

**CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT WITH MODERN LUXURY DIRECT-TO-  
CONSUMER BRANDS ON SOCIAL MEDIA:  
A STUDY OF GLOSSIER**

by

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of the requirements for the Master of Science in Fashion and Apparel Studies

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
ABSTRACT .....	ix

### Chapter

1	INTRODUCTION .....	1
	Purpose .....	4
	Definition of Terms .....	4
2	LITERATURE REVIEW .....	7
	Social Media and Luxury Brands .....	7
	Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) Brands .....	9
	Direct-to-Consumer Brands and Social Media .....	11
	Millennial Consumers and Direct-to-Consumer Brands .....	13
	Modern Luxury, Direct-to-Consumer Brands .....	15
	Consumer Engagement .....	18
	Brodie et al.'s Consumer Engagement Model .....	20
3	METHODS .....	26
	Research Questions .....	26
	Data Collection .....	27
	Sampling .....	27
	Semi-Structured Interviews .....	31
	Participant Profile .....	34
	Data Analysis .....	38

4	RESULTS .....	40
	General Social Media Patterns and Behaviors of Study Participants .....	40
	Top Social Media Platforms .....	41
	Social Media Engagement Level and Schedule .....	42
	Social Media Engagement Motive and Benefits .....	44
	Beauty Shopping Tendencies .....	48
	Beauty Shopping Budget and Frequency .....	50
	Beauty Product Purchase Learning .....	51
	Online Versus Offline Beauty Purchases .....	55
	In-Store Beauty Purchases.....	55
	Online Beauty Purchases .....	56
	Social Media Engagement with Glossier .....	57
	Social Media Behavior on Glossier Social Media Channels .....	57
	Social Media Engagement Level with Glossier .....	60
	Motive for Engaging with Glossier .....	61
	Hedonic Experience with Glossier .....	62
	Consumer Engagement with Modern Luxury, Direct-to-Consumer Brands....	64
	Learning.....	64
	Sharing.....	68
	Socializing .....	70
	Advocating .....	73
	Co-developing .....	76
5	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .....	80
	Limitations and Future Research.....	86
	REFERENCES .....	87
	Appendix	
	A UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE EXEMPT IRB REVIEW .....	98
	B DIRECT MESSAGE TO SOLICIT PARTICIPANTS .....	99
	C EMAIL TO PAUL MUNFORD, EDITOR OF LEANLUXE.....	100
	D INFORMED CONSENT FORM .....	102

E	SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	104
F	CODING GUIDE .....	108

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 3.1 Interview Follow Up Questions and Probes .....	33
Table 3.2 Participant Profile .....	36

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 2.1 Brodie et al.'s Consumer Engagement Model (2013) .....	22
Figure 3.1 Example of Glossier's Instagram Page .....	29



## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to examine how consumers engage with modern luxury, direct-to-consumer (ML-DTC) brands on social media. Using qualitative research methods, this study examined the cognitive, emotional, behavioral and reported offline elements of consumer engagement with ML-DTC brands on social media. Brodie et al.'s (2013) consumer engagement model served as the conceptual framework. A series of qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with social media followers of the ML-DTC brand Glossier. Through a detailed analysis of Glossier's consumer engagement with the ML-DTC brand on social media, this study offers insight into how social media allows ML-DTC brands to effectively connect with consumers and the new strategies used by modern luxury brands in relation to social media. The findings support Brodie et. al's (2013) conceptual framework on consumer engagement and expand its understanding on how brands on social media contribute to the sense of belonging and support among users in a social media community. There is limited information on the social media strategies of ML-DTC brands. This study expands understanding of how ML-DTC brands have evolved from the traditional marketing approach of luxury brands and offers insight into new ways social media is leveraged to distinguish the brand and engage with consumers.

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The fashion system is the entire supply chain of the fashion industry comprised of the structure, organization and processes that members of the industry use to conceive, design, fabricate, allocate, communicate, sell and consume fashion products (Vecchi & Buckley, 2016). A digital revolution has caused a break in the fashion system's flow of operations, which has led to pervasive talk of the fashion industry being "broken from the inside out," due to the luxury fashion industry's inability to keep up with the pace of the fast fashion industry, which uses social media to quickly communicate what products the brands offer to consumers (Anderson, 2016; Blanks, 2016). Fast fashion brands match the speed of their supply chains with the pace of social media to quickly deliver goods to consumers, while luxury brands rely on slower-paced supply chains to deliver goods. Social media has disrupted the fashion system by creating a new business channel for fashion brands and an outlet that has spurred immediacy for fashion products amongst fashion consumers ("How social media disrupted," 2017). Social media has given rise to the speedy dissemination of fashion product images, which have demanded fast fashion brands to deliver new clothing styles at affordable prices to make styles accessible to the mass market with higher frequency. The speed of communication has influenced all brand tiers of the fashion industry pressuring luxury fashion houses such as Dior, Givenchy and Yves

Saint Laurent to deliver new designs to keep up with the consumer demand (Fury, 2015; Hyland, 2017).

Social media disruption has perpetuated the quick buy-use-discard behavior of consumers as consumers can instantaneously see looks on the runways of luxury and contemporary brands. These looks are quickly reproduced by fast fashion brands in lower quality and affordable prices but have shorter life cycles (“How social media disrupted,” 2017). Some designers are reacting to these changes by creating seasonless collections on a year-round basis or hosting see-now-buy-now collections during international fashion weeks (Foley, 2017). These buy-now-wear-now collections afford consumers the ability to purchase looks directly from the runway without having to wait six months for out-of-season deliveries (Foley, 2017). Luxury designers trying to produce such collections have struggled to successfully sustain the see-now-buy-now model due to the nature of their brands. The see-now-buy now model only functions if designers model their businesses after fast fashion brands that sell wares at an attainable price point (Foley, 2017; “How social media disrupted,” 2017). Fast fashion is cheap, and luxury brands are expensive so the traditional model that luxury brands adhere to can no longer sustain the pace of shopper needs perpetuated by social media (Foley, 2017; “How social media disrupted,” 2017).

More brands are heavily relying on social media to facilitate dialogue between the brand and the consumer, yet luxury brands have struggled to connect with customers online and have been slow to adopt digital communication (Adler, 2017; De Marco, 2012; Kansara, 2016; Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). Traditional luxury

fashion houses' communication with consumers can be viewed as monolithic and authoritarian, relying on unidimensional fashion media. Traditional advertising in fashion print media, which served as the industry's main source of communication for the greater part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is now a dead form of communication due to the rise of digital media, which has pressured the industry to change (Cordero, 2016; Eddelkort, 2015; Laurell, 2016).

Current trends in product development and marketing among innovative fashion companies rely on communication to understand consumers' need for products. Fashion brands that are effectively using social media to communicate with consumers are emerging brands that have been able to connect with the consumer on an emotional level, adding to its value proposition in addition to its physical attributes (Sherman, 2016). One category of these emerging brands is direct-to-consumer (DTC) brands. DTC brands are digitally native vertical brands, which are initially introduced to consumers online (Carnot, 2017; Dunn, 2016; Munford, 2017b). The relationship building power of DTC brands through their websites and social media gives such companies the ability to move beyond a purchase and into the consciousness of the brands' patrons' minds (Hellqvist, 2015; Spruch-Feiner, 2016). In the luxury brand sector, nascent digitally native brands are using social media to convey brand ideals of minimalism, specialization, consumer-centrism and a refined, yet approachable brand aesthetic and build relationships with consumers (Munford, 2017a; Spruch-Feiner, 2016). These emerging luxury brands are classified as modern luxury, direct-to-consumer brands (Munford, 2017a). Modern luxury, direct-to-consumer (ML-DTC)

brands leverage technology and social media in a way that has disadvantaged traditional luxury brands.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine how consumers engage with ML-DTC brands on social media. Using Brodie et al.'s (2013) consumer engagement model, this study offers insight on how social media has allowed ML-DTC brands to effectively connect with consumers and the new brand strategies used by modern luxury brands in relation to social media. The ML-DTC strategy draws a contrast to traditional luxury brands on new ways of using social media to distinguish the brand and engage with consumers (Estienne, 2016; Roolant, 2017; Munford, 2017a; Munford, 2017b)

### **Definition of Terms**

**Boutique retail model:** Specialty retail stores that sell a curated selection of products to consumers.

**Contemporary brand:** Brands also known as bridge brands are lower-priced fashion lines created by luxury designers using lower-priced high-quality fabrics. Such brands target the millennial consumer and design fashion lines with trends and aesthetics that appeal to younger consumers. Such fashion brands are designed with a modern aesthetic that is sold to consumers at an attainable price point as opposed to a luxury price point.

**Direct-to-consumer (DTC) brands:** Digitally native vertical brands that sell goods directly to consumers primarily through e-commerce outlets. Direct-consumer brands are initially introduced to consumers online and are focused on offering consumers a

niche, specialized selection of products, and not diversified products as other e-commerce retailers.

**Direct-to-consumer (DTC) channel:** The online or brick-and-mortar outlet used to sell a direct-to-consumer brand.

**Direct-to-consumer model:** When brands such as luxury and contemporary brands utilize a direct-to-consumer sales strategy to sell directly to consumers via brand-owned stores and brand e-commerce sites instead third parties or multi-brand retailers.

**E-commerce:** Commercial transactions of goods and services conducted via websites.

**Editorial content:** Print and digital content created by brands online or in print that include blog posts, social media posts, online and print articles, native advertising and sponsored posts and email advertisements.

**Luxury brands:** Branded products or services “that consumers perceive to be high quality; offer authentic value via desired benefits, whether functional or emotional; have a prestigious image within the market built on qualities such as artisanship, craftsmanship, or service quality; be worthy of commanding a premium price; and be capable of inspiring a deep connection, or resonance, with the consumer” (Taylor, Costello, & Ko, 2016, p. 2).

**Modern luxury (ML) brands:** Brands that are “centered on minimalism; driven by functionality and simplicity less than a decade old and are therefore, still maturing and developing; place heavy emphasis on digital technology have elevated ambitions in the marketplace; present consumers with a refined, high-minded presentation and often times utilize the direct-to-consumer model” (Munford, 2017a, p.1). These novel

luxury brands are more affordable and accessible in price point than traditional luxury brands. Modern luxury brands promote the direct-to-consumer model by relying on social media marketing.

**Modern luxury, Direct-to-Consumer (ML-DTC):** Modern luxury brands that use the direct-to-consumer model as a selling channel.

**Niche brands:** Specialty brands that provide consumers with curated, specialized product categories.

**Social media:** Websites and mobile applications that allow users to create and share content and to participate in social networking.

**Vertical commerce (v-commerce):** A method of selling and manufacturing products that remove third party suppliers, sellers and manufacturers. Vertical commerce brands produce goods in their own manufacturing facilities through the implementation of vertical integration.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Social Media and Luxury Brands**

Social media has emerged as a prevalent form of digital communication in the fashion marketplace where consumers feel open to freely express their perceptions and feelings about a particular brand (Escobar-Rodríguez & Bonsón-Fernández, 2017). In addition to the various social media networks and online platforms that allow for consumer sharing and discourse, brands also directly engage in a two-way dialogue with consumers on their own social platforms (Kim & Ko, 2010). Consumers' open dialogue with brands displayed on these social platforms, coupled with the fact that consumers can freely express their opinions of a brand, is the antithesis of how luxury brands operate on social media (Edelkoort, 2015; Kim & Ko, 2010).

Luxury brands prefer to put out heavily edited, controlled messages about their brands, because they view social media as a risky place to present their brand messaging (Edelkoort, 2015). These brands in turn, have adopted a risk-averse strategy of only sharing carefully controlled messages to promote their fashion products, which has “brought the fashion machine to a halt” (Edelkoort, 2015, p. 3) due to a slowdown in the flow of information. This means that luxury fashion brands have stalled in growth because they have failed to fully embrace digital communication, which is pushing other sectors of the fashion industry forward (Edelkoort, 2015; Laurell, 2016).



Kim and Ko (2010) studied luxury brands' early efforts in digital communication via social media marketing initiatives. The researchers uncovered five properties of social media marketing useful to Korean luxury brand shoppers — a source of entertainment, a place to customize the user's brand experience, a platform for interaction between the brand and the consumer, a place where consumers can share word-of-mouth recommendations of the brand and a platform to discover fashion trends. While all five social media properties positively affected the luxury shopper's relationship with the brands and their purchase intentions, which is defined by intimacy and trust, the entertainment property had a stronger significant positive effect on luxury shoppers (Kim & Ko, 2010).

When shoppers interacted with other users of the brand or the brand itself on social media, the researchers found that a trust bond was formed between the brand and the consumer, which in turn strengthened the consumer's desire to purchase from the luxury brand. The research suggests that luxury brands must employ entertainment as one of the top aspects of their social media marketing activities to gain trust and create a stronger relationship with their shoppers, which will affect the shoppers purchase intentions. The results of Kim and Ko's (2010) research reveal an early model of digital communication. Subsequently, luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton and Burberry have begun to employ digital communication in the form of social media marketing (Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2010).

Godey et al. (2016) expanded upon Kim and Ko's five dimensions of social media marketing by studying how brand equity and consumers' interactions with

luxury brands is influenced by the brands' social media marketing activities. The researchers surveyed 845 luxury brand consumers from France, China, India and Italy who are followers of prominent luxury brands that are active on social media such as Burberry, Dior, Gucci, Hermès and Louis Vuitton (Godey et al., 2016). The quantitative survey revealed a connection between social media activity and price premiums, consumer loyalty and brand preference. The researchers concluded that luxury brands' social media marketing efforts have a significant positive effect on the two levels of brand equity, which include brand image and brand awareness (Godey et al., 2016). While luxury brands have been able to use the five dimensions of social media to strengthen consumers' purchase intention and build brand equity, luxury brands have not successfully been able to engage with consumers through "social media-driven engagement efforts, which can aid in building brand loyalty and drive direct-to consumer sales" (Gregory, Xu, Cheng, & Turner, n.d., p. 4).

### **Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) Brands**

Direct-to-consumer (DTC) brands are digitally native vertical brands that originate from online platforms rather than brick-and-mortar stores and use direct-to-consumer channels to offer goods and services to consumers (Dunn, 2016; Heiman, 2017; Hodak, 2017). DTC brands can range in categories, which include modern luxury, direct-to-consumer (ML-DTC) brands. These direct-to-consumer brands sell directly to consumers through e-commerce channels and forgo traditional ways of selling to consumers through wholesale and boutique retail models (Chapin, 2016; Sherman, 2016; Spruch-Feiner, 2016). Brands such as Nike, Under Armour,

Timberland and REI are primarily wholesale brands that sell their products through department stores and e-commerce channels, but DTC brands differ in that vertical commerce is their primary mode of operation. While traditional retail brands use e-commerce as a means to sell their wares directly to consumers, the differentiating factor of DTC brands is their adherence to a vertical commerce model (Dunn, 2016; Heiman, 2017; Hodak, 2017). The v-commerce model allows for DTC brands to thrive from vertical integration of the brands' marketing and supply chains (Hodak, 2017). Compared to e-commerce brands that sell a variety of brands and product categories, DTC brands only sell products in a specialized category (Carnoy, 2017; Hodak, 2017).

DTC brands use online "editorial content to connect with the consumer on an emotional level, distinguishing the brand not just by its value proposition, but also by its physical attributes" (Sherman, 2016, para. 6). Because of their digital focus, the majority of DTC brands do not have brick-and-mortar stores. Cutting out the middleman is a distinct element of DTC retailers, which allows the brands to keep prices low, while still providing consumers with high quality items. This adds another layer of connection between DTC brands and consumers, because it removes the retail middleman that wholesalers use to markup product prices (Spruch-Feiner, 2016). Jen Rubio, co-founder of Away, a DTC luggage brand, says there is an unmatched opportunity for DTC brands to connect with customers since the middleman is taken away from this retail model (Grechko, 2017). DTC brands portray an "aspirational, but attainable" brand image on their websites and social media (Chapin, 2016). For fashion brands, the primary outlet for communication between DTC brands and

consumers is social media where the messaging is focused on owning fewer items, that are of better quality than fast fashion goods (Sygiel, 2017). For example, Cuyana promotes “timeless simplicity” on their website for their Fall 2018 collection (Cuyana, 2018). This messaging supports DTC brands’ business model of offering consumers a small and refined selection of goods (Chapin, 2016; Sygiel, 2017). This model of retailing a small assortment of products in addition to promoting a “quality over quantity” message on their social media channels, means that DTC brands encourage consumers to buy less products at higher prices to obtain quality fashion products instead of cheap fast fashion goods (Chapin, 2016; Sygiel, 2017). Mark Lynn, co-founder of DSTLD, a DTC denim brand says, “the direct model allows for brands to share their story in a more competent, meaningful way and to provide customers with greater value...it strengthens the connection between the customer and the brand,” (Spruch-Feiner, 2016, para. 5). Putting customers at the center of the brands’ communication and marketing initiatives to build relationships between the brands and consumers are a hallmark of DTC brands (Chapin, 2016; Grechko, 2017).

