

Marketing to the Digital Self

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“knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves” (Belk, 1988)

Research Aims

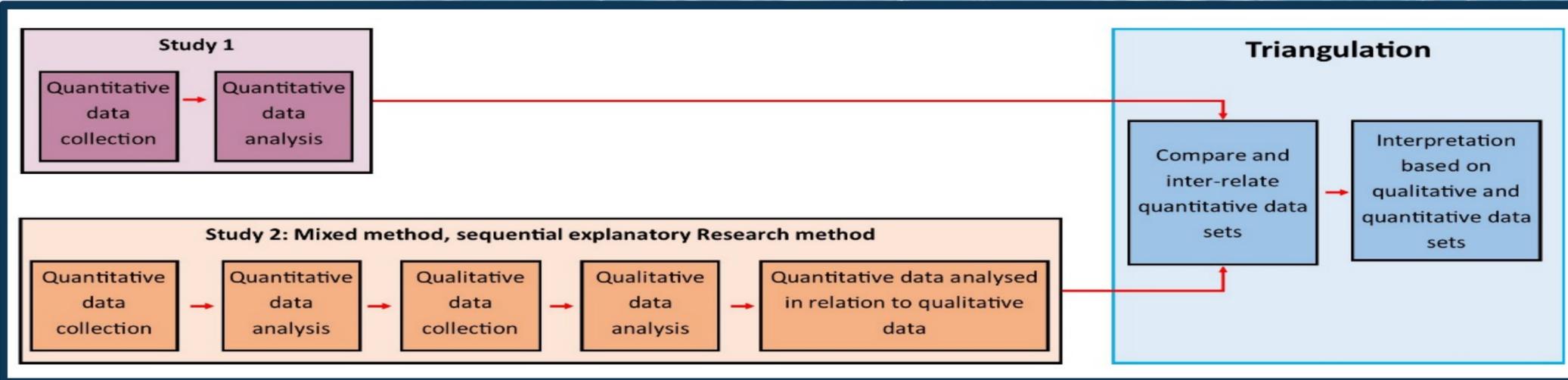
- To examine whether there is a relationship between congruence of a consumer’s actual self and perceived brand image, and continued brand engagement with branded digital possessions
- To examine whether there is a relationship between congruence of a consumer’s ideal self and perceived brand image, and continued brand engagement with branded digital possessions
- To investigate consumers’ perceptions of their digital brand relationships in self-identity construction
- To advance knowledge within the area of elapsed brand relationships through the study of consumer brand disengagement in relation to non-usage of branded digital possessions

Literature Review: Theoretical framework

The purpose of the research is to explore how the theory of Brand Engagement in Self-Concept (BESC) can be applied to gain an understanding of the development and maintenance of brand relationships and self-extension (Belk, 2014; 2016) in a digital environment. The proposed area of research focuses specifically on consumer engagement with branded Smartphone Applications to study the effect of users’ self-concept on the continued use of digital possessions, as validation for consumer brand engagement and identification. This is of particular importance due to the lack of longitudinal and qualitative evidence within this area. Whilst cross-sectional research has found the adoption of branded Smartphone Apps to influence consumer’s attitudes to particular brands and have an impact on purchase behaviour, the extent to which research participants display continuous brand loyalty has yet to be determined.

Methodology

The exploratory study takes a multiphase mixed methods approach, involving quantitative data collection and digital ethnographic research. Expected outcomes include substantial contribution to the emergent area of BESC, and to the field of digital ethnography. Managerial recommendations will be made for the application of branded digital possessions as an extension of the (digital) self.



Initial Findings from Study 1

N = 162

- ‘Sincere’ was the most reported personality characteristic for the ‘Actual self’ on Aaker’s personality scale
- ‘Competent’ was the most reported personality characteristic for the ‘Ideal self’ on Aaker’s personality scale
- ‘Competent’ was the most reported personality characteristic for the branded Smartphone apps on Aaker’s personality scale
- 14% of participants reported a downloaded smartphone app as their favourite, but stated they have yet to use it but intend to in the future
- Of those participants who do not currently use but intend to use their favourite branded app in the future, 79% have a high BESC score
- Of those participants who currently use their favourite branded app and intend to continue use in the future, 80% have a high BESC score
- The BESC score was greatest in participants who has no dominant Ideal or Actual personality

References: