

Chapter 10

Effects of Used Garment Collection Programs in Fast-Fashion Brands

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Abstract This research aims to investigate the fast-fashion brands' recently implemented used garment collection (UGC) scheme. It examines the effects brought by the UGC programs on brand awareness and image building of fast-fashion companies. A convenience sampling based consumer survey is conducted for this study. The statistical results reveal that the UGC scheme offered by fast-fashion companies is correlated to brand awareness and brand image. The findings imply that fast-fashion retailers can employ the used apparel collection program as a marketing scheme to help establish their own green brand image. This measure also enhances the fast-fashion retailers' brand positioning and their competitiveness in the market.

10.1 Introduction

In recent years, there is a growing concern on sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the fashion industry. In fact, the fashion apparel-related industries are often being accused of bringing negative environmental impacts to the society. As we all know, the fashion apparel industry has brought some negative impacts to the environment. Concerns on the environmental impacts brought by apparel production and distribution are important, because our planet cannot support

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the current level of production and disposal of apparel that drives the depletion of natural resources and landfill places (Claudio 2007; Walker 2008; Winge 2008).

The fast-fashion retailers, in particular, are commonly viewed as the advocates of disposable fashion. This view, though can be controversial, may negatively affect the brand image and business performance of the fast-fashion retailers. As such, environmental sustainability is a critical issue to them, and fast-fashion retail leaders like H&M, and UNIQLO have stated in their CSR reports that they are doing more on environmental sustainability and even launching the campaign of recycling used garment in recent years (H&M website; Uniqlo website). Under such kind of CSR programs, the donors may receive a cash coupon and the collected garments are donated to the people in need such as refugees, homeless shelters, and poverty-stricken globally (Uniqlo website). In this chapter, we call this kind of programs the used garment collection (UGC) programs.

Undoubtedly, the UGC program can be regarded as a part of the fast-fashion companies' corporate socially responsible practices which would improve their corporate image. At present, the existing literature mainly focuses on linking the "green" branding measures and the associated impacts on consumer behaviors such as paying a premium or green purchase which focuses at the product level. However, very few studies consider the linkage between brand image and the sustainability programs such as UGC. In addition, to our best knowledge, there is no systematic quantitative study which explicitly studies how UGC implementation in fast-fashion companies affects their corporate branding. Therefore, there is a research gap on investigating the linking between UGC and fast-fashion retailers' corporate brand image, which deserves further investigation.

To be specific, this chapter aims to investigate the effects on the young consumers' brand awareness and brand image brought by the fast-fashion retailers' UGC program. Owing to resource limitations, this study was conducted in Hong Kong with the target respondents being the generation Y young consumers who were also college students¹. Through this research, we aim to explore how consumers' response on fast-fashion companies' UGC program may create the desired brand awareness and brand image. We also discuss the research implications and generate managerial insights.

The organization of the rest of this chapter is listed below. First, we conduct a literature review in Sect. 10.2. Second, we develop the hypotheses in Sect. 10.3. Third, we discuss the research methodology in Sect. 10.4. Fourth, we present the data analysis and findings in Sect. 10.5. Finally, we conclude with a discussion on insights in Sect. 10.6.

¹ We explain later on why this consumer group is appropriate for this study.

10.2 Literature Review

10.2.1 *Fast Fashion and Environmental Sustainability*

Fast fashion can be described as an industrial practice in fashion, which offers relatively low-cost clothing collections based on the trendiest fashion that is usually driven by the luxury fashion brands (Joy et al. 2014). According to Childs (2014), and Choi (2014), the exceptional growth of fast-fashion retailers can be attributed to factors such as high-impulse buying, an increase in sourcing from low-cost developing countries, and a change in consumer attitudes. In fact, fast fashion greatly satisfies desires among young consumers for luxury and trendy fashion, even if it may embody “unsustainability” because of the “disposable fashion” nature. It is well-argued that fast-fashion companies do not offer the most durable products in terms of the selection of materials because of the costing issue and also the product nature. As a matter of fact, consumers are not assumed to use the fast-fashion products for a long time. If the above argument is sound, then more and more disposal of apparel and textile will be the result. There is no doubt that fast-fashion retailers, such as H&M, Zara, Uniqlo, and TopShop, sell garments at a very competitive price. Furthermore, their designs are usually made to be worn no more than, e.g., ten times and hence they are “disposable fashion”. Note that disposability is an important issue with clothing products. For each disposed item, all the energy and chemicals that went into them during production and the carbon emissions from shipping them along the supply chain would be wasted. For the more complicated fashion items, such as jackets, many of them are not biodegradable; so, once they are thrown away in the landfill, they would stay there for centuries. In fact, as stated in H&M Conscious Actions Sustainability Report 2012, 5 % of wastes in the USA landfill are textile and 95 % of them are actually recyclable. Thus, the issue of collecting used garments for recycling and other processing is critical and important.

10.2.2 *Brand Awareness and Brand Image*

In fashion branding, customer-based brand equity is an influential framework (Aaker 1991). In a general sense, brand equity is defined in terms of the marketing effects uniquely attributable to the brand (Keller 1993). Customer-based brand equity of a fashion brand can be defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing schemes adopted by the fashion brand. We say that customer-based brand equity is present in a fashion brand when the consumers are familiar with the brand, and they hold some significant, positive, and unique brand associations in their memory (Keller 1993). To develop customer-based brand equity, Keller (1993) suggests that brands should take a broad view of marketing activity and recognize the various associated effects on brand knowledge. Note that

the long-term success of future marketing programs for a fashion brand is greatly affected by the knowledge about the brand in memory (Keller 1993). Therefore, brand knowledge is very important (Ailawadi and Keller 2004).

Brand knowledge is usually defined in terms of two critical components, namely the brand awareness and the brand image (Faircloth et al. 2001). To be specific, brand awareness toward a fashion retail brand is related to the strength of the brand node or trace in the consumers' memory, as reflected by consumers' ability to identify the brand under different conditions (Rossiter and Percy 1987). Note that brand awareness consists of brand recognition and brand recall performance (Chattopadhyay and Alba 1988). Raising brand awareness increases the likelihood that the brand will be a member of the consideration set. Undoubtedly, brand awareness affects consumer decision-making. Brand image is defined as the "perception about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory" (Keller 1993). Here, the brand associations can be classified into three major categories which include (i) attributes, (ii) benefits, and (iii) attitudes (Chattopadhyay and Alba 1988). It is well-known that a marketing program which can create a unique, strong, and positive brand association will help to create a positive brand image in the customers' memory (Keller 1993). Esch et al. (2006) empirically show that brand awareness and brand image will affect the consumers' consumption indirectly and directly, respectively.

Note that brand attitudes are defined as the consumers' overall evaluations of a brand. Brand attitudes are very important because they often form the basis for consumer behavior (e.g., brand choice). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) develop a model that views attitudes as a multiplicative function of the salient beliefs a consumer has about the product or service (i.e., the extent to which consumers think the brand has certain attributes or benefits) and the evaluative judgment of those beliefs. Brand attitudes can be related to consumer beliefs about nonproduct-related attributes and symbolic benefits (Rossiter and Percy 1987). Brand attitudes can serve as a "value-expressive" function by allowing individuals to express their self-concepts.

In this study, we argue that the UGC program launched by fast-fashion companies is not only a response to the rising awareness of sustainability but also a branding strategy to enhance brand awareness and brand image (Chen 2008). Therefore, we explore the effectiveness of the UGC campaign with respect to various branding elements from the consumers' perspective.

10.2.3 Generation Y Consumers

Generation Y consumers, aged 18–35, in 2012, are the target group of consumers for this study. In fact, many generation Y consumers have been brought up in households where both parents work and have learnt to shop and make brand selection decisions earlier compared to the previous generations (Bakewell and Mitchell 2003). Therefore, "being born to shop" and "having the high need for material goods" are

characteristics of generation Y consumers. Generation Y consumers are also more concerned about fashion trends than probably any other age group (Martin and Bush 2000). As such, they are also the most crucial customers of fast fashion and heavily influenced by the fashion press and media (Birtwistle and Moore 2006). A study of young males and females between the ages of 15 and 24 reports that 38, 35, 33, and 24 % of them shop at fast-fashion brands such as Primark, Topshop, New Look, H&M, respectively. Forecasts of demographical trends reveal that, while some age groups are in decline, there will be an expansion in the 15 to 29-year-old group over the next 5 years. These all suggest that fast fashion will remain popular for the foreseeable future, and continue to be appealing to the young and fashion-hungry consumers, such as the generation Y. Note that the generation Y consumers are also especially socially concerned and aware of many global issues (Nayyar 2001; Morgan and Birtwistle 2009). These consumers form a powerful market segment with disposable income and are characterized by information empowerment. Thus, they cause increased awareness of environmental, social, and economic issues.