#### Direct-to-Consumer Brands and Social Media

DTC brand models leverage direct consumer-brand interaction. With DTC brands, customers provide instantaneous feedback through social media regarding the brand’s offerings and aid in the co-creation of the brand’s products (Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016; Sherman, 2016). Social media has given DTC brands the ability to build brand recognition without a physical store presence since the brands are able to generate consumer conversations and co-create products that stem from

such conversations (Grechko, 2017). Emily Weiss, the CEO of New York based beauty brand Glossier, is a hallmark for the successful use of co-creation on social media (Wagner, 2017). Weiss relies on social media comments from Glossier consumers to develop products for the DTC beauty line (Wagner, 2017). She used feedback consumers left on Instagram posts to create a moisturizer and face wash and was able to parlay sales of those items into a million-dollar business with a staff of over 280 people (Wagner, 2017). Weiss says this of her co-creation success, “one of the things that we really rely on is our customers as co-creators and sort of co-conspirators of our company” (Wagner, 2017, para. 3).

DTC brands use constructive feedback from consumers to develop and produce products that directly appeal to the brands’ consumers (Sherman, 2016). For example, New York-based fashion brand, Monogram, focuses on selling mid-priced luxury t-shirts and has adopted a DTC business model that leverages its native digital platform (Sherman, 2016). Monogram’s DTC model replaces the physical store with a cost-effective e-commerce platform and allows the brand to market directly to customers globally, while receiving real-time feedback on product ideas. DTC brands flourish because they include the customer from concept to creation and actual sale of the product (Sherman, 2016).

DTC brands charge lower prices for high quality, niche products, which consumers crave in an oversaturated market of fashion brands (Chapin, 2016; Edelkoort, 2015; Sherman, 2016). In addition to the price benefit, DTC brands develop personal relationships with luxury and contemporary brand shoppers who

have grown disloyal to brands (Sherman, 2016). Poor digital media practices of luxury brands and their mid-priced brand counterparts have not helped strengthen brand loyalty (Chapin, 2016; Edelkoort, 2015; Sherman, 2016). Although millennials are considered brand agnostic, DTC brands have been able to maintain millennials as a loyal consumer base from community building that occurs on social media (Hays, 2018).

### Millennial Consumers and Direct-to-Consumer Brands

DTC brands have special appeal to millennial consumers who integrate online shopping and social media into their lifestyle as these brands focus on offering consumers a curated selection of products (Hays, 2018; Sherman 2016). Millennial consumers consistently purchase and recommend products from brands, which they have developed personal relationships with via social media (Chapin, 2016; Hays, 2018; Sherman 2016). Millennials use social media as a platform to give feedback on brands' activities and DTC brands leverage this information to develop products according to millennials' needs (Hoang, 2016). As such, millennial consumers are the primary purchasers of DTC brands (Chapin, 2016; Hays, 2018). Known as the world's original digital native consumers, millennials have integrated the internet into their lifestyles and consumer behavior. The internet gives millennials the ability to personalize their shopping experience and provides them with instant gratification in each part of their lives (Moreno, Lafuente, Carreón & Moreno, 2017). Born between 1981 and 1996, millennials are avid users of social media and use it to communicate with their peers and the rest of the world about their values, personal tastes and views

on society as a whole (Moreno et al., 2017; Serafino, 2018). Millennials are used to communicating directly on social media and not afraid to post their views about particular brands, whether positive or negative (Moreno et al., 2017). As such, this group of consumers prefer consumer-centric marketing and interactions with brands (Hays, 2018; “Inside the Brand,” 2015). Connectivity is characterized as millennials’ greatest consumer need in addition to desiring one-on-one experiences with brands they interact with online and offline (Moreno et al., 2017). Millennials’ want to stay connected to their peers and show all of their daily activities on social media (O’Conner, 2018). Social media is the outlet they use to express the need for connection when shopping for products and interacting with brands (Moreno et al., 2017).

Millennials are influenced by nostalgia and cultural references from their childhoods (Moreno et al., 2017). This consumer segment is brand agnostic and finds the process of shopping on the web enjoyable, thus the demographic tends to have a proclivity for spending money quickly on the web and prefers online discounts and coupons (Moreno et al., 2017; Pasquarelli, 2017). When millennials shop for products, they are largely influenced by peer recommendations (Arnold, 2017). They seek product recommendations online through social media and word-of-mouth endorsements from their peers (Arnold, 2017; Ehlers, 2017). This desire for peer approval feeds their appreciation for user-generated content on social media as they create, like and share the content with their peers (Arnold, 2017; Ehlers, 2017). Consequently, 72% of millennials buy fashion and beauty products based on

Instagram posts and 43% of millennials prefer to research products online before they purchase them in-store (Arnold, 2017; Chamberlain, 2017). Millennials feel they must buy products aligned with their personal values; 81% of them expect brands to be transparent in their marketing and social and environmental impact (Moreno, 2017; Oakes, 2018).

Social media has initiated a change in millennial's demeanor towards clothing and their usage of clothing ("How social media disrupted," 2017). The "selfie culture" facilitated by social media has millennials buying clothes to wear once for a photo and discarding the clothing. This new consumer culture has perpetuated the rise of fast fashion shopping and clothing rental websites ("How social media disrupted," 2017). While millennials view luxury products as a means to express their upward mobility and status in society, their view of affluence is defined by the wealth of experiences an individual has acquired rather than the number of goods a consumer has obtained (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016; Moreno et al., 2017; Oakes, 2018).

#### Modern Luxury, Direct-to-Consumer Brands

Modern luxury (ML) brands are novel luxury brands that are more affordable and accessible than traditional luxury brands. ML brands are focused on minimalistic vertical processes, which include simplified marketing and selling practices and a narrow scope of curated brand offerings (Munford, 2017a). Simplicity and functionality drive the creation of such brands since they are facilitated by the speed and efficiency of digital technology (Munford, 2017a). Compared to traditional luxury brands with centuries of brand heritage, ML brands are less than 10 years old and are



still maturing and developing as brands. Munford (2017a) summarizes ML brands with the following seven defining characteristics: “quiet confidence in branding,” “virtue of product,” “transparency and credibility,” “a rejection of scale for scale’s sake,” “specialization,” “solving real problems” and “a full embrace of a consumer-centric economy” (p. 2).

Quiet confidence in branding refers to ML brands’ reliance on the social clout and credibility of the brands’ products for revenue instead of logo-driven marketing. ML brands avoid celebrity endorsed marketing campaigns, which are viewed as frivolous and status driven (Munford, 2017a). The virtue of product principal describes ML brands’ commitment to offering consumers the highest quality products and services. ML brands constantly refine and improve their products to adhere to this principal. Transparent communication about manufacturing and marketing processes illustrate how ML brands utilize the transparency and credibility principal (Munford, 2017a). By openly answering questions about how and where the brands’ products are made, in addition to who makes the products, ML brands are establishing the brands’ credibility and ultimately building trust with consumers who are highly knowledgeable about the products they purchase. A rejection of ML brands scaling for scale’s sake highlights the brands’ focus on growing the brands at a pace that is consistent with consumers’ desires. These brands do not scale at the will of investors that fund their businesses, but rather methodically expand the company’s product offerings at the will of the brands’ core consumers (Munford, 2017a).

ML brands use specialization as a means to become masters in individual product categories. The brands become specialists in few product categories to distinguish themselves in the marketplace. Specialization allows ML brands to perfect the brands' value propositions and develop functional, practical, long-lasting products that are memorable to consumers (Munford, 2017a). The principal of solving real problems is built into the business model of ML brands, which offer products with clear benefits to the consumer. In contrast to luxury brands that are focused on selling trend-driven products and highly artistic fashion collections, ML brands offer anti-fashion products that are simple and meet consumers' needs (Munford, 2017a). ML brands' full embrace of a consumer-centric economy means that the brands allow consumers to personalize and customize the company's goods as a means to help consumers fulfill their desire to differentiate themselves from other consumers. ML brands also embrace consumer-centrism by providing convenience for consumers (Munford, 2017a).

Modern luxury, direct-to-consumer (ML-DTC) brands are a subset of ML brands, which promote the DTC model by relying on social media marketing (Munford, 2017a). ML-DTC brands use social media to facilitate the creation and continuity of consumer-brand relationships (Bhuiyan, 2018, Rogers 2018). Social media is used as an e-commerce tool that focuses on the "depth of connection" that ML-DTC brands create with consumers (Rogers 2018, para. 2). On social media ML-DTC brands frequently display and post offerings of small batch, curated product assortments, which keeps consumers' attention on the brand (Gribbin, 2016; Rogers,

2018). Additionally, ML-DTC brands use social media to cater to a niche, passionate consumer base and use social sites as storytelling platforms where they tell consumers relatable stories through social media posts (IAB, 2018; Rogers, 2018). ML-DTC brands remove barriers to discovering product attributes on social media through activities such as unboxing videos (Rogers, 2018). ML-DTC brands also share in the responsibility of connecting users to other community members on social media with shared tastes and “encourage consumers to get involved in the conversation — a strategy, which has resulted in a high level of organic sharing of posts” (IAB, 2018, p. 51). Engaging with consumers directly through direct messaging and commenting on consumer posts is another activity ML-DTC brands use to connect with consumers on social media (IAB, 2018; Rogers, 2018). Consumer engagement, driven by social media, is key to the success of ML-DTC brands (Hays 2018; Munford, 2017).

### **Consumer Engagement**

Engagement is a “state of being involved, occupied, fully absorbed or engrossed in something.... which produces attraction or repulsion to a target” (Higgins & Scholer, 2009). This repulsion or attraction either adds to or subtracts from the value of the target. The initial use of the term “consumer engagement” was found in Abbelbum’s “Constant Consumer” Gallup study (2001). Abbelbum (2001) defined consumer engagement as the ability of brands to create “emotionally attached consumers” (para. 11). Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić and Ilić (2011) describe consumer engagement as a mental state that consumers assume when they interact with a brand, product or organization. The mental state that consumers assume when they interact

with brands is sustained as brands continue to offer products and services to consumers and brand value is co-created. Patterson et al. (2006) describe consumer-brand engagement as a level of commitment to a brand where consumers can be viewed as either co-producers or partial employees of a brand. Consumers develop relationships with brands each time they receive products and services from the brands they patronize. Whenever those consumer-brand interactions occur in the exchange of a service or product, a consumer will be physically present, but may not feel an emotional attachment to a brand or have a cognitive experience with the brand. To be considered a fully engaged consumer within the context of experiencing a product or service, consumers must be both cognitively and emotionally present (Patterson et al., 2006). Engaged consumers are loyal, satisfied, empowered, emotionally attached, committed and connected to and trust the brands they are engaged with (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić & Ilić, 2013).

Engaged consumers display their brand experiences and emotional attachments through word-of-mouth activities such as writing reviews about the brand or posting about the brand online through social media or blog posts (Brodie et al., 2013; Kim & Ko, 2010; Patterson et al., 2006; Van Doorn et al., 2010). Through these activities, which go beyond making a purchase, brand communities are developed (Brodie et al., 2011; Kim & Ko, 2010; Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016; Van Doorn et al., 2010). Consumer engagement influences consumer tendencies to stay loyal to the brands and repurchase from such brands (Bowden, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011). Loyalty is the foundation of consumer engagement and is defined by consumers' intent to repurchase

and recommend products from a brand, their overall satisfaction with a brand and the activities brands undertake to keep consumers devoted to a brand (Bowden, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011).

### Brodie et al.'s Consumer Engagement Model

Brodie et al.'s (2013) consumer engagement model can be applied to examine the interaction of consumers with ML-DTC brands on social media. Brodie et al. (2013) postulates that consumer engagement begins when consumers execute an online search for a needed product or service and find an associated online community. An interactive relationship is developed when consumers post comments on the brand's online and social media channels. This engagement leads to five sub-processes that are represented by "learning," "sharing," "advocating," "socializing" and "co-developing" with a particular brand (Brodie et al., 2013).

Learning refers to a consumer's acquisition of knowledge of a particular brand. Consumers use the acquired information to inform their purchases. Sharing takes place when consumers share personal information, knowledge and experiences with their online community. Brand knowledge is co-created when consumers participate in sharing (Brodie et al., 2013). Advocating ensues when consumers recommend brands, services and products and ways to use brands and products to members of an online community. Socializing is the two-way interactions of consumers to acquire and develop community norms, attitudes and language of the online community.

Co-development arises when consumers in online communities contribute to brand activities, which in turn, helps brands develop new products, brands, services,

brand identities or brand meanings (Brodie et al., 2013). The brand is represented by various stakeholders such as employees, managers, suppliers, consumers and others that constitute the brand community. Co-development is a process where brands work with consumers as partners in the product innovation stage of brand development (Roberts, Baker & Walker, 2005). When brands engage consumers in the creation of products, brand initiatives and brand identities, they are using consumers as co-producers of their brands (Brodie et al., 2013; Kristensson, Gustafsson & Archer, 2003). Brands use co-development as a means to understand consumer needs and create new products and services for the brand (Kristensson, Gustafsson & Archer, 2003). These five sub-processes are sparked by loyalty and satisfaction, empowerment, connection and emotional bonds, trust and commitment that consumers experience from the interactions between brands and consumers in an online brand community (Brodie et al., 2013).

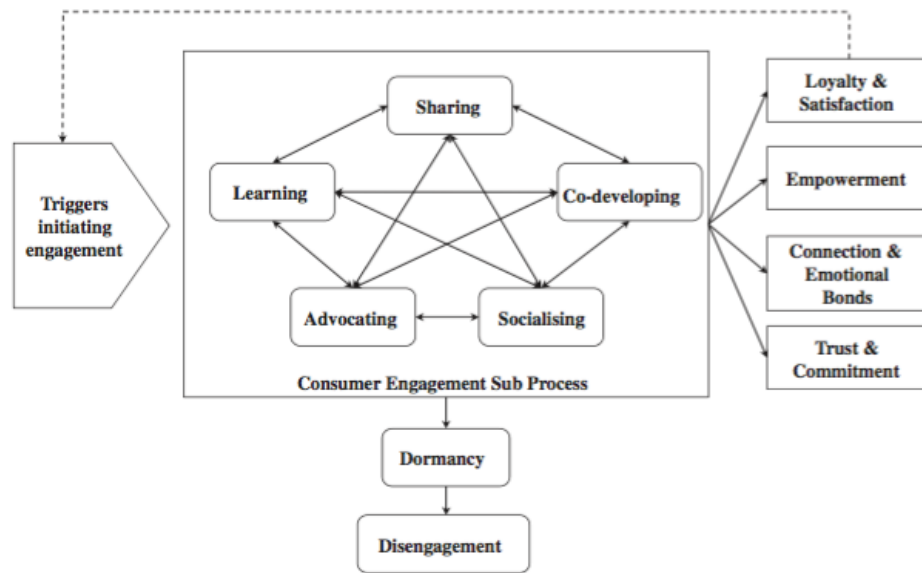


Fig. 2. Consumer engagement process in a virtual brand community.

Figure 2.1 Brodie et al.'s (2013) consumer engagement model

Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas (2016) applied Brodie et al.'s (2013) consumer engagement model to study how brand value is co-created in a virtual brand community. When analyzing shoe brand TOMS "One day Without Shoes" Instagram campaign, the researchers found that the learning process for consumers occur in the first stage of consumer engagement, which is sparked by consumers identifying common values they share with a brand, then engaging in a two-way dialogue with the brand on social media about these values. These interactions result in emotional and symbolic benefits as well as shared identity which motivates sharing of experiences and new product development (Brodie et al., 2013; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Ouwersloot & Oderkerken-Schroder, 2008).

