revised concept simplify them into a progress bar. Progress bar shows the how many percentages left to reclaim next gift. The percentage on the progress bar are calculated based on their fan club activeness, communication with emerging designers and amount of money spend in the application. As the percentage goes up, the gift information will gradually reveal as well.

## Notes

- 1 <http://adaptivepath.org/ideas/the-baseline-journey-3/>The Baseline Journey

# Chapter 5

## Conclusion

### 5.1 Conclusion

The current trends in fashion and the way that it is marketed to customers is increasingly focused on a customer-centric approach; thus, the fashion industry will need to adapt and offer more targeted and unique ways to reach their target consumer. Especially in the case of emerging designers and the users that appreciate these designs, it is important to offer a service similar to *Monolog* that can bridge this gap.

According to the results of evaluation and user testing, it is possible to create a high involved customer in the fashion industry that is based on the Takarazuka theater fan model. Through the use of this existing fandom system, this research has shown the effectiveness of A2A communication and value co-creation to improve the fashion consumers experience, as well as promote emerging designers in an alternative and personalised way.

Six design objectives mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 3 are attained as followed. Being uniqueness and showing off the fashion tastes are fundamental drives for fans to attend emerging designer supportive activities. Repetitive purchase and spread words among friends are means of nurturing designers. While supporting emerging designers, fans start to build rapport with other fans and personal connections with designers. Bonds are consolidated as communication accumulated. Ultimately, fans feel self-actualized when designers become famous or open their own independent shops.

### 5.2 Limitations

This research has several unavoidable limitations. Firstly, due to time limit, the scale of the project and many stakeholders involved, this application *Monolog* does

not have the chance to be implemented and tested in the real world. The whole evaluation is built on value proposing and value co-creation. Without real emerging designers and emerging designer items, deviation in user's perception may be caused. As the development of application and service ecosystem, additional user tests and evaluations are needed.

Secondly, the user tests were conducted in an environment that no real money and goods exchanges happened and no competitor's products available. Thus, users may overestimate their willingness to spend on product and emerging designers. In the future study, a well-controlled control group and experimental group are required.

## 5.3 Future work

### Pricing Model

The term "mass customization popularises in the manufacturing industry. (Duray 2002) Compared with mass production, mass customization respond consumer's demand and produce products based on consumer's preference. At the same time, each modularity will be produced on the large scale to realise economy of scale/scope to minimise the cost. The degree of personalization depends on the point of consumer involvement and modularity type and combining these two identifiers generate four mass customization archetypes. Due to the budget and time consideration, the best choice is to involve the customer in the late design stage and use modularity during assemble and delivery stages.

On *Monolog*, management team releases new items designed by emerging designers frequently in capsule collection. Specifically, it will be twice per week and 5 new designs each time, to keep the designs fresh and avoid information overload. The customer can pre-order items based on their tastes within a certain period of time. There is a minimal production line, the production threshold evaluated by the management team, to control the cost. If the pre-order quantity reaches the minimal production line, the order will proceed and the blueprint will be sent to pattern maker and produced in oversea factories. The same design will be produced, and only produced the number customers orders, as known as "consumer managed inventory" (CMI) to create the sense of scarcity and eliminate inventory cost. The unit price range of mass customised products is 10,000JPY 15,000JPY and customers can receive final product in 7-10 business days, which is cheaper

★ **Minimal Production Line:** The minimal Pre-order number to maintain economy of scope/scale.

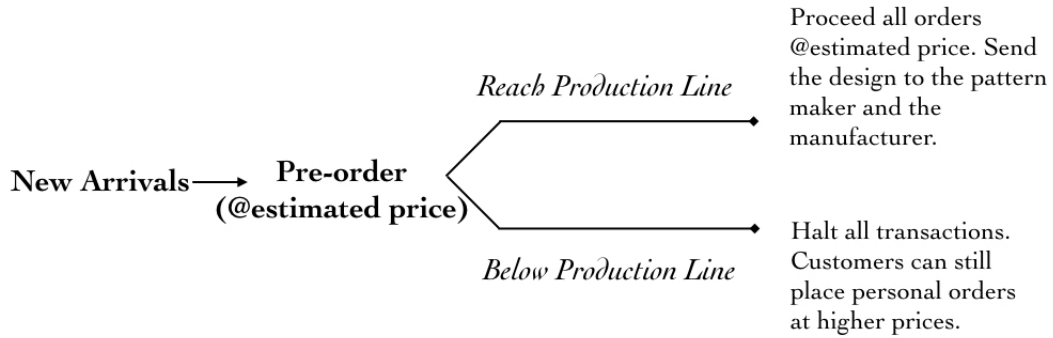


Figure 5.1: Pricing Startegy

and faster than personal order from individual designers. However, if the number of pre-order does not reach that threshold, consumers still can place a personal order, but the extra fee will be charged.

### Emerging Designer Recruitment Process

To keep the design fresh and retain new customers, every year there are two recruitment periods to hire new designers. The recruitment period starts from January and July separately. There are three rounds of screening to assess each candidate's basic skill, passion and personality. After being accepted, a short training session follows. Experienced designers and experts from different production processes will give the lectures to green designers. After the training session, an internal show case will be held and famous designers come to assess new designer's capability to release their works. Those who passed the inter-

nal screening can start to sell their design and be exposed to the public. Extra trainings are available for those who are not ready to sell their designs.



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