To sum up, the above discussions reveal that generation Y is an essential group of consumers for fast fashion and they are also sustainability conscious. As a result, they are the group of consumers selected for survey in this study.

10.2.4 Branding and Sustainability

There are several prior studies which link CSR (Luo and Bhattacharya 2006) or sustainability up with the corporate branding. We review them as follows. First, Brady (2003) explores how CSR can yield sustainable brand value. Fombrun and Shanley (1990) offer an early empirical link between charitable giving and reputation. Later on, Brown and Dacin (1997), though focusing on other relationships, identify an important link between CSR and corporate image. In addition, they include a control variable called corporate ability in their analysis. Brengman and Willems (2009) investigate the broad range of influences on dimensions of store personality in the context of Belgian fashion stores. They reveal an interesting connection between CSR and the fashion-store personality. One core finding from their study is that the fashion retail stores, which have a strong CSR program, are perceived to be more honest and trustworthy. Lai et al. (2010) propose and verify a link between CSR and corporate reputation in the B2B sector in Taiwan. Recently, using secondary cross-sectional data, Wang (2010) demonstrates that a relationship exists between lagged corporate social performance and brand equity. Similar finding is also observed from the studies of Torres et al. (2012) and Hur et al. (2013). To be specific, Torres et al. (2012) illustrate that the CSR program positively influences the global brand equity. Hur et al. (2013) empirically prove that brand credibility and corporate reputation are the important mediators that connect CSR and corporate brand equity. Note that some other studies have explored the linkage between CSR and brand satisfaction (Poolthong and Mandhachitara 2009), but do not proceed to investigate the influence of CSR on brand attitudes or brand reputation.

10.3 Development of Hypotheses

In the literature review, we know that the customer-based brand equity is defined as the differential effect brought by brand knowledge of consumers (Keller 1993) and the dimensions of brand knowledge include (i) brand awareness and (ii) brand image. Under brand awareness, there are brand recall and brand recognition; under brand image, the brand association includes brand attitude, benefit, and attribute (Keller 1993). In this study, owing to the research objectives and problem nature, not all elements are included and some modification is needed. Therefore, only brand recall and brand recognition (P.S.: brand awareness), and “benefit and attitude” (P.S.: brand image) are included in the investigation. In the following, we develop and propose the hypotheses.

Marketing programs are designed to enhance brand awareness and establish favorable, strong, and unique brand associations in memory (Keller 1993). Several marketing studies have found that CSR programs have a significant influence on several customer-related outcomes. More specifically, on the basis of lab experiments, CSR is reported to affect, either directly or indirectly, consumer product responses (Brown and Dacin 1997), customer–company identification (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001), customer donations to nonprofit organizations (Sen et al. 2006), and customers’ attitudes toward quality of products (Berens et al. 2007). Obviously, the UGC program can be regarded as a part of *CSR scheme* which would share the same influence brought by the above marketing studies.

Furthermore, a strong record of CSR creates a favorable context that positively boosts consumers’ evaluations of and attitude toward the firm (Brown and Dacin 1997; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). To be specific, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) suggest that CSR initiatives establish a key element of corporate identity that can induce customers to develop a sense of connection with the company. Not surprisingly, identified customers are more likely to be satisfied with a firm’s offerings (e.g., Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). Therefore, it is believed that the UGC program launched by the fast-fashion retailers is not only a response to social responsibility but it would also create significant brand awareness, generate specific symbolic benefit and favorable brand attitude. All these would generate beneficial outcomes to the fast-fashion retailers in the long run.

Brand awareness is related to the strength of the brand node or trace in memory, as reflected by consumers’ ability to identify the brand under different conditions (Rossiter and Percy 1987). We know that brand awareness affects consumer decision-making by influencing the formation and strength of brand associations in the brand image. A necessary condition for the creation of a brand image is that a brand node has been established in memory, and the nature of that brand node should affect how easily different kinds of information can become attached to the brand in memory (Keller 1993). Therefore, it is vital to increase brand awareness, and create brand node, in order to further build and enhance brand image. UGC programs could be viewed as a tool to generate brand awareness. Note that brand awareness includes both brand recognition and brand recall, where (i) brand recognition refers to the

consumers' ability to confirm whether they have seen or heard the brand before (Keller 1993), and (ii) brand recall refers to the consumers' ability to retrieve the brand from their mind when the product category is given to them (Keller 1993). With the above arguments, we have Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2:

Hypothesis 1 UGC has a significant effect on brand awareness in terms of brand recognition.