Consumers actively engage with and share posts on social media to reaffirm their desire to contribute to a brand community (Brodie et al., 2013). Brands such as TOMS promote sharing by posting photos of brand activities accompanied with hashtags that consumers can add to their posts (Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). Additionally, the “like,” “comments” and “send to” functionalities on social media sites such as Instagram encourage consumers to socialize and share posts and create user generated content that co-creates value for a brand. These activities reinforce the co-development aspect of the consumer engagement model in which brands rely on consumer user-generated content to develop the brand’s identity on social media in addition to building a deeper community (Brodie et al., 2013; Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016). While consumers are posting, sharing, creating user generated content and liking a brands’ posts on social media, they are participating in the socializing aspect of the consumer engagement model, as these activities prompt consumers to interact with one another and the brand. As these interactions take place, consumers who participate in this social community building culture emerge as advocates and ambassadors for the brand (Brodie et al., 2013; Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016).

The above literature review offers evidence that ML-DTC brands leverage social media to build a deeper connection with their consumers. ML-DTC brands use social media to offer consumer-centric communication and engage consumers by co-creating products. Continuous introduction of refined sets of products in limited quantities keep consumers engaged and at top-of-mind, stimulating discussion around the brand, and centering communication around their consumer needs. ML-DTC



brands offer a unique opportunity to study how social media can be used to offer a deeper connection with millennial consumers and different ways of engaging consumers on social media.

Studying how ML-DTC brands engage with consumers on social media will potentially help transform the way luxury brands communicate with consumers on social media. ML-DTC brands are more successful at communicating with consumers on social media than established luxury fashion brands. ML-DTC brands allow consumers to see the ins and outs of a brand through transparent communication about the brands' supply chain and manufacturing processes (Sherman, 2016). The level of connectedness that ML-DTC brands promote on social media poses a threat to traditional luxury fashion brands that have had difficulty with connecting with consumers on social media channels (Kim & Ko, 2012).

Contemporary brands also known as bridge brands are lower-priced fashion lines created by luxury designers using lower-priced high-quality fabrics. Such brands target the millennial consumer and design fashion lines with trends and aesthetics that appeal to younger consumers (Simmons, n.d.). Creating DTC brand extensions have allowed a small number of contemporary fashion brands to gain more control of selling to consumers (Milnes, 2018). Contemporary fashion brands including, Theory and Milly, in addition to luxury brand Comme des Garçons, have created DTC sister lines that are created by in-house design teams and sold directly through the brands' online and offline outlets. Luxury brands are built on craftsmanship, artisanship and quality of service which offers consumer a sense of authenticity that satisfies their

functional and emotional needs. Luxury brands deeply resonate with consumers and are able to command high prices (Taylor, Costello, & Ko, 2016). Luxury brands such as Gucci, Celine, Louis Vuitton, have utilized direct-to-consumer models to increase the brands' annual revenues (Bain, 2018). Mirroring ML-DTC brands commitment to selling curated collections, these luxury brands create seasonless exclusive pieces that are only sold monthly (Milnes, 2018). This model breaks from the traditional fashion calendar schedule, which is centered around specific fashion seasons and delivery dates. The ML-DTC model is the future of the luxury fashion industry (Milnes, 2018). The way forward for luxury brands opting to use the ML-DTC model is to leverage those characteristics that consumers perceive luxury brands possess, such as their premium quality and prestigious brand image (Taylor, Costello, & Ko, 2016). Brodie et al.'s (2013) model will facilitate the research of how ML-DTC consumers engage with ML-DTC brands on social media.

## **Chapter 3**

### **METHODS**

#### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine how consumers engage with ML-DTC brands on social media. Using qualitative research methods, this study seeks to examine the cognitive, emotional, behavioral and reported offline elements of consumer engagement with ML-DTC brands on social media. Brodie et al.'s (2013) consumer engagement model serves as the conceptual framework. This study offers insight into how social media has allowed ML-DTC brands to effectively connect with consumers and the new strategies used by modern luxury brands in relation to social media. The study explores how the social media strategy of the ML-DTC brand effectively engages their consumer base. The following research questions were examined:

**How do consumers engage with ML-DTC brands on social media?**

**How do consumers learn, share, advocate, socialize and co-develop ML-DTC brands on social media?**

Research literature on consumers' engagement with ML-DTC brands on social media is limited given ML-DTC brands have only begun to gain traction in the past 4-5 years. Qualitative research, conducted through in-depth semi-structured interviews, allowed the researcher to document rich insight into how ML-DTC brands leverage social media as part of its business model. A qualitative interview method helped the researcher examine how consumers use social media as a way to engage with ML-

DTC brands. A holistic account of active consumers allowed the researcher to understand the rich context and experiences involved in consumer engagement with the ML-DTC on social media.

## **Data Collection**

### **Sampling**

The research protocol for human subjects was approved by the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board on January 29, 2019 (see Appendix A for Human Subjects documentation). To examine how millennial consumers engage with ML-DTC brands on social media, consumers of Glossier, a New York based a ML-DTC beauty brand, was chosen for the study. The brand sells directly to consumers through its website and brick-and-mortar retail showrooms, and focuses on offering consumers a niche range of beauty products and launches small product collections at a time (Bhuiyan, 2018; Duan, 2018; Hassett, 2018; Rogers, 2018). The Glossier showroom is a place where consumers are able to physically engage with the products.

Glossier addresses the needs of millennial consumers by creating products that solve millennials' beauty demands at an affordable price point; Glossier embodies all seven modern luxury branding principles as noted by Munford (2015) (see Literature Review). Glossier uses its consumers as the spokespeople of the brand and "real women" in their advertisements as opposed to celebrities. Glossier adheres to the modern luxury principal of transparency and credibility by detailing the ingredients of its products and clearly displaying its supplier code of conduct on its website. The

brand has chosen to carefully grow at a pace that is consistent with consumer demand rather than investor demand. Consumers co-create value and co-develop products with Glossier through interactions on social media with the brand (see Figure 2.1). For example, the products that Glossier releases are co-developed from comments that consumers leave on the brand's Instagram page. As such, Glossier has an active online social media presence on Instagram where consumers engage with the brand more frequently than they do with the brand's other social media channels. Twitter is also a social channel where Glossier's shoppers interact with the brand. Additionally, the Facebook forum Into The Gloss is an online community that frequently brings together Glossier consumers. Leanluxe is an online publication targeted to ML-DTC consumers and was also considered by the researcher as a place to find participants for the study. The researcher scanned Glossier's social media channels including Instagram, Twitter and Facebook to find Glossier consumers who met the research criteria and used direct messaging to solicit participants for the semi-structured interview study from social media outlets (Appendix B). The researcher also scanned the Into The Gloss Facebook forum to find and contact participants for the semi-structured interview via direct messaging on the forum. Initially the researcher aimed to contact the editor of Leanluxe to post a direct message on the ML-DTC publication's email newsletter to solicit participation from its subscribers, but direct messaging on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter was sufficient to solicit study participants.



Figure 3.1 Example of Glossier’s Instagram page (screenshot taken October 14, 2018)

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted on active Glossier consumers born between 1990 and 1999 (approximately between the ages of 19 and 28 years). For the purpose of this study, active consumers are defined as individuals who own at least one Glossier product and browse or post on Glossier’s website and social media channels on average once a week. Active Glossier consumers who participated in Glossier’s social media community for at least six months fulfilled the criteria required to participate in the study. Active Glossier consumers were able to discuss the distinctive elements of their motivations for using the brand’s products and

their personal experiences engaging with the brand on social media. They were also able to detail the brand's product releases and showroom activities.

Using purposive and snowball non-probability techniques (Blackstone, 2012), a sample of 13 participants was selected online through direct messaging on Glossier's social media channels. The direct message to individuals soliciting participation in the study included: purpose of the study, consumers who are eligible to participate in the study, research procedures used to conduct the study, duration of the interview and offering of a Glossier gift card. At the end of the direct message, the email address of the primary researcher was provided for interested participants to contact the researcher. The researcher also employed a referral method and asked participants to recommend friends and family to participate in the study. Appendix B and Appendix C presents communication used to solicit participants. After being contacted by interested participants, the researcher forwarded the participants follow-up questions via email to assess their qualifications to participate in the study. Follow-up questions included:

- What year were you born?
- Which social media platforms do you use to follow Glossier?
- How long have you followed Glossier on social media?
- How long have you used Glossier products?
- On average, how many times a week do you browse through like, comment or tag other users on Glossier's social media posts?
- Do you regularly post comments and interact with the Glossier community (direct message the brand, leave comments on other people's posts on the brand's social media platforms and comment directly on the brand's social media channel)?

After each subject's eligibility to participate in the study was verified, the researcher sent an Informed Consent Form (Appendix D) via email, asked eligible participants if they had any questions about the study and scheduled the interview. The Informed Consent Form briefed the participants about the interview procedure, and gave information about the risks and discomforts associated with being interviewed for the study and the benefits of participating in the study. The consent form also detailed the assurance of participant anonymity and informed participants that they would receive a \$20.00 Glossier gift card as appreciation for participating in the interview at the conclusion of the interview. The form stated that the semi-structured interview would be recorded for transcription and data analysis after the interview. The consent form provided the interviewee with the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board's contact information to refer to the Board for questions about the study and the rights of study participants. A time frame that was convenient for each eligible participant was scheduled for the semi-structured interview. The researcher reviewed the consent form with the participants at the beginning of the interview and participants who agreed to continue the interview were considered as interview participants who implied consent.

### Semi-Structured Interviews

An in-depth, semi-structured approach was used to conduct participant interviews. The in-depth, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explore how consumers learn, share, advocate, socialize and co-develop with brands on social media using Brodie's et al. (2013) consumer engagement model. The interviews were



conducted between February 22, 2019 and April 3, 2019 by the primary researcher and the research adviser. Based on the preferred location of the interviewees and the interviewers, the interviews were conducted through video conferencing communication. Each interview lasted from 45 minutes to 1 hour and was recorded and auto-transcribed via the Zoom Video Communications online video conferencing system. An interview protocol (Appendix E) was created to guide the researcher through the interview process and aid the researcher in answering the research questions of the study. The protocol details the script that was used during the interview, which included the interview questions, follow-up questions and probes. Probing was valuable in ensuring the reliability of data and allow for clarification of answers (Barriball & While, 1994; Hutchinson & Skodal Wilson, 1992). Probing also provided the researchers with more opportunities to build rapport with the participants and reduce socially desirable answers (Patton, 1990). At the start of the interview, the researcher greeted the participant and briefed the participant about the purpose of the interview. To build a rapport with study participants and help them to feel comfortable answering questions at the beginning of the interview, the researcher asked study participants about their general interests. After the interview introduction, the researcher briefed the participants about the Informed Consent Form (Appendix D) and asked interviewees if they had any questions. The researcher asked participants demographic questions including their age, education and occupation of the participants and the state and city in which participants resided.

After, the researchers asked the open-ended questions guided by the interview protocol. Table 3.1 details the open-ended questions and the follow up questions. After initial questions were posed, researchers asked questions and appropriate probes based on the flow of the interview. At the end of the interview, the researcher asked study participants if they had any other experiences or comments to share about the topic and thanked the participants for their time and participation in the study. The respondent's email address was confirmed to send the \$20.00 Glossier gift card.

Table 3.1 Interview Follow-up Questions and Probes

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**2. Please tell us about your social media behavior/patterns.**

*Probes:*

- 2.1 *What are the top three social media platforms you use in order? (How much time do spend on each per day)*
- 2.2 *What time of day do you use social media? (When relaxing? At work? Completing academic tasks? In public places?)*
- 2.3 *Why do you use social media? (For what reason? Interact friends? Find product information? To discover something new?)*
- 2.4 *How much time do you spend on social media per day/per week (On Facebook? On Instagram? On Twitter?) Ask either one (per week or per day)*

**3. Please tell us about your general shopping tendencies with skin care and cosmetic brands.**

*Probes:*

- 3.1 What are your favorite brands?
- 3.2 Where do you shop?
- 3.3 Where do you get information about brands in general?
- 3.4 How much did you spend on skin care and cosmetics in the past six months?
- 3.5 How much have you spent on Glossier products in the past six months?
- 3.6 What did you buy from Glossier

**4. Please tell us your thoughts about the beauty brand Glossier**

*Probes:*

- 4.1 Why do you like Glossier? (*Branding? packaging? Service? Online presentation? online interactions? Showroom? Sales associates? Founder? Message?*)
- 4.2 What are the prime reasons for purchasing Glossier products?
- 4.3 What social media channels do you use to interact with Glossier?

**5. Please tell us how you interact with Glossier online? (*ask participants to elaborate*)**

*Probes:*

- 5.1 What are your activities on Glossier's social media (*post? tag? like? share? comment?*)
    - 5.1.1 How often do you interact with Glossier on social media? (How many times a day/ week/month?)
    - 5.1.2 If you post anything about the brand on social media what do you post? (*post? tag? like? share? comment?*)
  - 5.2 Have there been any negative impression of Glossier on social media?
  - 5.3 What are your activities related to the brand outside of social media? (*Showroom visit? Talk to friends?*)
- 

### Participant Profile

The participant profile is summarized in Table 3.2. All 13 of the study participants owned at least one Glossier product and browsed and posted on Glossier's website and social media channels at least once a week. Out of the 13 participants 12 were considered active Glossier consumers as they met the product ownership requirement and followed Glossier on social media for at least six months prior to participating in the study. Renee was not an active Glossier participant since she did not follow Glossier on social media, but possessed in-depth knowledge of the beauty brand's business and marketing activities and browsed Glossier's social media channels at least once a week. As a follower of the Into The Gloss blog, Renee had extensive awareness of Glossier's origins and the beginnings of the brand. She was

able to describe Glossier's social media interaction with consumers from the perspective of a beauty industry professional as her occupation is a beauty buyer and entrepreneur. Most of the participants (76.92 %) chose Glossier as one of their favorite beauty brands. Participants' other favorite beauty brands included Youth To The People, Drunk Elephant, Dennis Gross, Crave Beauty, Dr. Jart+ Tatcha, SK-II, Caudalie, and Fresh. Study participants spent \$50 to \$1,000 on beauty products in a six-month period and \$32 to \$300 on Glossier products within the same time frame. The range of years the participants followed Glossier on social media was 6 months to 5 years, while the range of years the participants used Glossier products was 7 months to 4 years. Sandra, a 20-year-old student who also identified as a beauty blogger followed Glossier on social media for 6 months and used Glossier products for 7 months. Although she followed and used the brand for the shortest amount of time of the sample, she was chosen for the study for her ability to describe the popularity of Glossier among the brands used by members of the skincare blogging community on Instagram. All interviews were conducted via the Zoom Video Communications online video conferencing system. The primary researcher conducted 11 of the 13 interviews with the research advisor.

Table 3.2 Participant Profile

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Highest Level of Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Years Following Glossier on Social Media</b>	<b>Years using Glossier Products</b>	<b>Favorite Beauty Brands</b>
Angela	Female	23	Bachelors	Student	3 years	2 years	Glossier, Clinique
Stacy	Female	26	Bachelors	Family Advocate	2 years	2 years	Kate Somerville, Glossier, Sunday Riley, The Ordinary, Clinique
Kira	Female	25	Bachelors	Opera Singer	3 years	3 years	Kat Von D Beauty, Milk Makeup, Make Beauty, Glossier, Color Pop
Carter	Male	19	High School	Student	1.5 years	2 years	Glossier, Morphe Cosmetics, Jeffree Star Cosmetics, NARS Cosmetics
William	Male	25	Bachelors	Store Associate	2.5 years	4 years	Ole Henriksen, Glossier
Dana	Female	22	Bachelors	Mental Health Associate	2.5 years	2 years	Fenty Beauty, Dior Beauty, Revolution Beauty, Morphe Cosmetics, Glossier, Body Shop, Clinique
Morgan	Female	22	Bachelors	Teacher	1.5 years	3 years	Glossier, Color Pop, The Ordinary

Rachel	Female	22	High School	Student	5 years	2 years	Glossier, La-Roche Posay, The Ordinary
Renee	Female	28	Bachelors	Beauty Buyer	5 years	1 year	SkinCeuticals, Votary, Lumière, May Lindstrom Bobbi Brown, Kiko, Chantecaille
Esther	Female	27	Masters	Special Education Teacher	2 years	2 years	Kat Von D Beauty, Glossier, Urban Decay
Shandi	Female	22	Bachelors	Online Editor	5 years	1 year	Youth To The People, Sunday Riley, Glossier, Drunk Elephant, Dennis Gross, Crave Beauty
Sandra	Female	20	High School	Student	6 months	7 months	Tatcha, SK-II, Drunk Elephant
Laura	Female	28	Masters	Project Coordinator	1.5 years	1 year	Drunk Elephant, Caudalie, Fresh, Dr. Jart +

The demographic profile of the sample highlights that 11 participants identify as female while two participants identify as male. Glossier markets itself as a gender-neutral beauty brand that invites both male or female consumers to participate in the female-dominated beauty industry (Newton, Sonntag, Latham, & Haddock, 2019). Participants' ages ranged from 19 to 28 years with the mean age of 23.77 years. Although the focus of the study was on Millennial Glossier consumers, Gen Z

consumers were also chosen to participate in the study as they were able to provide rich data on their experiences with Glossier as the next generation of Glossier consumers. A majority of participants were employed (69.23%) in occupations that included opera singer, mental health associate and special education teacher. Angela, Carter, Rachel and Sandra were students. A majority of the participants had obtained bachelor's degrees (61.54 %), two participants had a master's degree (Esther and Laura) and three participants had high school diplomas (Carter, Rachel and Sandra). Most of the participants (61.54%) came from the United States and the remainder of participants were dispersed across global locations in Canada, England, Singapore and France. Throughout the study, aliases are used in reference to participants to ensure anonymity and protect participants' identities.

### **Data Analysis**

The primary researcher re-reviewed the Zoom interview transcriptions twice to check for any inaccuracies or errors in the automated transcriptions. After the interview transcription process was complete, the primary researcher created an initial coding guide designed to answer the study's research questions. The coding guide was based on the interview protocol, which detailed study participants' social media behavior and patterns, beauty shopping tendencies, general thoughts about Glossier and social media interaction with Glossier. The initial coding guide was revised based on consultation with the research advisor with codes that represented more specific information.

The finalized set of 47 codes is presented in Appendix F. The codes were defined based on Brodie et al.'s (2013) consumer engagement model. Codes that supported elements of applying Brodie et al.'s (2013) consumer engagement model identified how consumers engage with ML-DTC brands on social media in the context of social media interaction with beauty brands. For example, codes such as 'Social Media – Top Platform' and 'Social Media Engagement Level' helped researchers understand what social media channel participants used the most to engage with Glossier. The qualitative research software NVIVO 12.0 was used to code all of the 13 interview transcripts. Initially the primary researcher and the research advisor jointly coded and discussed two interview transcripts and revised the coding guide. Using the new coding guide, the primary researcher and the research advisor independently coded four (25 %) transcripts. The inter-rater reliability (Kappa coefficient) was calculated at 98.75%.



## **Chapter 4**

### **RESULTS**

The first section of this chapter highlights consumers' general social media patterns and behaviors and consumers' social media engagement motive and benefits. Consumers' beauty shopping tendencies are discussed. The next section of this chapter details consumer engagement with Glossier, and the first research question of the study. Consumers' social media behavior with Glossier in addition to their motive for engaging with Glossier and hedonic experience with Glossier are explained. In addition, consumers' preferred Glossier products and consumers' experience with Glossier marketing and online community are discussed. Offline interactions with the ML-DTC beauty brand are also discussed. The final section of this chapter explicates consumer engagement with modern luxury direct-to-consumer brands. This section addresses the final research question based on Brodie et. al's consumer engagement model (2013).

#### **General Social Media Patterns and Behaviors of Study Participants**

This section elaborates on the general social media behavior and patterns participants. Highlighting participants' social media usage helps to elaborate on the context in which they interact with ML-DTC brands on social media. In addition, participants top social media platforms were also discussed in the context of participants' social media usage. The social media engagement level of participants revealed participants' social media engagement frequency and intensity, while the social media engagement schedule showed the time frame participants interact with

social media on a daily basis. This section allowed the researcher to better understand why study participants use social media and its benefits.

### Top Social Media Platforms

Participants were asked to name their top three social media platforms to understand what social media platforms they engage with the most on social media. A majority of participants' chose Instagram, Twitter and Facebook as their top social media platforms. Each social media platform serves a different purpose and function in consumer lives.

*I'll use Facebook to stay in touch with friends I have around the world and family because I think it skews a little older, so I don't post as much to Facebook as I am just an observer, whereas Twitter I use for news and entertainment and ranting so much more like of the political aspects on there, and it's kind of refreshing because people are a lot more honest on Twitter, whereas Instagram is a lot more of the facade and how you look and how great your life is, which serves its purpose for sure, but I think each platform that I use kind of turn their own purpose and function. (Shandi)*

Twitter was the social media platform that consumers used primarily to follow the lives of celebrities.

*I think Twitter's easier to connect with people that you don't know like you get real life and plus you get other stuff that maybe you don't know the people and you can follow celebrities, politics. You can do a lot more on Twitter than others. I feel like people are more open on Twitter than they are on other social media. So, if you follow a celebrity, they're more likely to tweet more everyday stuff, then a picture on Instagram. Sometimes, especially on Twitter you get random people who tweet funny things that go viral, that's entertaining. (Morgan)*

Twitter was also an important social media platform for consumers to read the news.

*Twitter, I use it just to kind of like catch up on news, just to kind of scroll and*

*see what's going on. But I don't frequent those as much as I do, Instagram, for sure. (Stacy)*

Instagram was presented as the platform participants most frequently engaged with on social media according to study participants. In Stacy's words,

*Okay um Instagram is the first. It's like almost a problem. I'm always on Instagram. It's so bad I think Instagram um I check like Facebook every so often, but like, not really. And then like Twitter I use it just to kind of like catch up on news, just to kind of scroll and see what's going on. But I don't frequent those as much as I do, Instagram, for sure. (Stacy)*

William described his main reasoning for engaging on social media with Instagram.

*I like personally I like Instagram because I like posting on Instagram. I like making stories. I like I find it like a great way to get things that I want to say out there like social commentary or things that are happening, that sort of thing, and I like to look at pretty things. So there's that too. (William)*

### Social Media Engagement Level and Schedule

Participants' social media engagement levels varied by individual, but all participants expressed that they frequently browsed social media every day of the week, spending an average of 10 to 30 hours weekly on social media. Participants posting frequency on social media ranged from two to three days a week. Renee considered herself a regular user of social media.

*I'm definitely like a regular user. And I, I definitely spend a lot of time on social media, both for personal, and also professional reasons. I enjoy not fundamentally looking at stuff, like I'm really noisy. So I enjoy seeing videos and pictures, and especially now, like the stories element of it. I like to see all of that. I find that really fascinating. (Renee)*

Participants used social media throughout the entire day with the morning and evening times being the most frequent hours of usage. Renee describes her typical daily social media schedule.

*In the morning, I spend probably about 15 minutes when I haven't even gotten out of bed, and that's twofold mainly because I want to see, especially international people that I follow, what they've been doing the night or the day before, but also just to check in. I have four different Instagram accounts. I've got my personal one, my business one, and I run two business accounts with two different companies. I then have to just double check to see what's happening there and like respond if I need to, and then over the course of the day because of my job. I'm quite lucky that I can have access to my phone at all times. I might even want to refer to something on Instagram when I'm working or when I'm talking to somebody else and I will kind of dip in my working day I will dip in and out of it literally all the time. But it could even it could just be for like a minute, I put my phone up and I'll have a look and I put it back down again. It's because it's relevant to what I'm doing, and then when I get home. I finished work normally at 8 p.m., which in terms of the UK like posting hours — 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. is like peak time to post for maximum engagements. If I'm posting, which doesn't happen too much then it will be between that time, but also, I like I'm aware that other people are putting stuff up. It's quite nice to see what they're doing at that time. (Renee)*

The most frequently used social media platform varied with Instagram ranging from 45 minutes up to 6 hours, Facebook 15 minutes up to 6 hours, Twitter from 5 minutes up to 3 hours, Snapchat from 30 minutes up to 3 hours and YouTube from 1 hour to 2 hours. Participants indicated that roughly half of the time they engage on social media was interacting with brands on Facebook and Instagram specifically.

*Per day I would say that's less than half of the time I spend on social media is brand related. You have sponsored stuff that you can't choose to get away from, so even if you're not seeking out a brand, it can still come up on your feed. (Morgan)*

The degree of participation also varied. For example, Renee explained her typical social media behavior and how she appreciates others' social media posts.

*I'm not the biggest commenter, I wouldn't say, I would have to really love something to comment. But I do quite like a lot of stuff so, actually I do probably comment more than I think. I mean, I like liking stuff. I like showing appreciation, especially if it's an individual that's created something, especially if you can see there's been like effort and sincerity behind it. I really like to then 'like' as a sign of appreciation, because it's hard. A lot of people are putting a lot of time and effort into their content, and maybe not getting recognition, and a brand may not repost it, but I've seen that and I 'like' that. (Renee)*

### Social Media Engagement Motive and Benefits

Study participants discussed participating in social media for various reasons which included browsing social media platforms for entertainment, discovering new things and finding inspiration, keeping up with friends and family activities and interacting with like-minded individuals. Angela notes how she uses social media for various purposes.

*I just kind of like to see what's going on the world, and I just think it's interesting to see kind of what my friends are up to because I'm interning this semester so I am not taking classes like I'm not with my friends. So, I'm doing it to stay in touch with them, but I also like keeping up with the news and politics and just kind of seeing what's happening outside of my own little corner of where I live. (Angela)*

Sandra explained that she uses social media as a means to connect with brands that may notice her skincare blog on Instagram. Kira echoed this sentiment,

*A lot of times on social media, the goal is for brands to notice you, for other people to follow you. So, that's a big thing, and ultimately, I love doing makeup and posting content because I think it's beautiful and I want to share it and I'm proud of something. If it's art or makeup or something because I do think makeup is art. However, I don't comment on something, or like something with the expectation that I'm going to get a comment back or I'm going to get a life back for a follow. It's not an expectation of those things. But I do think that, as*

*with most people a lot of times when you tag brands in your posts. You want them to notice those posts (Kira)*

Carter said social media is primarily a place where he can share photos of his work as a makeup artist.

*I just like to post pictures. And I also like to take pictures. So, I use social media more as like a kind of like a portfolio. (Carter)*

William discussed that his primary motive for engaging on social media is to connect with people.

*I like connecting like I like engaging with people. I used to be on Twitter a lot, and then I kind of got off Twitter because, it wasn't really working for me, but now I'm enjoying it a lot more because it's this really cool thing where, like, I'm connecting to people that I don't actually know. And I've never met, and we just have like a tweet in common or like an interest in common. There's a way to connect with people, and I think that's cool. (William)*

Renee discussed that her motive for using social media was to see how various communities of people form groups and engage on social media.

*It's quite nice to be able to share your passions with people, that you don't know over the internet, like you're seeing lots of communities formed now, and communities, then almost like subcategories within those communities of people that have a shared interest. So, whether it's let's say skincare makeup and within that you might have the black or that the people of color community within we might have people of color and then in between that, black or Asian or Middle Eastern or whatever, and they have within them their like sub categories. I'd like to see how other people interact. I just like seeing stuff. I'm quite noisy. (Renee)*

Finding inspiration was also one of the primary motives for consumers to engage with social media.

*I look for inspiration. I look for reviews. Since I do have more of like a blog-type Instagram, I like to see what other people are using. So, I guess I use it to influence people and then also be influenced. I like to see what other people are using. I like to know what's in new products and that can be anything from like skincare, which is related to clothes or vacation spots, you know? And I just to engage with other similar people, honestly, or somebody that has something in common similar passions, aesthetics. (Laura)*

Gathering information about products was also a major motive for participants to engage on social media. Stacy discussed how she wanted to limit the number of brands she was engaging with on social media.

*I'm trying to be better about it because like I am very much aware, like how easily influenced I am so I'm like, okay, I need to like unfollow all these things because I'll just, you know, I'm in social work. It's not like I'm bringing home a lot of bacon, and then I'm like, oh, I'll spend it all on this so ... (Stacy)*

The primary benefit of social media for participants was for the validation they receive from brands and other individuals. According to William,

*I feel validated. A lot of the times because I've always been funny, and so I think being able to leverage that and to be able to feel validated by strangers and people that I'm not friends with about a concept that I've created that I think is funny or something that I make that I think is funny or like a video that I do, or like an impersonation that I'll put on my social medias, even though it's like it's not like a career thing for me, it's not like that's what I want to do. I find it fun and like validating to get that feedback of, like, oh my god, this is so funny. Like, that sort of thing I think is, is really cool. And I guess it's like a social reward for me. (William)*

Participants also revealed social media as a platform to connect with brands and follow brand activities. Consumers primarily followed beauty and fashion brands on social media. When influencers on social media posted pictures, and tagged the brands featured in their posts this provided a way for consumers to find new brands.

*I wanted to go to Maui. I would type in Maui get pictures of Maui, but I would also get pictures of people in swimsuits in Maui, and they would tag their swimsuits on their picture. So, then I can go through that swimsuit website and say, oh, wow, really cute, maybe I should buy one like that. Especially like the shopping, you know, you can click shopping and it will tell you the price of things right away. So, you know, if you can, if you actually want to buy it or not. (Morgan)*

The explore page on Instagram, where consumers could discover influencers and brands on social media was a prominent place to help consumers find new products.

*If I see something that I enjoy on Instagram as an ad or something that's on the recommended page or something, I do a lot of research into that and if I like it, obviously aesthetic wise, I'm more drawn to it. (Shandi)*

William discussed that the explore page on Instagram, helped him find funny, entertaining videos and discover new brands.

*I'm following a lot of comedians now that like make a lot of videos about different kinds of things. And I like seeing people integrate, like, I'm just thinking of this now, but like the things that I love the most is when people integrate like a brand within their social media, but like making it work for their brand. I like when people do it right — when people have like a partnership with a brand, but then they do it in a way that feels like it's still them. (William)*

Participants also used social media to air customer service complaints.

*Like if I have a problem with the company like I'll tweet at them and sometimes they're not responding to my emails. I feel like they tweet back at me faster if I'm having an issue. On Facebook, I'll go to pages for companies that I like for makeup or clothing, and just to follow and see what they post if they post about some new products coming out or some new thing they have, but if I have like a customer service issue where like I got a package in the mail and there was a wrong item in it, I'll use Twitter and like contact companies through Twitter. And I don't know why, but I feel like they just respond faster through Twitter than Facebook or Instagram. (Esther)*



Additionally, participants preferred social media over other advertising mediums.

According to Stacy, while she does not wish to feel manipulated by brands on social media, she believes brands' correspondence with consumers on social media is "completely much more effective than like on TV or even like a magazine or like any other methods of like advertising," as social is the most efficient way to discover what new products being released by brands.

*I think also a big part of it is like, if I'm hearing from like a girlfriend or like, you know, a blogger, a skincare makeup blogger of a new product. And it's a community thing. And since I'm always on my phone like I think every person my age, it's, I don't have to search out for it. It's just like right there. So, I think it's just part of like the convenience and like how easy it is. That probably makes me just gravitate towards that more than like any other way of advertising. (Stacy)*

### **Beauty Shopping Tendencies**

Participants discussed they were more likely to purchase cost-efficient beauty brands that had the same quality of luxury beauty brands. Participants purchased products such as moisturizers and face masks that were health and skincare focused with skin hydration ingredients to facilitate the "no-makeup-makeup" look they wanted to achieve on a daily basis with blemish free skin.

*I also am really into a drug store like haul like any brands that are just not huge. I'm also into them, like, if it's a moisturizer, and that works for you, like, I don't really care where it's from. You know what I mean? And some of them I've had forever. I've just kept using and they're like drugstore. (William)*

Renee explained through the years she has whittled down her core beauty products to a few products. With her background working as a beauty store associate

and beauty buyer, she lives by the ethos of only buying beauty products she truly wants to try regardless of the price of the item. Although she considers herself a luxury beauty consumer, she will purchase lower priced beauty items to share her product experience with friends.