Hypothesis 2 UGC has a significant effect on brand awareness in terms of brand recall.

Brand attitudes are defined as consumers' overall evaluations of a brand (Olsen et al. 2014). Brand attitudes are important because they often form the basis for consumer behavior toward the brand. According to Faircloth et al. (2001), brand attitude generally relates to the overall evaluation of objects. Observe that brand attitude can simply come from affect (feelings), cognition (beliefs), or previous experience. The UGC program is believed to generate a better consumer evaluation and attitude toward the fast-fashion retailers which have implemented it. Thus, we have Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 3 UGC has a significant effect on brand attitude.

Symbolic benefit corresponds to nonproduct-related attributes and relate to underlying needs for social approval or personal expression and outer directed self-esteem (Keller 1993). Note that the symbolic needs are defined as desires for products that fulfill internally generated needs for self-enhancement, role position, group membership, or ego-identification (Park et al. 1986). The symbolic meaning associated with the product is an important input to product image. When social groups attach symbolic meaning to a product, companies need to understand its nature so that they can reinforce or alter it to their advantage. Companies can take a more proactive stance by attempting to develop favorable symbolic images for their goods and services. The primary means by which a company can influence the symbolic image its product acquires is through a carefully planned and implemented marketing program (Leigh and Gabel 1992). Since the UGC program can be treated as a marketing program which may create the symbolic benefit and enhance the symbolic brand image to fulfill the needs for social approval, we develop Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 4 UGC has a significant effect on symbolic benefit.

10.4 Research Methodology

After forming the hypothesis, we move on to prepare the questionnaire and conduct the survey to collect data. For the questionnaire design, questions are developed based on the literature review and industrial observations. The 5-Point Likert Scale measure is adopted to get the consumers' inputs on their levels of agreement or disagreement which express the favorable and unfavorable attitudes toward an object; agree and disagree of the statement. Note that 5-Point Likert Scale has the advantage that it

Table 10.1 Summary of reliability test result

Elements of hypothesis	Cronbach's alpha (α)
Brand recognition	0.851
Brand recall	0.873
Brand attitude	0.815
Symbolic benefit	0.892

does not allow a simple yes or no answer from the respondent, but rather allows for degrees of opinion, and even neutral comment. Therefore, quantitative data is obtained and can be analyzed with meaningful interpretation. Before conducting the real survey, there was a pilot survey.

The purpose of pilot survey is to find out and correct the problems associated with the draft questions and avoid misunderstanding. In this study, as a pilot survey, 21 questionnaires were distributed to students who belonged to generation Y of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. They were all aged between 17 and 27. After the pilot test, the polished and final questionnaire was formed which is divided into three sections. The first section includes the filtering questions to ensure the interviewee is aged between 17 and 27 which is the target group of the research, generation Y. The second section is the main body of the questionnaire and is divided into several smaller parts, which include "UGC," "brand awareness," "brand attitude," and "brand image." The final section devotes to collecting the respondents' general personal information.

The questionnaires were distributed through social media via the Internet. This method is fast, with high accessibility, environmentally friendly, and convenient to collect data from the generation Y respondents. Note that a nonprobabilistic convenience sampling was chosen for this study owing to resource constraint. The collected data sets were exported from the online questionnaire system and then analyzed by using SPSS version 19.0.

10.5 Data Analysis, Hypothesis Testing, and Discussions

10.5.1 Statistical Testing

Totally, 204 copies of valid questionnaires were collected. First of all, a reliability test was conducted. From Table 10.1, the Cronbach's Alpha values of all elements are over 0.7. We hence believe the factors employed in the survey study are reliable.

Next, we proceed to conduct the correlation analysis. From the statistical results (Table 10.2), we find that for Hypotheses 1–4, the Pearson correlation values are all positive and the correlation result is significant at the 0.01 confidence level. This result shows that all the elements under study are positively correlated with the UGC program.