*I think when you start using less stuff you invest more in the products that work and will give you that kind of natural look or I like — no-makeup-makeup look, but I think happens again with age. Like, there are a lot of people in over 16 to 18 — when I was 16 to 18 before let's say like the Kylie Jenner plan existed, that had very dramatic makeup, because you just did. And then as you get older it just kind of almost all get stripped back and now you've got entire brands... so like products like, you know, CeraVe is an American brand, actually, like, very simple skincare products and they've recently come to the UK. It's like £8 for 236 ml cleanser like I want to see how that will compete against a £25 cleanser because the active ingredients are the same, you know? (Renee)*

Kira discussed that while she purchases most of her beauty products online, the convenience of online beauty shopping is outweighed by the fact that it may be a hit or miss experience since a consumer has no guarantee whether the product works for their skin tone or skin type. The prime reason she continues to purchase beauty products online is because she knows the kinds of products that work well for her. Renee shared a similar experience,

*Whilst, thankfully now because of the internet, I can see textures and colors because people share everything and that's amazing. I'm not always going to get it right. Sometimes you want to just go and feel the texture, and I actually have someone that follows me — an American follower — kindly offered to go to a store, and, this is actually a Glossier a store. She was like, 'oh, if you want, I'll go to the store and I'll swatch,' and we can video call whilst we're doing it. That kind of kindness is just unfathomable, but obviously in America, you've got physical stores or even like you've had pop-up stores. Whereas I think we had a pop up store in London for like a few days, and that was it. So if*

*you want to buy online-only brands in the UK, a lot of it is based on trust. And if I buy and I don't like it then I'm stuck. (Renee)*

Laura explained that she is focused on seeking deals when purchasing beauty products.

*So, what I'll do if it's sold at Sephora. I will buy it through Sephora or if I find a product where a brand is having a big sale specifically to their site, then I will shop directly through the brand. (Laura)*

### Beauty Shopping Budget and Frequency

Participants shared that they may shop for beauty products in small weekly increments over time and then will go on a beauty shopping binge to buy newly released products. William said “there can be like two and a half weeks were like, I don't buy any skincare, I don't even walk into like Sephora or go online or whatever. And then I'll just like spend \$200 in one sitting.” According to Shandi,

*It varies in that I went through sort of a buying frenzy, where I needed to try everything that came out that was new and, find out about a new brand and I'd buy everything from them. Whereas over the last few months I've become a little more conscious in both cost and company in terms of trying to buy from brands that are ethical and, you know, not spending \$200 on a product because I think it's pretty. So, but I do love going to Sephora on my walk home and looking around and buying new things I do a lot of shopping online. (Shandi)*

Participants purchased products from their favorite beauty brands, which include Kate Somerville, Glossier, Sunday Riley, The Ordinary, Clinique, Kat Von D Beauty, Milk Makeup, Make Beauty, Glossier and Color Pop. The frequency with which participants are shopping in-store versus online ranged from 60 % to 90 % in-store in comparison to from 20 % to 40 %. For example, Laura specified her in-store versus online shopping ratio,

*I would honestly say, for skincare specifically 75% of the time I buy in store, because I like to be able to test it out. Then other times, it's the cases where I'm buying a brand, like a smaller brand, I've never tried before, and they're not sold at Sephora then I will buy it through them. So, in that case it would be online, but I would say it's like a 75:25 ratio. (Laura)*

### Beauty Product Purchase Learning

When participants were seeking to buy beauty products, friends' recommendations, online searches, social media and beauty focused brick-and-mortar stores were their major outlets for discovery. Participants indicated that their beauty product purchase learning began online. Angela described a shopping experience where a woman selling hair products at a mall kiosk told Angela that her hair was thinning. Although she understood that the woman at the kiosk was using a scare tactic to push her into purchasing products, Angela said she used this experience as an opportunity to search for hair thickening products online to combat insecurities about her hair.

*The other day, I thought that my hair was starting to fall out, so I search hair. This lady at the mall told me that I had thin hair and just really got me. It just made me feel really insecure (Angela)*

Participants said social media is the place to gather the most information about the beauty brands they use on a daily basis as well as new brands. Dana said on Twitter she used chat threads posted by users with skincare-focused Twitter accounts to learn about products she wanted to test out. She prefers reading the feedback by Twitter users in the chat thread comments instead of relying on beauty advertisements from brands for information about beauty products. Morgan said the tweets of celebrities expressing their approval of beauty products alerts her to new products of

interest. YouTube was also a social media platform that participants relied on to learn about beauty products. Tutorials and reviews from influencers on YouTube where participants can watch influencers test beauty products are informative.

*I will watch a YouTube tutorial of someone using the makeup to see if it would work for my skin tone or my skin type or if the eye shadows are actually good quality. I'll look for other beauty influencers and see what they're saying about it, which could make me want to buy or not buy it. (Morgan)*

Apart from the skincare influencers' YouTube presence and social media pages, Instagram and beauty blogs provided a place for participants to learn about beauty brands. According to Shandi,

*Whether it be other skincare influencers I follow, or the brands themselves and then also brands websites, I like to read about the products, what ingredients they use — other reviews that have been posted about them. (Shandi)*

William shared his thoughts on using skincare influencers' reviews to inform his product purchases.

*I really like to get people's opinions, so I don't like when it's huge influencers. I don't know how much I trust it — a huge influencer being like 'you need to use this,' and they have like 3 million likes on the photo. I don't know how much that really sways me in terms of purchasing, but I like it when it's smaller creators or smaller influencers that are talking about brands like that. (William)*

Instagram was the social media platform that participants used the most to learn about beauty products and connect with beauty brands. Shandi said when she sees beauty brands featured on social media pages recommended to her by the Instagram algorithm, she is drawn to them primarily because of the aesthetics of the posts prompting her to spend time researching the beauty products featured in the posts. She said she relies on Instagram beauty posts as a research source to help her

determine whether or not she wants to buy a product. After Dana views beauty product posts on Instagram she considers how the packaging looks and the reviews and recommendations of bloggers. According to Kira,

*I follow a couple hundred beauty brands on social media from skincare to make up everything in between and that's my main route of kind of getting in contact with beauty brands, finding out what their new releases are, seeing how products wear on other people. So, I follow a lot of beauty brands and Instagram is my major platform where I connect with beauty brands. (Kira)*

Participants explained that online beauty chat groups were a place for them to learn about beauty products and participate in discussions with like-minded beauty enthusiasts. Kira said while she initially gets information about beauty products from Instagram and Facebook advertisements, she will go to the brands' websites for further research on the product and log on to the beauty chat group Temptalia to see if the product is worth spending her money. Esther said she is a member of two beauty chat groups on Facebook — Into The Gloss and The Curly Girl Methods. She uses beauty chat group CosDNA to learn about the ingredients in beauty products she is interested in purchasing, and she frequently contributes to beauty chat threads on Reddit.

*I read a lot on Reddit. They have certain subreddit groups about skincare and cosmetics, so if I have a question about an ingredient I'll go on there or also a really good website called CosDNA, where you can search certain ingredients or products, and you can see, if it's good for sensitive skin — if there's like alcohol or whatever, because I also have really sensitive skin. So, I have to do a lot of research to make sure that what I put on my face will be okay. (Esther)*

Into The Gloss, Glossier's Facebook beauty chat group, was also a place participants used to learn about beauty products. Angela discussed that the Glossier focused chat group, which also highlights the usage of other beauty brands is a place

to find cheaper versions of luxury beauty products. She bookmarks group members' comments and posts experiences with products to view later when she is ready to purchase the products discussed in the posts.

*The Into The Gloss group is where I get most of my stuff, and then sometimes it's like my friends do post something that I think is interesting. I'll do a lot of research on it and see is it safe for sensitive skin, look at different review, see how it looks like on different types of complexions and kind of make a judgment based on that, but I usually don't end up buying anything if I have to do all that. (Angela)*

Kira discussed how it was important for her to research whether brands were sustainable and inclusive.

*I like to see what kind of people they have on their pages — how inclusive they are — cruelty free. I'm not so much vegan, but I'm 100% cruelty free when it comes to makeup and skincare. So that's a really important thing for me. So, I'll look for like key factors with those brands and then that's what really draws them to me. (Kira)*

William discussed how being able to physically handle the products was important because he uses that experience to inform his purchase of the products he tries on in-store online.

*If I'm going into Sephora and I'm seeing a bunch of products, I usually don't purchase them right away. Like I'll usually go if it's a brand that I don't know about or if it's product I don't know about, I'll usually go like on Instagram, like search their Instagram page, and then look at people who have tagged them. That's what I pick to see for reviews, and then I'm also like there's an app. It's called Super Great. It's where people leave reviews about beauty and makeup. (William)*

Rachel said she spends a lot of time in pharmacies discussing her skin concerns with the staff, and she asks questions about ingredients and the science behind how the products work.

*Before I buy anything, I look up reviews online, will do some research and compare and when I'm shopping for skincare. Normally, I would get very involved and ask the staff working there about their opinions and tell them about my skin types. So, it's a very involved process... if it's just a product that I try out in the stores, swatch on my hand and I'll maybe a Google review or two, buy it if I like it. (Rachel)*

### Online Versus Offline Beauty Purchases

Participants discussed how they shop for beauty products both online and in physical stores and described a variety of reasons why they chose one retail channel over another. Convenience was a factor for determining whether participants would shop in-store. Stacy explained that she will choose to purchase beauty products in-store if the store is nearby or if she is running weekly errands. The closest beauty store at Angela's local mall is 10 minutes away so it was easy to get to, while Carter said he preferred to shop in store as the store provides an opportunity for him to access the products immediately. Renee explained why she enjoys the in-store experience.

*I want to touch. I want to smell. I want to play in some stores, but this is probably quite unique, because I work in the industry. In some stores, I almost want to test them. I want to know your knowledge, I want to know what you would recommend if you don't know that I work in the industry. But even if I ignore that, I want to touch and I want to play, like beauty is such a sensual experience... (Renee)*

In-Store Beauty Purchases. The beauty retail stores participants chose to shop varied from beauty-specific stores including ULTA and Sephora to local drugstores. Consumers preferred these stores because they are well-known and they are conveniently located on their way home from work or school. Laura said she shops at Sephora because she believes the beauty retail store is a trustworthy retailer. Although



Esther also shopped at Sephora for beauty products, she preferred to shop at ULTA because she appreciated the store's customer service and budget-friendly products.

*I've been trying to shop more at ULTA because I feel like you get better value and you get more points for shopping, so you get more free stuff, whereas at Sephora it's harder to do that. So, I definitely do most of my cosmetics shopping at Sephora, and a little bit of Target for like makeup remover or little everyday stuff. (Esther)*

Laura benefited from Sephora's store perks as a loyalty program member of the beauty store.

*A lot of my favorite brands for skincare are sold at Sephora and I have the Sephora VIB rouge status so, I love getting the points. So, generally, if it's sold at Sephora, even if I could buy it somewhere else, I'll choose to get it at Sephora to speed up those points because of the reward system. (Laura)*

Rachel preferred to shop at her local pharmacy for beauty products.

*With skincare, I mostly buy from pharmacies, either in France or in Norway. Some pharmacies are bigger than others and some specialized more in cosmetics where it's some is mostly medicine or for colds and vitamins and things like that. So, the ones in which I would get advice from the people who work there, would be the bigger ones that are more focused on cosmetics. (Rachel)*

Online Beauty Purchases. Although participants spend most of their time shopping for beauty products in-store, they discussed that shopping online was convenient. Angela said she preferred to purchase beauty products online, but did not like how long she had to wait to receive products in the mail. Kira said she enjoyed shopping online because she could curate the products she wanted to buy more easily online compared to in-store. Shandi said she appreciated the fact that she could obtain more discounts for products online than in-store.

*Largely because a lot of the products are not available in-store when you buy or they don't have their own stores. So, when you buy directly from, say, Farmacy, your first order is 15% off, but it's not if you buy it at Sephora. So, a lot of it has to do with sales or perks that they'll be giving for things like that, if they have their own reward system. Or even just like proximity, like it's just sometimes it's easier to just sit on your computer and place an order than it is to actually go out and see people in person. (Shandi)*

Participants discussed that niche brands were easier to find online as most niche brands do not have physical retail stores. Most participants mentioned that Glossier and The Ordinary were the only beauty brands they would purchase online. Laura enjoyed using Instagram to find new small, local beauty brands that she could buy directly from online.

*The niche brands that I buy are not available around me. Obviously, there's things like Fenty Beauty and Tart and that kind of stuff that are available in Sephora, which I do shopping a lot, but a lot of brands like Glossier are not available around me. So, I normally will buy those online. (Kira)*

Renee preferred to use home television shopping network QVC to purchase and discover new beauty products while Stacy used beauty store apps from ULTA and Sephora to buy her beauty items to supplement her online beauty purchases.

*I used to have a Sephora and ULTA app on my phone and I was just like, they gotta go, because it was so easy to just like scroll and be like I need all these things. That's definitely helped so I mainly do it online. If there is something I know that I've tried, and I like, I just go and place it online. And then if I happen to be out doing errands, or like it's nearby. I will go to the actual store, but I like things delivered to me so online for sure. (Stacy)*

### **Social Media Engagement with Glossier**

#### **Social Media Behavior on Glossier Social Media Channels**

Participants mentioned a variety of ways in which they interacted with Glossier on the brand's social media accounts. Participants described their social media

interaction with Glossier with commenting on pictures, direct messaging the brand, tagging Glossier in comments and Instagram posts, watching the brand's Instagram stories and liking the brand photos. According to Laura,

*Generally, I will like the majority of their photos, and then I will occasionally, leave a comment. just because that's what I do for the skincare Instagram, and if ever I post a photo with one of their products, I always tag them in it, or post a story was one of their products. I will always type them in it as well and sometimes they will respond. So, of course I will like that and then maybe respond back to the response. It just depends. (Laura)*

Participants discussed how they have multiple social media accounts to interact with Glossier — a personal account and beauty focused Instagram account emerged as the two most common accounts participants used to engage with Glossier. As a skincare blogger, Shandi follows Glossier on both her personal account and skincare-focused Instagram account. She interacts mostly with Glossier through her Glossier skincare account through posting about the brand's products, tagging the brand in her posts, sharing the brand's posts in her Instagram stories, commenting on the brand's posts, asking the brand questions and liking the brand's posts. She also participates in the brand's social media polls about the product. While Shandi will not post about Glossier on her personal account, she follows the brand and likes the brand's posts. She also posts about her offline experiences when she visits the Glossier's showroom. Laura uses her skincare focused Instagram account to post product reviews and first impressions of Glossier products.

*So, what I'll do is I'll post, a flat lay or just any kind of photo of their product or multiple of their products or their products mixed in with a couple other brand products, and I will generally in my caption mention my honest opinions*

*and thoughts about the product...or just talking about the aesthetics like cute packaging or something. (Laura)*

Participants discussed that most of the time spent interacting with Glossier on social media was dedicated to liking and commenting on the brand's posts. While Carter does not leave reviews about products on the brand's Instagram accounts, he feels comfortable with liking Glossier's posts and sharing the posts with his friends. Also, Carter responds when Glossier asks users to post images using their favorite Glossier products.

*If I like really like a product and they have an Instagram post talking about the product and they're asking their followers to talk about what they like about it, then I will answer. But if it's like if it's just a normal post, usually I won't just like comment that I love their products. (Carter)*

Esther explained her response to Glossier posts.

*When Glossier posts something, like when they launch a new product they'll just post the link, I'll comment or interact, like, 'oh, that's cool,' or like, 'oh, I really like that.' (Esther)*

Most participants discussed that sharing Glossier's posts with their social media communities was part of their regular social media activity. Dana watches Glossier's Instagram stories and shared discount codes with her followers on her personal Instagram page after receiving a discount code from the brand when she purchased a product. Laura shares Glossier's product posts and product giveaways on her skincare Instagram account to gain more followers. Angela said when Glossier posts hints on Instagram about new products the brand is about to release she will tag her friends on Glossier's Instagram posts to alert them of new product releases.

*Anytime Glossier posts something new I always repost it on my story and I always get people sliding in and being like, 'Oh, I didn't know they did this or why are you so obsessed with this company or oh I just ordered that it's the first product I've tried,' like that kind of stuff. (Angela)*

Participants shared that they also spent time interacting with other Glossier users on the brand's social media accounts. Esther said she interacts with other Glossier users on social media by commenting on what others post to have a discussion about Glossier products. While Esther does not go out of her way to frequently post her own comments about products on Glossier's social media accounts, she responds to posts if other users asks about the products. When Kira interacts with Glossier users on social media she expresses her approval of other users posts by liking and commenting on their posts.

*Most of the time I will like other people's comments, and if that comment allows me to go to their page, like if I find that comment something that is worth going to their page. A lot of times I will follow people that have commented on Glossier's posts, and again, a lot of times I'm just liking them. (Kira)*

### Social Media Engagement Level with Glossier

While participants' social media engagement levels with Glossier varied by each participant, most participants said they interacted with Glossier every day or one to three times a week. Elizabeth said she interacted with Glossier's social media pages once a day while William said he would engage with Glossier any time the brand posted something new. William interacted with the brand two to three times a day, and would find Glossier through the brand's page via his Instagram feed, the Instagram

Explore page or when the brand posted an Instagram story. Angela watches “every single thing that they post and watch pretty much every single like Instagram story.”

*Every time I like get a new order I always do me opening the box and unwrapping the little pink plastic pouch and be like, ‘these are my goodies, like aren't they so cute?’ And then pretty much every time I order something always screenshot it and put gifs of excited people and be like, ‘I'm about to be happy in five to nine days. Like, let's see, when it gets here.’ Like a little stuff like that, and then pretty much every time they have something new, I'm always just like, ‘ordered it, didn't even know what it was, but it's in my cart and it's on the way. (Angela)*

### Motive for Engaging with Glossier

Participants engaged with Glossier to create a sense of belonging in the Glossier community. Feeling appreciated as a Glossier consumer and gaining the personal satisfaction of being able to help other Glossier members answer questions about the brand's products also emerged as prime motivations for engaging with Glossier. Participants also wanted to engage with Glossier to increase their social media following. Carter engages with Glossier to feel recognized as a consumer. When Glossier interacts with Carter by liking or commenting on his posts, he feels like the brand appreciates his presence in the brand's social media community. Sandra's motive for interacting with Glossier's social media pages is to gain the personal satisfaction of helping other community members understand how to use the products. Morgan's motive for engaging with Glossier comes from her desire to get the full usage of Glossier products she purchases.

*It's important for me to make sure that I'm using the products and in ways that would make the most sense for me. I could be doing something wrong, so seeing other people post about that makes me use makeup in different ways that I wouldn't have figured it out on my own. That's my ultimate goal by*

*following them is making sure that I have all the information to use the products in the best way. (Morgan)*

Rachel has been following Glossier from its inception and engages with the brand to feel like she is a significant member of the Glossier community.

*I'm very I guess it was biased in a positive way. Already before the brand had even started, and I guess for me I also like the aesthetic. I like the message they portray. It gives me some kind of belonging to interact with the brand on social media, especially because I have friends are equally as excited about the brand I am. (Rachel)*

Another motive that emerged from two participants was to be featured on Glossier's Top Five social media posts, where the brand reposts the top five entertaining post of the week created by Glossier's social media followers. Participants said being featured in the posts validated them as an important contributor to the community.

*Sometimes I do share things like hoping that maybe would be one of the top five of the week, or maybe like somebody, at Glossier would see it and like it. I know sometimes like all think that I'm being witty and I'll try to post something to get like in the top five of the week. Like when they dropped Glossier Play. That was my work hours got up. So, I was like, 'God must have known this was coming out, I have to get over time this week.' (Angela)*

### Hedonic Experience with Glossier

When participants described their hedonic experience with Glossier they repeatedly discussed that they felt the brand was trustworthy, reliable, loyal and authentic. Morgan has grown to become a loyal follower of the brand. She is able to buy products without researching them because she knows all the Glossier products she uses will work well for her skin type. Angela was comfortable ordering new

Glossier products after viewing posts about the products because she trusted that the products would work for her.

*I just really trust them as a brand like based on their values and their mission statement, but I also feel like they put a lot of thought into their products like they're not constantly dropping something new. It's like we've spent months formulating this and we want to be the best product that it can be. (Angela)*

Dana notes a stronger level of engagement with Glossier because the brand consistently responds to her posts inquiring about Glossier products. Rachel explained Glossier's reliability.

*It hasn't been a 'Oh wow they answered.' It's been the quotation, of they always answered. They started answering in the comments and interacting and so they usually answer if you have a question on Instagram or elsewhere. (Rachel)*

Similarly, Rachel feels a personal relationship with Glossier.

*I have a more personal relationship to the brand and a sort of loyalty to the brand that I don't have with other skincare brands in particular. So, I think especially when all of the people or most of the people working at Glossier are so present on social media and very accessible, you get this personal or this illusion of a personal relationship towards the brand but also the people behind it. (Rachel)*

William describes the way Glossier presents itself on social media feel natural and authentic. Glossier's social media marketing does not feel like a marketing gimmick, but rather a way to connect with the consumer. Carter believes Glossier is able to engage with consumers on a personal level, because the brand was created with its consumers in mind. Shandi explained the following feelings towards the brand.

*I really do love their products. The girls that work for them are very genuine, you know, the girls who work in their stores are super nice, and always really*



*helpful. I love their ad campaigns and their marketing and so yeah, I do love them as a brand. (Shandi)*

Angela observed Glossier has its finger on the pulse of the millennial generation and understands how to make its consumers feel significant. She recounted a story where Glossier went out of its way to care for its customer and described her feelings of goodwill towards the brand.

*I remember reading a story. Last year, this woman's house burned down and she said something like, 'this might be so dumb, but I just ordered some Balm Dot Com and it burned up in the fire and like literally didn't tag them in and they found it and they sent her one of everything that they had in stock and then like a bunch of Balm Dot Calms. I just feel like they're superb people who know what their product means to the customers that kind of go out of their way to facilitate that relationship. (Angela)*

### **Consumer Engagement with Modern Luxury Direct-to-Consumer Brands**

The main purpose of this study was to examine consumers' engagement with ML-DTC brands on social media by studying Glossier's consumers. Participant interviews corresponded to the five engagement sub-processes derived from Brodie et al.'s (2013) consumer engagement model — learning, sharing, socializing, advocating and co-developing — that reveal the way consumers interact with the Glossier ML-DTC brand on social media. Distinct engagement factors and behaviors that emerged from interviews provided an expanded context to study the benefits of the ML-DTC brand, Glossier, on social media.

#### **Learning**

Learning refers to a consumer's acquisition of knowledge of a particular brand. Consumers use the acquired information to inform their purchases (Brodie et al.,

2013). When participants wanted to learn about the ML-DTC brand Glossier, they used social media as a gateway to gather information about the brand and its products. Participants used a variety of social media platforms to learn about Glossier, which included Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Instagram, in particular, emerged as the primary platform that provided consumers with access to the most information about Glossier. Angela observed that the ML-DTC brand had the largest presence on Instagram. Carter preferred Glossier's Instagram page as the best place to learn about using Glossier products. Participants also engaged with Glossier's branded Facebook group Into The Gloss, yet Instagram was the most prominent place for consumers to discover new product releases by the brand. Angela explained that even though she was wary of taking suggestions from people about beauty products on social media, she still used Instagram frequently to learn about the ML-DTC brand. Outside of Glossier's branded Facebook group Into The Gloss, many participants like Esther used beauty chat such as Reddit and CosDNA. Esther discussed how she learned about the ML-DTC brand's copyright issues and the obscure details surrounding the release of Glossier's new sister color cosmetics line called 'Play' on Reddit. Whenever Esther reads information about Glossier on Reddit she will reaffirm the knowledge gained with other user posts and comments on the brand's Twitter account and Into The Gloss Facebook group.

*I read a lot on Reddit, actually, they have certain subreddits or groups about skincare and cosmetics so, if I have a question about an ingredient, I'll go on there or there is also a really good website called CosDNA, where you can like search up certain ingredients or products, and you can see, if it's good for sensitive skin, if there's alcohol or whatever, because I also have really*

*sensitive skin. So, I do have to do a lot of research to make sure that like what I put on my face like will be okay. (Esther)*

The main ways consumers learned about Glossier products were through influencers, brand product launches disseminated through social media channels and visual product posts on Instagram and Twitter.

*They will post about new releases or even old products that I haven't used. I found out that they had released more Stretch Concealers and their foundation because they posted that they had expanded their shade range. Obviously, the Instagram algorithm has been kind of weird. So you only see certain posts, and you can see things that were from five days ago, but you won't see something that's posted 10 minutes ago, which is irritating. So I don't see a lot or all of the things that Glossier posts on their social media until probably days later. (Kira)*

Direct messaging Glossier on its social media channels was also an important way for participants to make direct contact with the ML-DTC brand. Consumers engaged on social media most via Instagram.

*There have been a couple of times where I have DM'd them about how long products should last to see if I'm using too much or too little of those. So, they are really quick. Usually I got my response within an hour. So, which I think is pretty decent for a brand with millions of followers, because they probably get a lot of DMs. It was about the Milky Jelly Cleanser, specifically, because I felt like I was using too much because I was going through it too fast, and eventually I think they were like, 'you'll only need a quarter size amount' and they told me to put it on my face, rather than on a washcloth because the washcloth will absorb that product, and so it ended up where I was actually using too much product because I was using it in a way that wasn't conducive to the way that the product was meant to be used. So, they helped me with that. (Kira)*

To learn about how Glossier's products worked for their particular skin type, consumers would purchase products after being alerted through product posts on social media. If consumers experienced good results using the products, they would

repurchase them. Participants also read reviews on Glossier's website and waited to receive information about the brand through Glossier's email newsletter. In addition, participants posted questions about products on Glossier social media accounts and asked other Glossier's user on Glossier's social media about their experiences with the beauty products. Morgan discussed that when Glossier posts pictures of products on social media, followers comment on what shades of product to buy and whether or not the product works for their skin type. Morgan joins the comments posted and directs users who have the same skin tone to her social media page to see how the product looks in real life. Sandra comments on these product posts by asking about the price of the product and whether it is worth the money. Shandi discussed her experience.

*When I first started using their Solution product, it was really my first introduction to a chemical exfoliant. So, I really didn't know much about them. So, I remember asking whether I could use it, whether it was better for morning or night or, if there were certain products that I couldn't use with it, if I couldn't mix vitamin C with it, because I've heard in the past that you can't. So, I like to go the source about things that they might not include in product descriptions... It wasn't Glossier as a company that responded to my question. It was another Instagrammer that replied to my question that answered it. (Shandi)*

To determine the right Glossier products, consumers would post questions asking about specific product attributes. Randi discussed that other users' comments about their experiences with the product were important in making the decision to purchase the products. William explained what he looks for specifically when he is learning about Glossier products.

*I think, like what the payoff is. If it's like a makeup thing, definitely what it'll look like on specific types of skin or skin tones. If it's like a skincare thing, like when Solution came out, I didn't get it right away because I was like, it's an*

*exfoliator and then they started posting before and after sort of thing. So, that was cool like to know what the payoff would be, also for like a skincare product. I'm looking for that. I guess I don't really look for the price, that's not like the first thing that I look for. Maybe how many shades or what kind of shades or what the shades are for a thing, how to use it... Sometimes I comment to people who ask how to use it or how people use it or something like that, for sure. (William)*

### Sharing

Sharing takes place when consumers share personal information, knowledge and experiences with their online community. Brand knowledge is co-created when consumers participate in sharing (Brodie et al., 2013). Revealing their personal information and experiences emerged as the main way participants engaged in sharing on Glossier's on social media channels. Participants shared personal information such as skin type, hair type, age and where they live to help other users understand how a product might work for them. William discussed when other Glossier users ask about Glossier products work for particular skin types, he shares that he has dry skin, to help other users better understand the product. Rachel explained that sharing her personal information helps facilitate important discussions about how to use Glossier products.

*I definitely share my skin type and hair type because it's relevant to the conversation. I also shared that lived in France, because there was a conversation about dealing with different water — tap water. The girl who posted it was actually a girl that goes to my university and the year below me, and I didn't know her before this post (Rachel)*

Some participants preferred to share experiences on personal social media accounts. In particular, Instagram Stories offer an easy way for consumers to post and tag video images for 24 hours. Participants mentioned being comfortable with sharing personal experiences on Glossier's social media channels if other users had questions

about how a product worked. Some participants indicated a sense of obligation to share their personal experiences and help create brand knowledge among members of Glossier's social media community. Stacy discussed that although other Glossier users posted positive experiences using the brand's Solution product, she had a negative experience with the product and felt that it was important to share with the community to give a balanced review of the product. Kira discussed helping other community members.

*It's not something that I actively seek out, but if people have questions, and I know the answer to them because I've dealt with those questions, I will respond to them.... Glossier does, I think, try to respond to a lot of their comments. But they don't get to all of them. And I think when you see a question appear a couple times, times or somebody asks, something that you know the answer to, that you can offer advice on that's a good time to say, hey, like I'm obviously not the brand, but this is my experience with ABC and I think maybe that you could find that helpful. (Kira)*

Stacy also frequently posts about her experiences using Glossier's Milky Jelly cleanser product because she is "obsessed" with the positive results from the product. Kira and Esther share personal experiences when discussing Glossier products with other users. A Glossier user inquired about the coverage of Glossier's Haloscope product and Kira told the user she liked the product, "because it wasn't sort of a blinding highlight and it was something that it didn't dry down so it was very dewy finish, so it looked very natural, and so if you were looking for some sort of natural highlight, I think it would be a good product."

*If someone posts the question, and I know the answer, or I have like personal experience to be able to answer their question then, like, I'll post in response to what someone else asked....with the foundation, actually, where someone was talking about how they have rosacea. So, they were nervous about using the*

*foundation. I said that I have mild rosacea, and I'm fine using it. (Esther)*

Participants also post “unboxing videos” where they shared video posts of themselves unpacking Glossier products after they received a new order. Dana said after she shared unboxing videos on her personal Instagram page, other Glossier users started asking her what she liked about the products to gain knowledge about how the products work. Angela always posts to social media whenever she receives a new Glossier order in the mail, but she never felt comfortable with sharing any negative experiences with Glossier products.

*I guess I'm pretty go with the flow pretty laid back, so it would take a lot for me to want to send them a message and be like, hey, this is terrible. Please don't ever do this again...but normally, if I have negative feedback, I have to be really upset to tell them or to post something about it. I'm pretty passive and go with the flow. So, I'll just, like, give it to a friend and let them try their experience with it. (Angela)*

Morgan always posts on Twitter whenever a new Glossier product is released to alert her followers of new products and create conversation surrounding its release.

Similarly, Laura discussed how she shared Glossier product launches.

*If they announced a new product that I was excited about, or I know they announced the Glossier Play, but before they let anyone know what that was, I would have posted that in my story and mentioned being excited about it, or if they post a really pretty product photo that I just like the aesthetic of then sometimes I'll post that in my story. (Laura)*

## Socializing

Socializing is the two-way interactions between consumers to acquire and develop community norms, attitudes and language of the online community (Brodie et al., 2013). Participants socialized to share in the online Glossier community

experience. Participants discussed that commenting on other users' posts was the most common way to socialize on Glossier's social media accounts. Comment exchanges mainly included discussions about participants' favorite Glossier products. Glossier's branded Facebook group, Into The Gloss, was the social media channel participants used the most, which provided an open dialogue about Glossier products and other beauty products.

*People like comment or post anything like in the Glossier group, like I'll read what they post or I'll respond like if I have something to say, or like want to discuss something... it's just like, it's things like in passing, like I haven't made like friends through it or anything, but like, it's just interesting (Esther)*

Stacy used the Into The Gloss Facebook group to do most of her socializing and interacting with other Glossier users. She discussed her skin concerns and issues with products on Glossier's beauty group. She recalls reading a discussion on the Into The Gloss group and reading a question from another Glossier user about finding a Glossier product for hyperpigmentation and how they discussed that Glossier's Solution product did not work for their skin. Another Glossier user joined in the conversation along with Angela to discuss similar negative experiences with the Solution product.

*Someone posted like 'oh my god, I just didn't work for me, I didn't like it. I was like, Oh my God, did this happen to you too, so 30:07 Yeah, I think it was their mascara, and I also talked to someone about the Lash Slick. I was really excited about it and I hated it. So, when I, I saw so many reviews and loved it and I was like, 'oh my god, am I the only one who just hated it?' And then I saw someone was like, yeah, it's a no for me. That's what I was like 'oh yay,' someone I can talk to you about it (Stacy)*

Participants also socialized with other Glossier followers about the best



products to use and purchase. William discussed his experience socializing in the comments section on Glossier's social media accounts.