Table 10.2 Results of correlation studies

	UGC	Brand recognition	Brand recall	Brand attitude benefit	Symbolic benefit
UGC	Pearson correlation	0.247	0.317	0.439	0.377
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	204	204	204	204

Table 10.3 Summary of correlation analysis

Hypotheses	<i>Pearson correlation (r)</i>
Hypothesis 1 (Brand recognition)	0.247 ^a
Hypothesis 2 (Brand recall)	0.317 ^a
Hypothesis 3 (Brand attitude)	0.439 ^a
Hypothesis 4 (Symbolic benefit)	0.377 ^a

^aCorrelation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 10.4 Mean score of the effects of UGC

	Dimension	Mean score
Brand awareness	Brand recognition	3.3
	Brand recall	3.5
Brand image	Brand attitude	4.0
	Symbolic benefit	4.2

From Tables 10.2 and 10.3, observe that the values of Pearson correlation helps reflect the degrees of correlation between UGC and (i) brand recognition, (ii) brand recall, (iii) brand attitude, and (iv) symbolic benefit, respectively. The larger the Pearson correlation value implies the higher level of correlation. From Table 10.2, the UGC program has the highest correlation with brand attitude (0.439^a). The second-highest Pearson correlation value is Hypothesis 4 (0.377^a), which implies that the UGC program has the second-highest correlation with symbolic benefit. The second-lowest and lowest correlations brought by the UGC program are brand recall and brand recognition, respectively.

10.5.2 Discussions

As shown above, in this study, correlation test is applied for testing the relationship between the UGC program and (i) brand recognition, (ii) brand recall, (iii) brand attitude, and (iv) symbolic benefit. From the correlation tests, we know that the four variables, “brand recognition,” “brand recall,” “brand attitude,” and “symbolic benefit” are positively correlated to the UGC program.

Table 10.4 shows the mean scores of UGC toward the critical elements of brand awareness and brand image. Observe that they are all of above 3 in the 5-Point Likert

Table 10.5 Mean score of the effect of used garment collection to symbolic benefit

Symbolic benefit	Mean score
Refined	3.14
Attractive	3.67
Thoughtful	4.02
Approachable	3.93
Self-assured	3.63
Trustworthy	3.73
Confident	3.67
Prestige	3.16
Sporty	3.20
Modern	3.48
Proud	3.44
Optimistic	3.62
Elegant	3.13
Human-oriented	4.10

Scale, which means that the respondents agree that UGC affects the brand awareness and brand image of fast-fashion retailer. According to the statistical testing results, Hypotheses 1 and 2 are supported. This gives evidence that UGC has a significant effect on brand awareness in terms of brand recognition and brand recall. The result reveals that the UGC program can be utilized to enhance the brand awareness of the fast-fashion retailers (e.g., H&M and UNIQLO); in other words, this finding also shows that consumers have “ability to identify the brand” with UGC (Rossiter and Percy 1987). Given that more and more fast-fashion brands emerge in the market, it is expected that the fast-fashion retailers will continue sell garments at a very competitive price and hence there is keen competition among brands. The UGC can be a way to help the fast-fashion retailers to differentiate from others and earn a competitive edge.

From the significant statistical testing results on Hypotheses 3 and 4, we know that there is scientific evidence to show that the UGC program has a significant effect on brand attitude and symbolic benefit. Given the fact that “disposable fashion” is usually associated with fast-fashion brands, in order to change this brand image, and stand out from the “unsustainability cloud,” fast-fashion marketers can wisely employ the UGC program. This act also fits the needs of the society. As a remark, establishing a positive brand image has long been recognized as an important element in building a strong brand (Keller 1993). It is a critical issue.

For symbolic benefit, note that it is usually related to the needs for social approval or personal expression and consumer may value the prestige and exclusivity of a brand (Solomon 1983). From Table 10.5, we can see that human-oriented (mean score 4.10), thoughtful (mean score 4.02), and approachable (mean score 3.93) are ranked

Table 10.6 Summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypotheses	Supported/not supported?
1. Used garment collection has a significant effect on brand recognition	Supported
2. Used garment collection has a significant effect on brand recall	Supported
3. Used garment collection has a significant effect on brand attitude	Supported
4. Used garment collection has a significant effect on symbolic benefit	Supported

top three in terms of mean scores among all dimensions. This implies that consumers value fast-fashion retailers as human-oriented, thoughtful, and approachable after noticing their implementation of the UGC program. Compared with the findings reported by Brengman and Willems (2009) in which the fashion store offering CSR program is perceived to be honest and trustworthy, this study shows a slightly different result from theirs. Even though both studies indicate positive symbolic benefit to the brands when there are ethical actions, this study shows that consumers especially value fast-fashion retailer as human-oriented, thoughtful, and approachable. We argue that the nature of fashion retailers may influence the results, because we are focusing solely on fast-fashion retailers whereas Brengman and Willems (2009) examine the more traditional fashion stores in Belgium. Moreover, owing to cultural differences, the perception of Hong Kong consumers and Belgian consumers may be different. Therefore, different symbolic benefits may be generated. Nevertheless, we believe that the UGC program is associated with the symbolic benefit and this emerging activity can be used as a promotional tool for fast-fashion retailers.