*I think there was one time where someone was asking about Cloud Paint and what shade was best for them. It was a girl who had a very similar skin tone to me and I told her the ones that I had. And then we like went back and forth a little bit. I don't remember which one she ended up getting, but it was like there was an exchange happening and I told her, which ones — what kind of look it gives me for specific shades that I use. (William)*

Although some participants did not feel compelled to initiate conversation and socialize with other Glossier users most participants noted they would always respond to questions users posted about Glossier products. On the other hand, Laura said “on Glossier's page I have never, to my knowledge, answered anyone's question that I've seen on there,” but she would socialize with other Glossier users that she follows and interacts with on a regular basis.

Three participants discussed how “The Pink Pouch,” Glossier's pink plastic packaging, opened up opportunities for socialization. The pouch is common knowledge to the Glossier community as it provides instant Glossier brand recognition. Glossier frequently asks followers to post how they are using their pink pouches, and when Glossier users see other Glossier users with the pouch, Glossier users socialize around that topic, William explained.

*A year and a half ago, they did this thing where they were talking about a little pink pouch that all their products come in and they were talking about how people are now using it as a purse and that it was like a sisterhood of people who have it and who use it in real life. And it was a way to approach someone to be like, 'Oh my god, like you have a Glossier product, like what kind of products do you use', and how people were using in real life, and I think for someone to engage with the brand on their social media is kind of like the same thing. (William)*

## Advocating

Advocating involves consumers recommending and supporting brands, services and products to members of an online community (Brodie et al., 2013). Participants discussed a variety of reasons why they consider themselves advocates for Glossier. Generally, participants recommended Glossier products to their friends on social media and in-person. When participants had good experiences with Glossier products they were more apt to advocate for the product on social media whenever another user commented about the best Glossier products to use. Morgan had an impressionable experience with Glossier's Cloud Paint blush. She has become a loyal user of the product and feels obligated to advocate for it.

*Well, I think liquid blush is really hard to use for most people like me. I'm not a makeup guru or anything, but I think their blush is so easy to use and it gives you such a natural result that I almost felt obligated to tell all my friends about it so that they could go get it and have the same experience that I'm having (Morgan)*

Angela prefers to give her recommendations exclusively to her friends on social media, because she feels her recommendation of a product will get lost in the thousands of comments on Glossier's social media accounts.

*If I do post anything, I'll just send it directly to my friends because whenever I do post I want to see my friends taking my suggestions or taking my recommendations and knowing that, hey, I really like this, or I'm excited about this. I think that you would be too. And I think if I commented that on one of Glossier's post it would kind of get lost. I want my recommendation to be known to somebody and not just another compliment that someone's going to swipe through. (Angela)*

Angela described an experience where she was a leader in advocating for Glossier

products within her friend group.

*On spring break last year, a bunch of girls used my Milky Jelly and then right after we got back that's when they released the travel size bottles, and so when they posted it I like tagged all of my friends in the comments. I was like, hey guys like here it is, but now you can like, buy a bottle. It's half the size. If you want to give it a more regular try instead of splurging for the \$18 full size bottle or sometimes they'll post like the shades of Lidstar, like they'll swatch them out and I try to tag my friends and things if I see a post that triggers that to be like, hey, like you've seen me wear this, but now here it is from the brand if you want to buy it, here's your opportunity to do it. (Angela)*

Carter “loves” all products he purchases from Glossier and always recommends the products to all his friends. He “very much stands by the brand” and defends the brand.

Morgan actively defends Glossier’s Boy Brow product because users on social media who say the product does not live up to its hype do not understand how to use the product.

*I know with Boy Brow, when you open a new one it's very pigmented at first, so a lot of people are kind of scared of it online, say, oh, it's not up to the hype of people and I say, oh, just keep using it. (Morgan)*

Rachel said that there is one Glossier product that she “dies hard for and will always recommend. She will always defend the brand’s Milky Jelly Cleanser because she believes that people who have had a negative experience are using the product incorrectly.

*This is very specific to one product, but other people might say, oh, I don't like it because of this, it doesn't work because of this. I'm very, for some reason loyal, so I say ‘no, you're using it wrong.’ On the Facebook group, I would see people claim that it doesn't remove makeup properly and I, in my experience, that's not the case. It does, but you have to use it dry and also some people say doesn't cleanse properly and but I have kind of strong opinions on what it means to cleanse. I think it's just, I'm very loyal to a specific product. And I think when people review it badly in a way that doesn't really align with my subjective experience of the product I like to speak up for it. (Rachel)*

Participants said they would recommend specific ways to use the products. Kira would often direct message friends and other Glossier users to advocate for the best ways to use Glossier products.

*It was specifically about the Lidstars and I saw that they worked better as a highlighter than they did as I shadows, because of the formula. The formula is nice, but the pigment in it was just not, for me, at least, it was not worth buying a \$20 eyeshadow when it had barely any pigment in it, but I thought it might be pretty as a highlighter. And then they came out with their Nightshines, with Glossier Play and somebody on YouTube, I think, was like, this feels like the Lidstar so it might be the same formula, which I think is funny, but I discussed using their products multi-use which, I think, actually, a lot of their products are designed to be multi-use. I talked about using the Haloscopes as like I shadows, but again, those have been mostly to like friends or people that have friends that I've met through social media as opposed to on the websites or their Instagram page. (Kira)*

Rachel is a person who advocates brands to other people when she believes in how well they work. She is a picky beauty shopper so her recommendation of Glossier should be seriously considered since she carefully chooses the products she uses.

*I'm definitely a person that when I find a product or brand that I think this really works. I advocate it to other people because I'm very picky. With skincare, especially, I care about it a lot. So, when I find something and get excited about this really good product. I'll share it with friends. (Rachel)*

Angela could be considered an evangelist for the brand due to the frequency with which she discusses the brands with people around her.

*I talk about it a lot. I post. If I don't like repost the things that they post like I'll show my friends over like a look at this funny meme and it always has Glossier in it, so they know where I got it from, and then with every order you get little stickers. So, I have my stickers all over everything and people will be like, 'Oh, you got another Glossier sticker.' I've had people will be like, 'Oh, what is that and it gives me a chance to explain what the brand is and tell them what they have and if I know the person really well can be like, I think you'd actually like this. Like, you should give it a try. If you ever want to (Angela)*

Morgan feels a responsibility to advocate for Glossier since the brand is difficult to find in stores.

*You can't buy it everywhere. You wouldn't just walk by the Glossier counter at Sephora. You would have to go online and purchase it on purpose. You don't accidentally just say, oh, I'll try this out. You have to go online and actually look for it...Not in like a pretentious way, but it does feel exclusive, because like I said, not everybody has heard of it. Even so, it is kind of like an obligation to tell people about it because I think it is so great. (Morgan)*

### Co-developing

Co-development arises when consumers in online communities contribute to brand activities, which helps brands develop new products, brands, services, brand identities or brand meanings (Brodie et al., 2013). Participants helped Glossier improve its products and services through comments, direct messages, and reviews via the brand's website and social media channels. Participants noted that Glossier was responsive to consumer comments about recommended changes to improve the brand's products and services. Angela and Kira noted general comments on Glossier's social media channels about how Glossier followers wanted the brand to be more sustainable in the way its products were packaged and shipped.

*They have been listening to their customers when it comes to now their boxes are recyclable. They stopped putting sticker sheets in, which I think is kind of a weird way to go more quote unquote eco-friendly, but it's start, you know, you can't expect people to do it overnight, and I do think that they really do listen to their customers. (Kira)*

Stacy discussed an experience where she direct messaged the brand with the aim of helping Glossier improve the way the brand delivered its products to consumers. She

is co-developing services with the brand since they are using her feedback and suggestions.

*I was looking into their website because they do a bundle where you can buy the cleanser and this and that, and I wanted to be able to pick my own three things instead of having to choose between what they were offering, so I messaged them. I was like, 'hey, I think it would be so great if you could make it like a do-your-own-pick-three, whatever products you like instead of just having those options. They were super like open and they were like, that's a great idea. Yes, I thank you for letting us know. I also mentioned the travel size for the Milky Jelly because I want to take it with me wherever I go, but, you know TSA. It wasn't like friendly enough, but I'm saying, like, 'hey, you should make those things like travel friendly.' They listened because they did release it. (Stacy)*

Carter shared the brand made him feel comfortable to share personal ideas and he suggested the brand make a candle out of its Glossier You perfume. When Glossier was developing its first products, Priming Moisturizer and Milky Jelly Cleanser, Rachel shared she commented on an open chat thread on its Into The Gloss blog in which Glossier asked users about attributes that make a perfect skincare moisturizer.

*I don't know what the results would have been of that, but I commented on several of the open threads about what's your perfect like moisturizer or cleanser, way back when they were still developing the original products. I don't know if that was taken into consideration or not but I definitely commented on those things. (Rachel)*

Similarly, when Glossier was developing its first skincare products, the brand asked its social media community what ingredients they wanted to see in a skincare cleanser. The brand then expanded their skincare range with new products after talking to customers on social media. Morgan comments the brand “is really smart about what people are going to buy because they're listening to what people want.” Shandi and

Esther both noted they had commented on social media that the brand should develop a mascara.

*I messaged them and I told them, 'I would really like if you guys like would make a mascara. Are you guys going to make a mascara?' It just so happened to be that in like a month later, after that, they were making your mascara so they ended up like mailing me one for free. (Esther)*

Esther commented on Glossier's Facebook group Into The Gloss about the need for the brand to be more inclusive by expanding the shade range in their color cosmetics lines. Carter shared a similar experience.

*A few months ago, they included more shades in their shade range, because originally, they only had five concealers for Tinted Moisturizers and so before that I talked about how I needed a shade in between, like light and fair because one was too pink and one was too yellow and I needed more of a neutral line and that I would like want one more coverage. (Carter)*

Participants appreciated Glossier's speedy and polite responsiveness to consumers when they asked the brand to improve products and services. Stacy is part of a group of consumers that sent direct messages to Glossier asking the brand to launch something new or answer questions. Glossier's quick and friendly response makes Stacy feel like the brand cares about her.

*I do feel like they're very like receptive to what their customers are saying because I know I tried their concealers and they only had like three shades or like their powders and their shade range was just terrible for me, you know, I mean, like, I'm a Mexican so like my skin tone is like a little bit darker than what they released, so I think I did say something like, it would be great to have more like ranges of like color because my undertone might be different than my white friends. They definitely were open to that and it's nice that you can just like reach out to them and say, like, hey, I would like to see more of this, and then they're open and not like reactive. They're very approachable and friendly. I really like that. (Stacy)*

Morgan also describes her experience with Glossier's response to consumer input.

*So, they'll post something from Twitter or Instagram, . . . They don't post anything negative, but actually they did because they repackaged their lipsticks so they posted something that was like we listened to you guys and we changed the packaging because it kept breaking. (Morgan)*



## **Chapter 5**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Through the study of Glossier followers, this research offers insight into how modern luxury, direct-to-consumer brands uses social media to effectively communicate and engage with consumers. The connection ML-DTC brands have with consumers on social media highlights current trends in product development and marketing among innovative fashion companies. The brands rely on communication to understand consumers' need for products and services. This research analyzed how consumers engage with Glossier, a major ML-DTC brand.

The findings examined from the results align with literature on consumer engagement as illustrated in Brodie et al.'s (2013) consumer engagement model which highlights the five sub-processes that consumers use to engage with brands. First, the study's findings suggest that social media is the gateway for Glossier consumers to learn about the brand's offerings. When participants wanted to learn about the ML-DTC brand Glossier, they used social media to find information about the brand and its products. Participants mentioned using Glossier's product posts to learn about the new products the brand is releasing. These product posts allow the consumer to see older products with which they may not be familiar and learn about new products the brand is releasing. These product posts on social media are helpful to Glossier consumers. Our finding suggests that Glossier should continue to post products on social media to keep consumers engaged.

Although Glossier consumers used a variety of social media to engage with the brand and learn about Glossier products, Instagram emerged as the most prominent platform consumers used to learn about the brand's products. Some participants noted that Glossier's branded videos on YouTube helped them learn about ways to use Glossier products but consumers preferred learning about the products on Instagram. While Glossier consumers can comment on YouTube posts the platform lacks certain functionality of Instagram, which helps Glossier users build its online community. Instagram features such as the "Send to," "Comments," "Tagging," and "Stories" functionalities promote sharing and discussion, which in turn facilitates community building. Glossier followers note that Instagram is the first place they will search when they want to learn about Glossier products since they are able to directly ask the brand and Glossier followers questions about the products. Glossier followers that participated in the study noted that other user input is an important aspect of learning about Glossier products and Instagram provides a space for consumers to ask these questions. Some consumers are wary of taking suggestions from other users about beauty products due to its personal nature. Instagram offers a comfortable platform for a community of like-minded consumers to share their experiences with the product. In addition to Instagram, Glossier's branded beauty chat group hosted on Facebook, also served as a place to learn about Glossier products. Our findings suggest that Glossier's Instagram page and Into The Gloss Facebook Group work harmoniously to facilitate engagement, connection and community among Glossier followers.

When describing their hedonic experience, participants mentioned that they believed Glossier was trustworthy, reliable, loyal and authentic due to the brand's consistent customer service, responsiveness to consumer on social media and product releases and marketing that put Glossier users at the center of its brand activities. Consumer level of trust with Glossier purchasing of products with little to no research. Participants' interaction on social media with Glossier and other Glossier followers extends the learning aspect of Brodie et al.'s (2013) consumer engagement model as learning among Glossier followers extends into community building. In terms of the sharing component of Brodie et al.'s (2013) consumer engagement model, participants noted that they will not go out of their way to post or share on Glossier's social media channels, but if other community members need help they will share their experience with the brand's products and services on social media. Glossier followers feel comfortable sharing their personal information if they believe it will help other community members better understand the brand and what products will work best for them. An important finding in this study was participants' sense of obligation to share brand knowledge as part of their duty to help other community members especially if they share answers based on their personal experiences with the products.

Participants shared negative experiences to give a balanced review of the products to more accurately reflect the product's performance to fellow community members. At the same time, Glossier participants expressed reluctance in posting negative product experiences to protect the positive and upbeat atmosphere of the social media community. Sometimes, they would give the product to a friend hoping

the friend would have better results. Glossier followers feel proud of their purchase and feel the need to share. Some participants shared unboxing videos while others would post announcements on social media each time they received a new order of Glossier products. Glossier member's sharing behavior generated from a personal sense of duty and obligation adds an interesting component to Brodie et al.'s (2013) consumer engagement model. This aspect of engagement shows the loyalty and the bond that the community members have towards the brand. In addition, members appear to embrace community membership at a more personal level through sharing.

Glossier members contributed to the community for the purpose of socializing with other members and create a sense of belonging to the community. In addition to Instagram, The Into The Gloss Facebook group was the primary place for socializing amongst Glossier community members because the nature of the platform as a beauty chat group facilitated two-way conversations. Into The Gloss is a place for participants to openly discuss their feelings about the products with a group of like-minded, beauty-focused individuals.

In addition to the products themselves, marketing and packaging was also a source of engagement. Participants discussed that "The Pink Pouch," Glossier's pink plastic packaging, has become symbolic of community membership which has opened up opportunities for socialization as consumers can instantly recognize the brand on social media and in offline interactions with Glossier followers. This example shows that such marketing ideas and strategies facilitate engagement and socialization within the brand community.

Brodie et. al's (2013) consumer engagement model explains the advocating components as being restricted to recommending products and services and recommending ways to use the products. This study finds ample evidence of this level of engagement. Participants report that they actively tagged their friends to alert them of new product releases, taking on the role of a Glossier brand evangelist. At the same time, Glossier's large social media community poses a challenge to community members who want their comments to be acknowledged. Participants will directly recommend products to users they regularly follow and interact with to receive acknowledgement from other community members.

Advocating for Glossier products is the result of a carefully curated process. Participants shared a sense of seriousness in which their reputation as an informed beauty consumer was being demonstrated. When participants advocate for specific ways to use the Glossier products they may even go as far as direct messaging other Glossier followers with text content and images. As Glossier has limited physical presence and the brand can be difficult to find, participants believe they have a responsibility of advocating its products to a wider audience. Furthermore, Glossier followers can be seen defending the brand against negative comments widening how Brodie et al.'s (2013) engagement model is applied.

In terms of co-development, participants report helping Glossier improve products and services through comments, direct messages, and reviews via the brand's website and social media channels. Direct messaging in particular emerged as an important way for consumers to suggest changes to the brand's offerings. Participants

discussed feeling comfortable in sharing their ideas with Glossier because the brand creates space for co-developing by responding back to their suggestions in a quick and friendly manner making followers feel the brand cares about them. Participants report developing a personal relationship with the brand because Glossier's social media team are responsive and very accessible. Glossier also frequently posts questions asking followers about what products and services they want to see the brand develop. These posts by the brand ensure that Glossier followers know they are listening to customer suggestions and value them. Glossier's extended level of responsiveness to its followers on social media makes them feel welcome and part of the brand, encouraging continued engagement with the brand.

The current research expands understanding of consumer engagement on social media by studying the ML-DTC brand Glossier. The unique context of the beauty community and how Glossier leverages social media and its followers to develop and market its products offers insight into the new ML-DTC business model. Consumer engagement is instrumental to its operations, success and viability. The personal nature of beauty products as a product category with high product involvement is reflected in how participants view themselves as part of the community and their motivations to engage with Glossier. Glossier's social media participants leverage the social environment and cultivate relationships that are beyond transactional. Furthermore, the ML-DTC company, Glossier, is an integral actor within the social media space that encourages a strong and productive culture of collaboration and support.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The research was limited in that only one ML-DTC brand was studied, which makes the results of the study difficult to generalize. In a qualitative study, in-depth semi-structured interviews were used to understand how consumers engage with ML-DTC brands on social media. With a limited sample size of 13 participants, findings from these results cannot be generalized to a broad group of consumers. A broader sample size within a quantitative study examining how the specific attributes of ML-DTC brands' communication on social media promotes consumer engagement would aid in expanding the results. Further study on how ML-DTC brands use social media to create emotional bonds with consumers on social media should also be studied. Studying how ML-DTC brands respond to consumers on social media will be beneficial in helping brands understand how responding to the needs of consumers on social media can create more engaged consumers. Additionally, a study on how ML-DTC brands use social media to facilitate connection and engagement with consumers through offline experiences would be useful in helping brands understand how to engage with consumers in offline settings. How ML-DTC brands use social media to facilitate online community experiences would also be an interesting topic of study, which could potentially help luxury brands learn how to create online communities of engaged consumers.

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## Appendix A

### UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE EXEMPT IRB REVIEW



RESEARCH OFFICE

210 Hullihen Hall  
University of Delaware  
Newark, Delaware 19716-1551  
Ph: 302/831-2136  
Fax: 302/831-2828

DATE: January 29, 2019

TO: Ashley Paintsil  
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [1373429-1] Consumer Engagement with Modern Luxury Direct-to-Consumer Brands on Social Media: An Extension of Brodie's Engagement Model

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS  
DECISION DATE: January 29, 2019

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # (2)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Please remember to notify us if you make any substantial changes to the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Renee Stewart at (302) 831-2137 or [stewartr@udel.edu](mailto:stewartr@udel.edu). Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

## **Appendix B**

### **DIRECT MESSAGE TO SOLICIT PARTICIPANTS**

Hi [Insert Potential Participant name here],

My name is Ashley Paintsil and I'm a fashion graduate student at the University of Delaware. As part of my master's thesis, I'm studying how shoppers like you engage with brands like Glossier on social media and I'd love to chat with you about your experience with the brand. The interview will be 30 to 45 minutes and we'd like to offer you \$20 Glossier gift card as token of our appreciation. Does this sound like something that interests you? If so, you can email me at [paintsil@udel.edu](mailto:paintsil@udel.edu) so I can send you more details.

Best,  
Ashley Paintsil

## **Appendix C**

### **EMAIL TO PAUL MUNFORD, EDITOR OF LEANLUXE**

Hi Paul,

Not sure if you remember this from our previous conversations, but right now I'm a fashion graduate student at University of Delaware.

As part of my master's thesis in the Fashion & Apparel Studies program, I'm studying how consumers engage with modern luxury, direct-to-consumer brands on social media. The study will have a particular focus on consumers who shop from the ML-DTC brand Glossier.

Modern luxury brands are doing a better job of connecting with consumers on social media and I would like to understand why for my study.

I'm looking for modern luxury consumers to participate in my study and was wondering if you could post my call for interview participants either on your newsletter or Slack group?

**Here's my ad for the study:**

#### **RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR MODERN LUXURY STUDY**

Hi Leanluxer readers!

My name is Ashley Paintsil and I'm a fashion graduate student at University of Delaware. As part of my master's thesis in the Fashion & Apparel Studies program, I'm studying how shoppers like you engage with modern luxury brands on social media and I'd love to interview you about your experience with the brand as part of my study. The study will have a particular focus on consumers who shop from the ML-DTC brand Glossier.

**Research Study:** How modern luxury consumers engage with modern luxury, direct-to-consumer brands on social media

**Details:** 30 to 45-minute phone interview about your experience with Glossier on social media.

**Purpose:** The study is focused on understanding how modern luxury consumers engage with modern luxury, direct-to-consumer brands on social media. Modern luxury brands are doing a better job of connecting with consumers on social media and researchers at the University of Delaware would like to understand why.

**Appreciation:** \$20 Glossier gift card

**Interested?** Email me at [paintsil@udel.edu](mailto:paintsil@udel.edu) so I can send you more details.

## **Appendix D**

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

Ashley Paintsil is conducting the research study “Consumer Engagement with Modern Luxury Direct-to-Consumer Brands on Social Media: An Extension of Brodie’s Engagement Model” under the guidance of Dr. Hye-Shin Kim at the University of Delaware. You have been selected based on your experience engaging with the brand Glossier on social media.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to collect data about how modern luxury, direct-to-consumer brands are engaging with consumers on social media.

#### **Procedures**

The researchers will record your responses to the interview questions through audio and transcribe your interview responses. We will ask you questions about your background, your experiences with the brand Glossier, and how you engage with Glossier on social media. The interview will last from 30 to 45 minutes.

#### **Risks and Discomforts**

The interview questions ask about your personal experiences in relation to online consumption behavior. There is minimal risk for participating in the study.

#### **Benefits**

You will receive a \$20.00 Glossier gift card at the end of the interview as a token of our appreciation for your time and participation. While there are no direct benefits for participants, the information collected and documented in the study will help researchers and the industry understand how consumer needs are met.

#### **Confidentiality, compensation and participation**

All data obtained from participants will be kept confidential. Relevant quotes from this interview will be used within the final report and related publications. Numerical coding will be applied to protect your identity and you will be identified using a code instead of your name. Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely, without any negative consequences to you.

All the papers pertaining to the study will be kept in a locked file cabinet, and all electronic data will be stored in password-protected computer files. Only the primary researcher and the research advisor, who are directly involved with the project, will have access to those records. After three years, all the data will be carefully destroyed.

**Questions about the Research**

If you have questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact the primary researcher: Ashley Paintsil at 302-339-2345, or [paintsil@udel.edu](mailto:paintsil@udel.edu); or the research advisor: Dr. Hye-Shin Kim at 302-831-8549, [hskim@udel.edu](mailto:hskim@udel.edu).

**Questions about your Rights as Research Participant**

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Institutional Review Board, University of Delaware at 302-831-2137.

At the beginning of the interview, the researcher will briefly go over this consent form with you and address any questions concerning this consent form and research. The researcher will also ask whether you consent to participate in the study.



## Appendix E

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### *Opening*

**A. (*Establish Rapport*) [greet]** Hi, my name is Ashley Paintsil and I am pursuing my Masters' degree in Fashion and Apparel Studies at the University of Delaware. Joining me is Dr. Hye-Shin Kim, my thesis advisor. I wanted to start by saying thank you for taking time out and agreeing to speak to us today. I am collecting data for a research project and your responses will help me to better understand the topic.

#### **B. Informed Consent**

*(Researcher briefly goes over the Informed Consent Form.)*

Do you have any questions? By participating in the interview, we are assuming that you consent to participating in the study by beginning the interview. Do you consent to participating in the study?

#### **C. Interview Body**

*(Transition: Let me begin by asking you some questions about your background, your interests, and your routine activities).*

#### **I. General demographic information**

##### **1. Some background information:**

What is your highest education obtained? *(Example: high school, trade school, college, graduate school, etc.)*

What's your profession?

Where do you live? *(State and city of residence)*

##### **2. Please tell us about your social media behavior/patterns.**

*Probes:*

2.1 *What are the top three social media platforms you use in order? (How much time do spend on each per day)*

2.2 *What time of day do you use social media? (When relaxing? At work? Completing academic tasks? In public places?)*

2.3 *Why do you use social media? (For what reason? Interact friends? Find product information? To discover something new?)*

2.4 *How much time do you spend on social media per day/per week (On Facebook? On Instagram? On Twitter?) Ask either one (per week or per day)*

**3. Please tell us about your general shopping tendencies with skin care and cosmetic brands.**

*Probes:*

- 3.1 What are your favorite brands?
- 3.2 Where do you shop?
- 3.3 Where do you get information about brands in general?
- 3.4 How much did you spend on skin care and cosmetics in the past six months?
- 3.5 How much have you spent on Glossier products in the past six months?
- 3.6 What did you buy from Glossier

**4. Please tell us your thoughts about the beauty brand Glossier**

*Probes:*

- 4.1 Why do you like Glossier? (*Branding? packaging? Service? Online presentation? online interactions? Showroom? Sales associates? Founder? Message?*)
- 4.2 What are the prime reasons for purchasing Glossier products?
- 4.3 What social media channels do you use to interact with Glossier?

**5. Please tell us how you interact with Glossier online? (*ask participants to elaborate*)**

*Probes:*

- 5.1 What are your activities on Glossier's social media (*post? tag? like? share? comment?*)
  - 5.1.1 How often do you interact with Glossier on social media? (How many times a day/ week/month?)
  - 5.1.2 If you post anything about the brand on social media what do you post? (*post? tag? like? share? comment?*)
- 5.2 Have there been any negative impression of Glossier on social media?
- 5.3 What are your activities related to the brand outside of social media? (*Showroom visit? Talk to friends?*)

**II. Main Questions**

***Define "engagement" for consumers.***

- 1. **Do you have a personal goal or objective when using social media related to Glossier?**
- 2. **What do you like about Glossier's social media pages (*Posts? Images? Interactions with shoppers?*) or what do you like about using social media for the Glossier brand?**

**Follow up questions for "engagement"**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Probe Questions</b>
<b>Learning</b>	Refers to a consumer's acquisition of knowledge of a particular brand. Consumers use the acquired information to inform their purchases.	<b>How do you learn about Glossier products on social media?</b> 1.1 Do you look for product information about Glossier products on their social media pages? 1.2 Do you post questions about Glossier's products? 1.3 Do you ask other Glossier users questions about the products? 1.4 Do you direct message the brand to ask questions about the products?
<b>Sharing</b>	Takes place when consumers share personal information, knowledge and experiences with their online community. Brand knowledge is co-created when consumers participate in sharing	<b>Do you share any of your thoughts about Glossier on their social media pages?</b> 2.1 Do you share any of your personal information with other users on Glossier's social media pages? Where you live, How old you? Skin type? Relationship status beauty preferences? 2.2 Do you share any of your personal experiences with the brand with other users on Glossier's social media pages? 2.3 Do you share any knowledge you have about Glossier products with other users on Glossier's social media pages?
<b>Advocating</b>	Ensues when consumers recommend brands, services and products and ways to use brands and products to members of an online community.	<b>Do you recommend Glossier products to other users on Glossier's social media pages?</b> 3.1 Do you recommend any of Glossier's services to other Glossier users on social media? 3.2 Do you recommend ways to

		use Glossier's products or services to other Glossier users on social media?
<b>Socializing</b>	The two-way interactions consumers participate in to acquire and develop community norms, attitudes and language of the online community.	<b>Do you interact with other Glossier consumers on the brand's social media accounts?</b> 4.1 Do you talk to other users on Glossier's social media pages 4.2 When you talk to other Glossier users on social media do you feel like you are a part of a community <i>(Learning anything about Glossier slang, and how the typical Glossier consumer thinks and acts?)</i>
<b>Co-developing</b>	Arises when consumers in online communities contribute to brand activities, which in turn, helps brands develop new products, brands, services, brand identities or brand meanings (Brodie et al., 2013).	<b>Have you ever helped Glossier develop new products or services?</b> <b>Probes:</b> 5.1 Have you ever given Glossier feedback on products they should develop? 5.2 Have you offered Glossier suggestions about how the brand can make its products and services better?

### III. Closing

*(Maintain Rapport)* Thank you for taking the time to do this interview. We really appreciate it. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience with the Glossier that we have not covered here?

*(End the interview)* Your responses will add immense value to my study. It has been a pleasure speaking with you. Thank you. *(Hand over/mail the \$20.00 gift card as compensation for participating in the interview study.)*

## Appendix F

### CODING GUIDE

Code Label	Description
Advocating	Mentions of recommendations of brands, services and products and ways to use brands and products to members of an online community; Study participants' defense of Glossier products and services
Beauty Product Purchase Learning	Information product search
Beauty Purchase (Products)	What types of beauty products participants buy
Beauty Purchases \$	How much participants spend on beauty products
Beauty Retail Store	Where participants shop for beauty products
Beauty Shopping Frequency	How often participants are shopping for beauty products
Beauty Shopping Tendencies	Study participants' general beauty shopping habits and behaviors
Birth Year	Year study participants were born; their age
Brand Personality Attributes	Descriptions of brand personality of Glossier
Co-Developing	Mentions of study participants in Glossier's online communities contributing to brand activities, which in turn, helps the brand develop new products, brands, services, brand identities or brand meanings
Diversity and Inclusivity	Mentions of Glossier's diversity and inclusivity efforts
Education	Study participants' highest level of education
Emily Weiss	Mentions of Into The Gloss and Glossier founder, Emily Weiss
Experience with Glossier	Study participants' personal experiences with Glossier products and services
Favorite Beauty Brands	Mentions of study participants' favorite beauty brands
Gender	Study participants gender
Glossier Community	Mentions of the online Glossier community experience
Glossier Products	Mentions of Glossier products; motive for purchasing Glossier products
Glossier Purchases \$	How much study participants have spent on Glossier products in the past 6 months
Glossier Reviews and Influencers	Mentions of reviews and social media influencers
Glossier UGC	Glossier leveraging user-generated content
Glossier versus Other Brands	Mentions of participants comparing Glossier to other brands
Hedonic Experience with Glossier	Hedonic experiences with the Glossier - fun, pleasurable, enjoyment, fantasy, adventurous; positive emotions that participants feel towards Glossier
Into The Gloss	Mentions of Into the Gloss online beauty Facebook group
Introduction to Glossier	Initiation into the Glossier brand

Learning	Mentions of when study participants acquire knowledge of Glossier. Study participants use the acquired information to inform their purchases.
Memorable Quotes	Interesting standout quotes from study participants
Motive for Engaging with Glossier	Study participants' personal goal or objective when using social media related to Glossier
Offline Glossier Interaction	Mentions of visits to Glossier showroom; discussing Glossier products and services with friends; Sharing physical Glossier products with friends
Online Beauty Purchases	Where participants shop for beauty products online
Preferred Glossier Products	Participants favorite Glossier products
Product Presentation and Marketing	How Glossier presents products and markets products
Profession	Study participants' profession
Sharing	Mentions of when study participants share personal information, knowledge and experiences with their online community. Brand knowledge is co-created when study participants participate in sharing
Social Media - Top Platform	The social media platforms participants interacted with the most on a daily basis
Social Media Behavior (General)	How study participants engage with social media; general behavior and patterns engaging with social media
Social Media Behavior (Glossier)	How study participants engage with Glossier's social media accounts
Social Media Benefits	The benefits participants derive from using social media
Social Media Engagement Level	Social media engagement frequency and intensity
Social Media Engagement Motive (General)	Reasons why study participants use social media
Social Media Engagement Level (Glossier)	Social media engagement frequency and intensity with Glossier
Social Media Engagement Schedule	Time of day participants interact with social media
Social Media Interaction with Glossier	Study participants' interaction with Glossier on social media; study participants' behavior engaging with Glossier's social media accounts
Socializing	The two-way interactions study participants participate in with other Glossier users to acquire and develop community norms, attitudes and language of the online community
State, City	State and city where study participants reside
Sustainability	Glossier and sustainability
Years Following and Using Glossier	Years study participants have been using Glossier products and following Glossier on social media