10.6 Conclusion, Implications, and Research Limitations

In this study, we have explored the effects brought by the UGC program to fast-fashion retailers. We have reviewed the related literature and formed the hypotheses. Through a consumer survey conducted in Hong Kong, we have collected data for statistical analysis. The statistical results demonstrate that there is a positive relationship between the fast-fashion retailer's implementation of UGC and the customers' brand awareness, and brand image toward the fast-fashion brand. As a summary, Table 10.6 shows the hypothesis testing results. In the following, we further discuss some implications from the research findings.

First, from the results of Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, we know that the UGC program is associated with the brand awareness of the fast-fashion brands. This relates to the consumers' ability to confirm and retrieve information of the respective fast-fashion brands. With this result, the fast-fashion retailers can put more effort and resources on promoting their UGC programs, e.g., via TV or Internet commercials, company's website or social media pages. More could also be done in the retail store in which banners can be posted and leaflets could be distributed to catch more

attention toward their UGC programs. Currently, in places like Hong Kong, the UGC programs of fast-fashion retailers are relatively “low profile” and we believe that the fast-fashion companies should take a more proactive approach in promoting them.

Second, from the results of Hypotheses 3 and 4 which relate to brand image, the consumers have positive brand attitude toward fast-fashion brands and there is an important symbolic benefit (in particular, in the dimensions of human-oriented, thoughtful, and approachable) associated with the fast-fashion brands when they have implemented the UGC program. Undoubtedly, in the fast-fashion industry, a positive brand image can provide a competitive advantage because it gives the brand the power to capture a larger market share with higher profit margins. Fast-fashion retailers can make good use of “environmental protection” via their UGC programs to differentiate themselves from others. As a remark, the current findings are associated specifically with the UGC programs. However, it is intuitive that other environmental sustainability measures may also have similar effects. In fact, the UGC program is just a small part of the formal sustainability programs of many fashion companies, more campaigns could hence be done to enhance the impact and trigger a bigger effect on brand image. We thus propose that fast-fashion retailer may exploit other popular and socially aware concerns on environmental issues and implement them together with UGC. From the fast-fashion retailer’s perspective, our findings demonstrate that it is possible for them to improve their brand image through UGC, which is a part of better environmental management and CSR practices. We argue that the movement to sustainability is largely driven by the social expectations of consumers. Thus, it deserves a long-term investment and should be supported by a consistent and long-term strategy of the fast-fashion company.

According to Miller and Dale (2013), it is possible for retailers to enhance their brand reputation through better environmental management practices. Their results also show that sustainability practices can provide commercial benefits to the retailers as a strong business motivation. Furthermore, their study extends the benefits of CSR practices in the area of corporate branding. Our study also indicates similar findings in the scope of fast fashion, and shows the positive relationship between the UGC program and cooperate branding (e.g., brand awareness and brand image). In corporate level, to support the movement of “sustainability,” a higher level of internal and external organization integration is necessary. From this perspective, we believe that a multidisciplinary team should first be set up in the fast-fashion retailers to manage, in an integrated way, “sustainability” related measures associated with the UGC. It makes sense to bring people with different areas of expertise together, too. Second, a cross-functional team is required for effective planning and implementing the UGC programs. Throughout the whole fashion supply chain, teams on research and development, production, sales and marketing, etc. should coordinate together and take part in the UGC programs. It is important for each functional department to send at least one representative to join this cross-functional team. Closer cooperation is generally believed to help increase communication and enhance the effectiveness of the program. Also, this cross-functional team should continuously seek feedback of the UGC campaign from consumers and propose ways to further polish and improve the program to better satisfy the needs of consumers and society. Integration with external organization, such as developing partnership with professional recyclers and

collectors, is crucial and helps ensure the UGC program associated reverse supply chain system is effective. In short, we propose that deep integrations internally and externally are important to support the implementation of UGC program in fast-fashion companies.

There are some limitations in this research. As time and resources are limited, only a relatively small sample size is used in the research. Thus, the statistical results may not totally reflect the real situation in the market. Besides, this research only targets at the generation Y consumers in Hong Kong and hence the results may not be generalizable and we need to interpret the results carefully. For future research, it would be good to examine how cultural differences may affect the research findings by conducting similar studies with consumers in other countries with different cultural backgrounds. In addition, it will be interesting to see if different or similar findings will be obtained when we study other fashion retailing business models (e.g., in luxury fashion).

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